



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 8TH OPENTESOL
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020
LANGUAGE EDUCATION FOR GLOBAL COMPETENCE:
FINDING AUTHENTIC VOICES
AND EMBRACING MEANINGFUL PRACTICES**



TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ TP. HỒ CHÍ MINH
HO CHI MINH CITY OPEN UNIVERSITY



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ABOUT OPENTESOL

Welcome to Ho Chi Minh City Open University,

The  International Conference series was established in 2012 by The Faculty of Foreign Languages and The Graduate School of Ho Chi Minh City Open University, a higher education institution offering a variety of programs ranging from on-site to distance learning and learning at satellite academic centers and aiming to meet various learning needs of society and to contribute to enriching the country's human resources.

OpenTESOL is a conference for local and international professionals in the field of Foreign Languages Teaching and Learning. OpenTESOL has been recognized as a valuable professional development forum for practitioners and researchers in the region.

Since 2016, OpenTESOL has also published its conference proceedings. All presenters are encouraged to submit their papers for consideration in this publication.

OpenTESOL honors the following groups:

- Classroom teachers and teacher educators;
- Ph.D. students and researchers in the fields of foreign language teaching and learning and applied linguistics;
- English language school's managers and tertiary education administrators.
- Foreign experts or researchers who wish to network within the foreign language communities in the region.

OpenTESOL aims to:

- Establish a quality hub for sharing ideas of appropriate pedagogies in different teaching and learning contexts;
- Provide an opportunity for building a network of teachers and those professionals involved in language teaching;
- Strengthen the ties between the foreign language teaching communities in Vietnam and other nations;
- Connect local communities with international language education institutions or associations;
- Present state-of-the-art research into language and language education.

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EDITORIAL

It is our honor to present to you the Proceedings of the 8th OpenTESOL International Conference 2020. This year, under the theme *Language Education for Global Competence: Finding Authentic Voices and Embracing Meaningful Practices*, the proceedings addressed topics including:

- learner autonomy
- globalized curriculum and materials development
- K-12 and young learners
- culture in ELT
- teaching and learning of language skills
- applied linguistics
- approaches
- second language writing
- technology
- teaching Chinese (in Vietnamese)
- teaching Japanese (in Vietnamese).

The proceedings are a collection of research findings and teaching ideas shared by a diverse group of language researchers and practitioners from Vietnam and other parts of the world. As a reflection of the authors' perspectives and efforts in finding effective ways for language education in response to the challenges brought about by the era of globalization and integration, it may provide researchers with new directions for future studies, and can be a reference where educators in the field find solutions for their problems as well as inspiration for their quest of the development of language teaching expertise.

The organizing committee and the editors of OpenTESOL are

grateful to the reviewers for their valuable contribution in reading and giving constructive comments on the authors' manuscripts.

We wish you all the best and hope you will enjoy reading OpenTESOL 8' s Proceedings to the fullest.

Warmest regards,

Dr. Le Thi Thanh Thu, Dr. Bui Thi Thuc Quyen, Mr. Mai Minh Tien, and Dr. Lam Thanh Nam.

Editorial Board Members, Proceedings of the 8th OpenTESOL International Conference 2020

SELECTED CONFERENCE PAPERS

LEARNER AUTONOMY

EXPLORING THE SPATIAL DIMENSION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY FOR STUDENTS AT TERTIARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

Learners in modern times tend to move from space to space all the time and learning does not only take place in the classroom as before. However, to transform a learning space into a place of learning, they need to ascribe meanings to those spaces. This study involved 226 students in different years at a university to find out the learning spaces that they usually occupy, the spaces which they have changed into learning places because learning occurs, actions that have been done for that transformation and how their learner autonomy is developed there. The finding indicates that students have different learning spaces which they have given various meanings to change into their learning places. The majority of students considered that the physical classrooms, which they go to every day, are not the place that learning takes place for various reasons. A virtual platform that teachers create along with their physical classroom is believed to be helpful for students in the age of technology and that potential learning space needs to meet certain requirements to be effective.

Keywords: *spatial dimension, learning spaces, learning places, learner autonomy*

INTRODUCTION

Credit-based training has been applied in most universities in Vietnam for nearly two decades and it requires the students to be in control of their learning process. University students, in addition to the knowledge obtained during the class time, are supposed to act a lot on their own

outside the classroom. From policy level, tertiary-level education reform states that 'students need to be provided opportunities to develop positiveness, self-awareness, activeness, creativity and self-study ability to meet the country's demand for industrialization, modernization and international integration' (Article 40, Law on Education, 2005). Recent regulations continue to encourage autonomy among learners of all ages (Vietnamese Prime Minister, 2017). However, because of the heavy influence of Confucian cultural features which requires students to attend class regularly, pay full attention to the lesson, and memorize all the details provided by teachers (Bui, 2018; Dang, 2010), it can be difficult for Vietnamese learners to be really in control of their learning both inside and outside the classroom. To help them become more autonomous still remains a challenge for the whole education system.

Even though learners in Vietnamese context do not have official training to be autonomous, opportunities to learn are still open for them much more than ever. Because of the dynamic of the changing world, learners often involve in different physical and virtual spaces. Even when they are physically resided in one place, they can be part of other virtual spaces. From general observation, the number of available physical spaces to learn is increasing rapidly. Inside the training institutions, they can learn in their physical classroom, self-study area at school, English club, Youth Organization, book club, theater club and so on. Outside the schools, the physical spaces to learn can be centers or other different communities of their interests, to name just some. Beside the physical ones, in the era of technology, university students who belong to generation Z - the digital natives (Daukseviciute, 2016) - have a lot of virtual communities of interests and resources to study only with a connection to the Internet. With language learning, websites and online courses as well as virtual communities with thousands of members to study English are available to make learning possible anywhere and anytime. Therefore, there is a hope that students majored in English can be not only good English learners but somehow as fluent as English users. The available resources make it doable; however, many English majors find it hard to meet the requirements to graduate. They can accumulate the number of credits needed, but many fail to gain a national or international certificate at level C1 on CEFR Framework. Even though there are a lot learning spaces available, travelling into and out of them and studying here a bit there a bit does not guarantee success in learning. Joining many learning spaces does not guarantee that learning will take place, because it depends on how learners can ascribe meanings to those spaces. Therefore, there is a need to understand the spaces that English-majored students usually join to

learn, what spaces are most effective for them and what actions they need to do to make the learning spaces more suitable with their own situation so that learning can happen. In the era of technology which emphasizes the potential of blended learning, it is also significant to know their opinions about the virtual platform that teachers can create along with the physical classrooms. From that understanding, suggestions will be provided to make the teaching and learning process more effective.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy

Autonomy has its original meaning as a political concept about the emergence of the self-governing city state. There has been a lack of consensus over definitions of learner autonomy, but there has been agreement since 1970 that autonomy has 'both awareness and reflection features' (Lamb, 2016). Accordingly, defining learner autonomy can follow two main directions. The first one focuses on external factors that facilitate learner's self-management and it is exemplified in the earliest definition of autonomy by Henri Holec, who was considered as the 'father' of learner autonomy when he represented the definition of learner autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's learning':

To take charge of one's own learning is to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e.:

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly (rhythm, time, place, etc.)
- evaluating what has been acquired.

(Holec, 1981)

The second direction centers on internal factors that predispose learners toward accepting responsibility and controlling one's thoughts and actions as a learner. Little's definition of autonomy as 'a capacity' emphasized the psychological attributes of autonomous learners which enable them to take responsibility for and control over their learning:

“Essentially, autonomy is a capacity – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.”

(Little, 1991)

Benson came up with some revision to Holec’s definition of learner autonomy when he agreed with Little to define learner autonomy as ‘the capacity to take control over one’s own learning’ (Benson, 2001, p.58). He argued that autonomous learner needs to have the capacity rather than ability because besides having the ability, learner also needs to have the desire and freedom to do so. The capacity is reflected through their control over learning management (making a study plan), cognitive process (paying attention or noticing input) and learning content (choosing what they want to learn).

Up to this stage, knowledge about learner autonomy was mainly for ‘individual’ view even though from an early stage, learner autonomy did not imply the notion that learners were learning in isolation, but took place within a sociocultural framework. Oxford developed a model of autonomy that included two ‘sociocultural perspectives’: the first referring to Vygotskian approaches (‘learning begins from the starting point of the child’s existing knowledge and experience and develops through social interaction’ (Oxford, 2003 as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 41) and the second to ‘situated learning’ theory (Bloch, Lave, & Wenger, 1994) to consider learning as participation or learning is the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice (Oxford, 2003 as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 47). These perspectives emphasize ‘the context of autonomy rather than the individual exercising it’, or in other words, learner autonomy is ‘socially conditioned and constrained’ (Oxford, 2003). So, learner autonomy should be looked under both the individual and social dimension. Murray (2014) went deeper into the social dimension of learner autonomy. Through his longitudinal studies with the L-café, he pointed out that it was autonomy which ‘enables learners to act on affordances they perceive in ways that suit their sense of self’ and the emergence of affordances would not have existed for them if they do not have learner autonomy to interact with the environment. From that, the importance of the learning environment to the development of learner autonomy should be highlighted.

In short, learner autonomy can be defined as a capacity to take charge of one's learning under the individual's perspective and 'an emergent phenomenon and an affordance for learning arising through learner's interaction with the environment' under the social dimension.

Space, place and learner autonomy

There is a tendency for interdisciplinary in research where researchers in different fields combine their research with notions from different fields. While physical geography concentrates on spatial and environmental processes, human geography - which focuses on the spatial organization shaping the lives and activities of people - is closely relevant to social sciences and humanities (Castree et. al, 2013). 'Space' - a concept in human geography has also been considered as an important concept in the autonomy research in the field of language learning for many years when autonomous learners empower themselves by finding 'spaces for manoeuvre' (Lamb, 2000). However, previous studies in social theory only described space as 'a backdrop to social action' rather than 'a significant component of social interaction' (Giddens, 1979). Applying spatial dimension with space and place, the relationship between space and the development of learner autonomy is being explored in different contexts to give more understanding about learner autonomy (Murray & Lamb (Eds.), 2017).

People at different points of time are seen to do things in a particular 'space' and talk about it as 'an environment in which these activities are carried out' (Murray, 2018, p.99). On the other hand, 'place' is 'space to which meaning has been ascribed' (Carter, Donald & Squires, 1993). Creswell (2004) stated that 'places are created through actions by people doing things in a particular space'. Therefore, to transform a space into a place is a process of 'place making' - a process in which individuals 'change, appropriate and shape space' (Parnell & Procter, 2011, p.79). Research into the spatial dimension so far have contended that 'autonomy is not about having control over the learning space; rather, autonomy is about having the possibility to exercise one's agency within the space' and actions and discourse of the learner in the process of ascribe meanings to that space is the performance of learner autonomy (Murray & Lamb (Eds.), 2017); in other words, learner autonomy is a condition to start and nourish the 'place making' process. An autonomous learner is more likely to initiate their place making process and activate learning, so the concern for researchers is how can 'those are less autonomous be encouraged to be more agentive and

understand the affordances of a space.

A learning space needs certain factors to nourish the ‘place making’ process. For a physical space, these factors range from environmental aspects such as noise, color, furniture, lighting, temperature, and air quality to personal aspects such as experience, emotion, task organization, safety, and social structure (Beckers, Van der Voordt & Dewulf, 2016; Dang and Robertson, 2010). From the longitudinal research about the English café, a provisional model for social language learning spaces has been proposed with 12 constructs: vision, diversity, randomness, coherence, neighbor interactions, reciprocity, levels of engagement, redundancy, decentralized/distributed control, archives/social media, personalization, space design (Murray, 2015, pp. 143, 144). These factors are the conditions that can support learning through sociality in a physical social learning space. However, these elements can change in different learning space contexts, for example in a virtual learning space. With technology advanced, learners do not limit themselves in physical spaces, but reach out for virtual spaces. The virtual spaces can be chosen freely by learners or they officially belong to as a requirement of their training courses. As a new trend to maximize the benefits of both offline and online learning, blended learning has been applied in many universities where they have good infrastructure and expected to be more and popular in the future. For an effective Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), different sets of factors including ‘perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and attitude’ need to be put in consideration (Davis et al., 1989, as cited in Tran, 2016). However, there is not yet comprehensive literature to define space, place as well how the place making process initiates and proceeds under the perspective of learner autonomy development, especially in Vietnamese context. As a result, a clear description about what learning spaces are popular for Vietnamese students, what actions students have put in for the space place transformation, and what difficulties still remain is needed. From that understanding, appropriate pedagogies can be used to support students in the process of making their learning spaces meaningful.

Research questions

To get the general picture about the learning spaces that English majors usually take part in, the effectiveness of learning in those spaces as well as what difficulties still remain in the space-place transformation process, the study revolves around 2 research questions and some sub questions below:

1. What are the most effective learning spaces to the students among the ones that they travel to?
 - 1.1. What meanings have they ascribed to those spaces?
 - 1.2. What difficulties have they encountered and how they overcome them?
2. What are the spaces that students want to transform to learning places but fail?
 - 2.1. What are the difficulties they encounter on the space place transformation process?
 - 2.2. What do they think about the necessary and their expectations for virtual learning environment?

METHODOLOGY

Setting and participants

The study was conducted at Foreign Language Faculty of a public university in Ho Chi Minh city. Every year, about 500 students join the department and the study program lasts 4 years with 132 credits accumulated. The requirement for English- majors to graduate is completing all the required subjects and an international certification at level C1 of CEFR of English. The students are from different parts of the country and they are well-behaved. The school's infrastructure is still limited. The classrooms are equipped with a blackboard, fixed rows of chairs and tables, a projector and a microphone with no air-conditioner. Internet coverage is not good and teachers have to prepare their own laptop. The number of students in each class is from 35 to 60 students. 226 students in different years of the Foreign Language Faculty participated in the study.

Data collection

The data of the study was collected through 2 phases:

Phase 1

A questionnaire including 15 questions to collect preliminary data about (1) the spaces that students travelled across in their studies, (2) the space that they think most effective for learning the meaning they have ascribed to that space, the difficulties they have encountered and overcome in that space and the level of control they exercised in that place, and (3) the learning space they would like to make more effective

but not yet successful, the reasons for it and their expectations with a virtual learning platform. The questionnaire was piloted on paper version with the second researcher and 3 students to make sure the wordings do not impede participants' understanding. Some small changes have been made to make it the meaning clearer.

The questionnaire using Google form was posted on the Facebook groups of each school-year of the department along with a message asking for participation. The first researcher also talked to the admin of these Facebook groups about the survey, so they could have some words to encourage their group members to participate. The link was posted and reposted three times in 2 weeks at the end of the 1st semester of the school year 2019-2020. Emails of the students were collected so that the researcher could contact with the participants in the second phase. The participations were completely voluntary and it did not affect their studies in any way.

Phase 2

To understand more clearly about the actions that students have had in their favorite learning spaces to make changes to suit their individual conditions, semi-structured interview was conducted through email to 5% of the participants. The students were selected randomly from the list of students who participated in phase 1 and the skip interval was 10, starting from student 1 to student 226. After 1 round, the researcher received more than 11 replies, but chose the first 11 ones. The interview includes one open question to ask the students about their 'place making' process in their favorite learning place. Several rounds of emails, depending on the answer of the participants, were exchanged between the researchers and each participant for verification. Both the questionnaire, email questions and answers were written in Vietnamese to facilitate students' accurate understanding and responses and then back-translation into English.

Data analysis

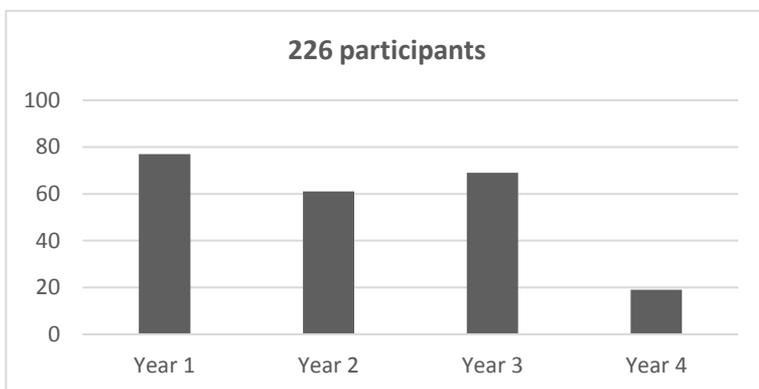
The quantitative data collected from the questionnaire was computed into Excel for analysis. Basing on the results of the first phase, the researchers gave the decision on the interview question. The emails were gathered for analysis after the interviewees' identity was anonymized and coding into themes. The data analysis procedure allowed for the emergent of any new theme as originally expected in the objectives of the current study.

FINDINGS

Among 226 students who participated in the survey, 77 students (34.1%) are in their first year, 69 (27%) in their second year, 71 (30.5%) in their third year and 19 (8.4%) in their last year at university.

Figure 1

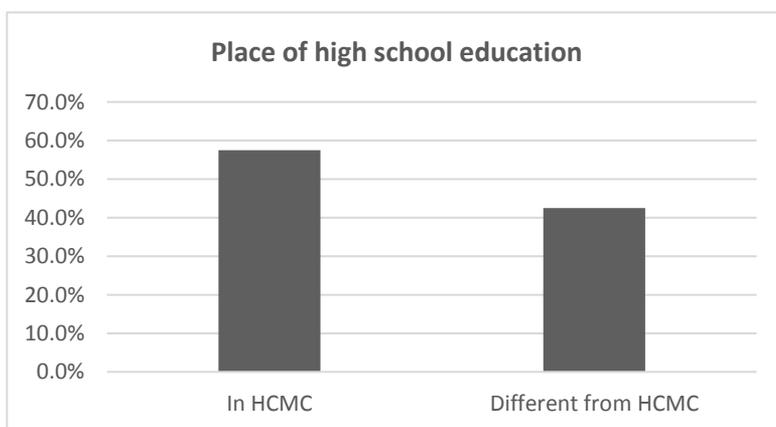
Information about the year of study of 226 participants



The majority of them graduated from high schools in Ho Chi Minh City with 57.5% and the rest studied high schools in other cities and provinces in Vietnam. This factor was asked to see if technology would be a difficulty for students outside HCMC to participate in online spaces.

Figure 2

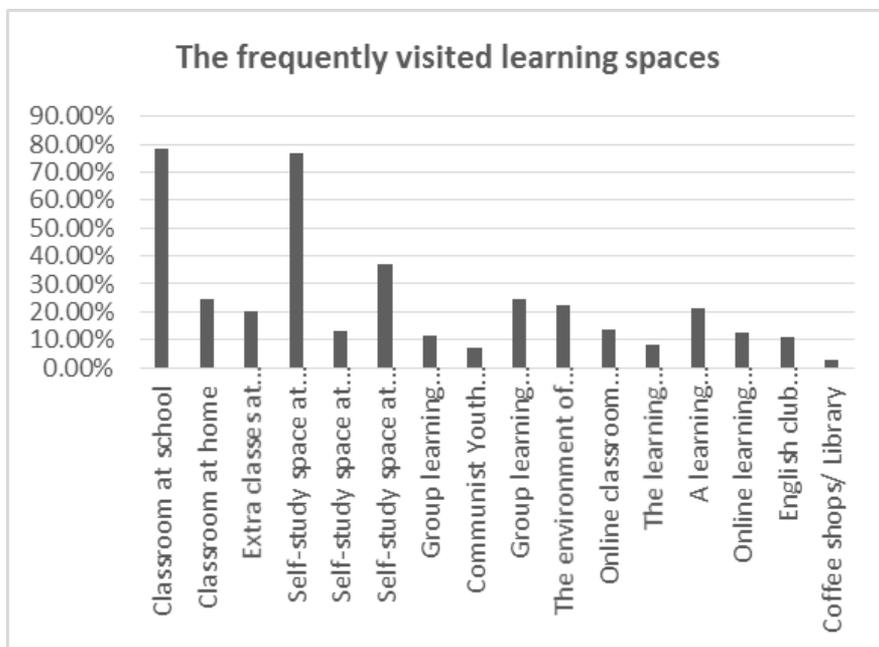
Information about the year of study of 226 participants



The learning space that the majority of students attend is the classrooms at school with 78.3%. Their learning space at home has the second highest percentage 76.5%. Slightly more than a third (37.2%) of the population join the self-study area at the university.

Figure 3

The frequently visited learning spaces

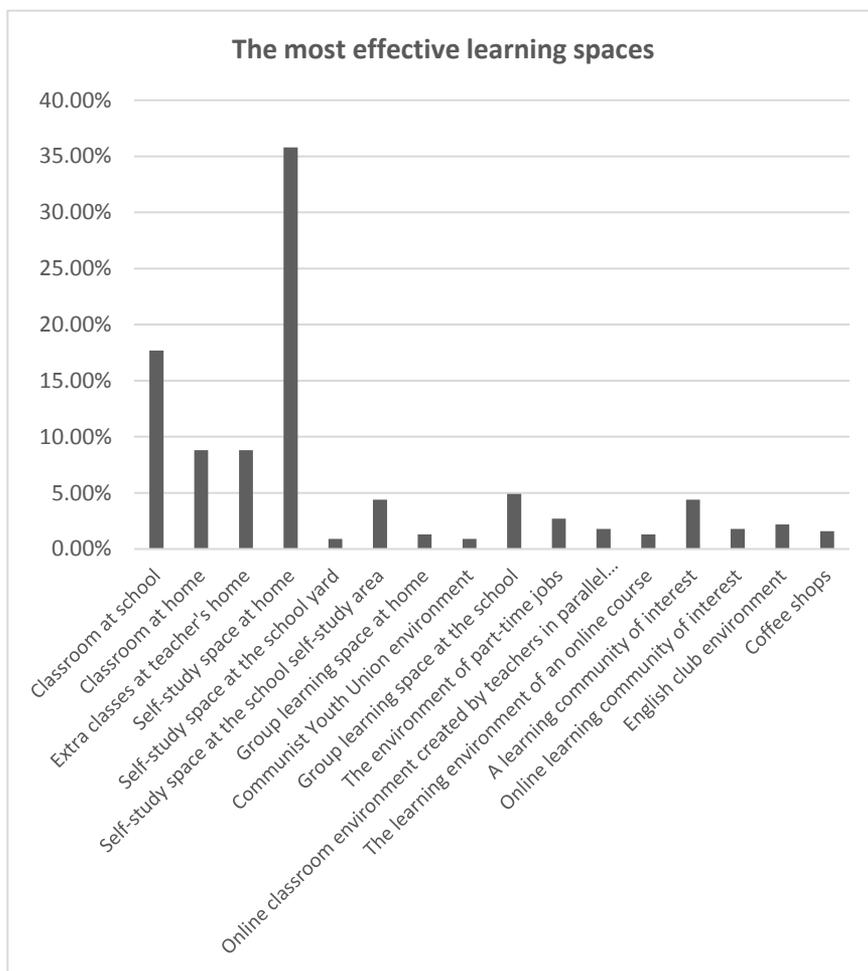


Different learning spaces such as their class at home, class at a teacher’s house, study groups with friends at school, part-time job’s working environment, and communities of interests are selected by a fifth of the population each. Slightly more or less than one tenth of them learn when they study in group either at the school yard or at home or when they join the English club. Virtual spaces such as the platform of the virtual classroom that their teachers created with their physical classroom and the online learning communities account for 13,7% and 12,4%. Other learning spaces they mention are at the library or coffee shops with less than 10%.

It is clear that even though students study mainly in the physical classrooms at school, learning spaces outside the classroom are also very popular. Besides their self-study area at home, they also study at different learning spaces and the official virtual learning spaces are not very popular with them.

Figure 4

The most effective learning spaces



In the learning spaces that students usually join, the learning space at home is where more than a third of students (35.8%) think they can study well. In more details, 32% of freshmen prefer to study at home, 30% of the sophomore and nearly 50% each for students in their third and last years at school, which shows that senior students study more at home than junior students. The other high percentages of 8.8% go for the extra classes at teachers' houses or extra classes at students' home each, which also attract more senior students than the junior ones.

Figure 5

Learning spaces at home

Learning spaces at home			
Year	Self-study space at home	Extra classes at teachers' houses	Classrooms at home
Year 1	25	8	8
Year 2	18	5	4
Year 3	29	5	5
Year 4	9	2	3

Only 17,7% of students on average find their classrooms at school effective the most for their learning. To be specific, 16 out of 69 students in their third year vote for it, which accounts for 23% while 17% and 16% of first year and second year students choose the physical classrooms to be the place they best study in. Only 5% of students in their last year attach to the classrooms at school. Other spaces at school outside the classrooms such as the self-study area or different study spots where students study alone or in groups accounts for 4.4%, 0.9% and 4.9% respectively and they are more popular with the junior students. The figures respond well with the new definition of education in the modern time, where physical classrooms at school might not play the main role.

Figure 6

Learning spaces at school

Learning spaces at school			
Year	Classrooms at school	Self-study area (KLF)	On the school yard
Year 1	13	3	1
Year 2	10	6	1
Year 3	16	1	0
Year 4	1	0	0

The non-official learning spaces such as the environment of students' part time jobs, the coffee shops where students study alone or with groups of friends, communities of different interests, English club, Communist Youth Union organization are listed to be efficient for the students even though the percentages are still small. It is noticeable that the communities of interests become more and more popular to students with 4.4%, the highest in this group. The virtual spaces, such as the online classrooms teachers created along with the physical ones, online courses and online communities of interests are chosen by only 1, 8% for each one and not chosen at all by the senior students. It can be unexpectedly low for students in the era of technology.

Figure 7

Virtual learning spaces and other learning spaces

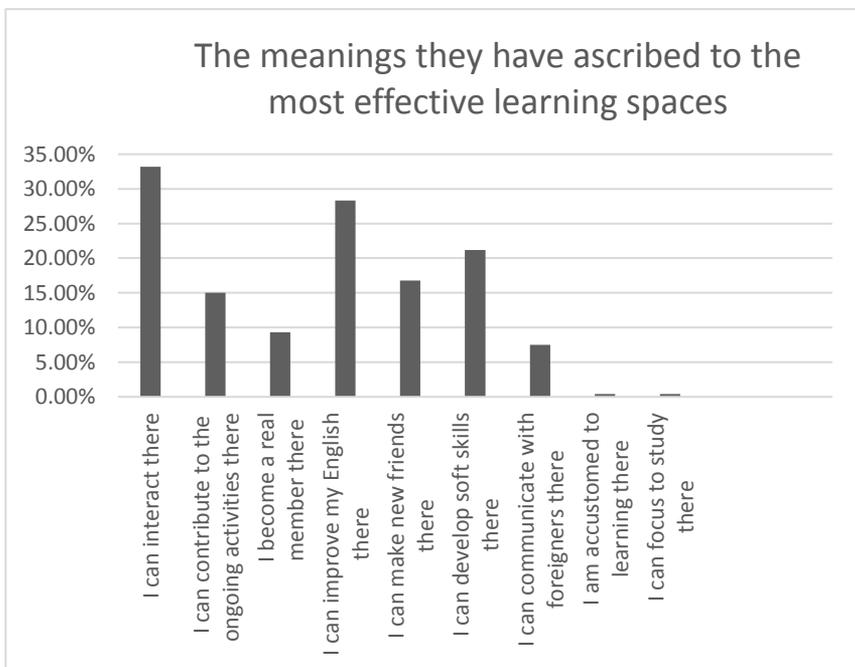
Virtual learning spaces				
Year	Google classrooms	Online courses	Online learning community	
Year 1	0	1	2	
Year 2	2	0	1	
Year 3	2	1	1	
Year 4	0	1	0	
Other learning spaces				
Year	Part-time jobs	Communities of interests	English club	Coffee shops
Year 1	1	5	2	0
Year 2	2	2	3	2
Year 3	3	3	0	1
Year 4	0	0	0	2

Students have ascribed different meanings to their most effective learning spaces. The majority of them think that they are the best places for them because in those spaces they are the person in control of learning (67.3%) and they can develop their ability to self-study

(62.8%). A third of participants feel attached to place because it is the place they can interact (33.2%). More than a quarter of them think the space is the most effective when they can improve their English (28.3%) and slightly less than a quarter think it is the place where they can improve their soft skills. Other meanings mentioned are when the learners can make friends (16.8%), have some contributions to the space (15%), become a member (9.3%) or they can communicate with the foreigners (7.5%). Only 2 students said the learning space at home is good because he/she is accustomed to studying at home and that is the only place he/she is not distracted.

Figure 8

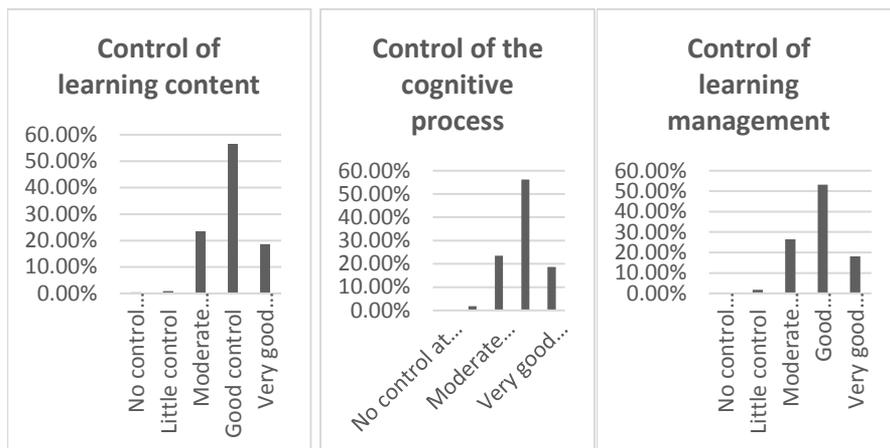
The meanings students have ascribed to their most effective learning spaces



When they can ascribe meanings to the learning spaces, they can control all aspect of learning. Nearly 100% of them consider they have the moderate control the content of learning, the cognitive process and the learning management. They just seem a little bit worry about the learning management in comparison with the other two.

Figure 9

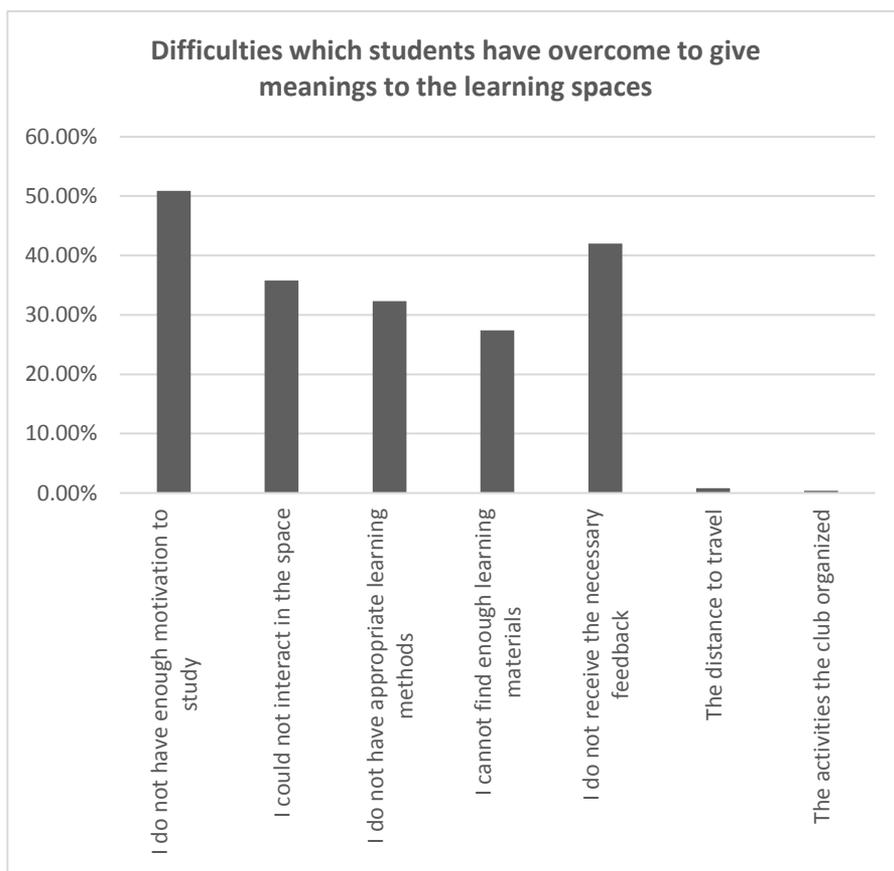
The control of learning content, cognitive process and learning management in the their most effective learning spaces



When asked about the difficulties they had to face when first started to study in their most effective learning spaces, slightly more than half (50.9%) of them said they did not have enough motivation to study. Just less than that a few percent (42%) was the problem with not being able to receive the necessary feedback. Other problems which a third of participants faced with were they could not interact with others (35.8%), did not have the appropriate learning strategies (32.3%) and could not find the learning materials (27.4%). The problems seem to be mainly from not having feedback or help from the contexts, which can trace back to the characteristics of students with Confucian culture who are used to be told what to do.

Figure 10

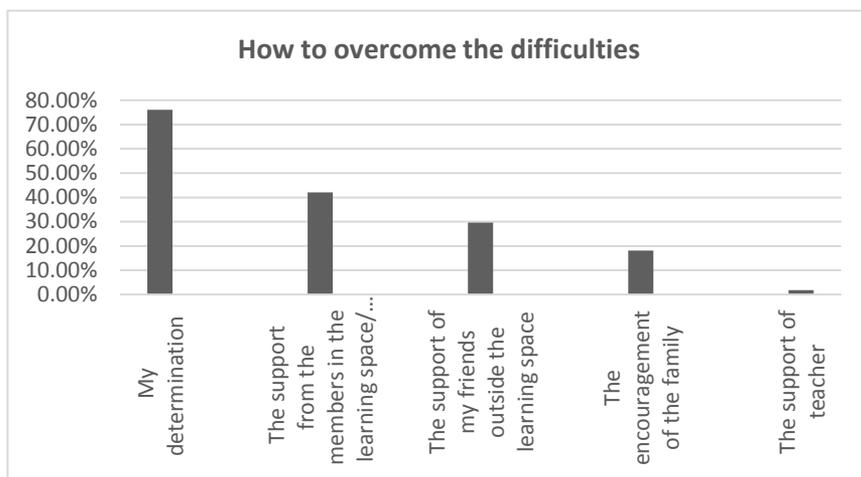
The difficulties which students have overcome to give meanings to their most effective learning spaces



To overcome these difficulties, it was because of their own determination (76.1%) and the support of their friends (42%). They also solve the problems with the help of other members, the organization of the space (29.6%) and also the support of the family (18.1%). Less than 2% of the participants mention the help of teachers. These elements show that besides the effort of the students themselves, the supports from contexts are even more important.

Figure 11

How they overcome those difficulties



5% of the students were chosen randomly to exchange email to ask more about the actions they have done to make the learning in their favorite learning spaces meaningful.

6 students (students 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10) reported about their actions at their learning space at home to make it more suitable with their own conditions. Self-studying at home is the most effective for them because they feel comfortable (Student 4), they can focus on their studies without the disturbance of noise and other distractors (Student 7) or they can study at any time they like and study whatever they want (Students 9, 10). At home, they can focus on the areas that they are still not good at. For example, student 2, 4, 5 and 7 will go to the websites introduced by their teacher in the classroom (student 2), use eBooks (student 4) or channels (The Ellen Show, IELTS FACE-OFF, Motivation2Study, Canguro English, JIANG JIANG 汉语听) (student 5) or try out from the results from google search with the key words (student 7), and then the websites will link to other websites. From that they can choose what is suitable for them to improve pronunciation (student 2), their studies in general (student 4, 7) or their listening and translation skills (student 5). Student 5 also follows pages on Facebook and joins some online translating communities to receive help from the communities. Student 7 and 10 takes notes when she has problems and asks for help from friends, senior students in the foreign language majored students 'community and also their teachers. Student 10 likes to do mock tests at home, and he thinks it was quite well for him when

he prepared for his university entrance exam, so he is doing it with his IELTS preparation test. With the reading and listening sections, it is easy with the answer key provided, but for writing and speaking section it would be more difficult, so he chooses to record himself and write the essay and compare them with the model or send them out for others to check and give feedback.

2 out of 11 students choose their favorite learning space is at the coffee shops (Students 3 and 11).

"I love to study at the coffee shops which has a quite space and the majority of the customers they come there to work (Highland coffee)." (Student 3)

"I usually go to the coffee shop to study rather to self-study at home. I will prioritize the coffee shop that is mainly for students or office workers like cheese coffee, the coffee house" (Student 11)

Studying there, student 3 has with him a list of things to do and he will multi-task to finish all the tasks on the list. He can handle not only school assignments, class duties as a class monitor but also work at a language center where he works as a teaching assistant. For student 11, he studies effectively there because when people in the surroundings are focused and working, he wants to be as productive as them.

1 student (student 6) said the environment at her part-time job as a teacher assistant is the most effective learning space because she can improve her communication skills there. She works with the foreigners, so she has to try her best to be better to fulfil her duties. Another student (Student 8) chooses the physical classroom to be the best place to study because it is convenient to interact with teachers and friends, and when there are some problems raised they can ask them for help immediately. Another student (Student 1) reports she likes to study at the English speaking club or activities that involve the presence of foreigners. She thinks that it is the best way to practice communication skills. However, she is quite shy, so she tries to persuade her friends to go with her so they can encourage her to speak up.

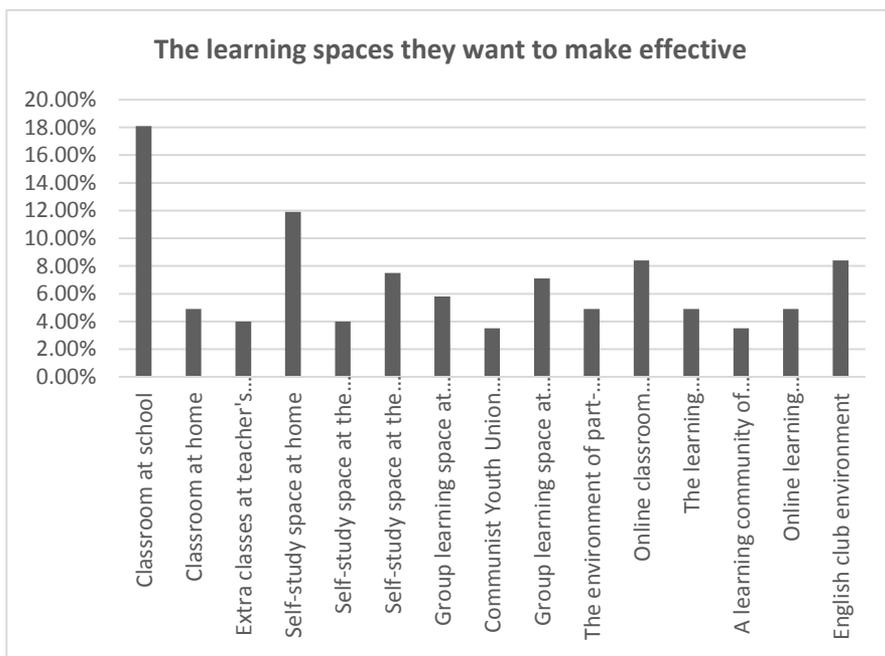
These actions have shown that they have made changes to the learning spaces to take advantage of the affordances available in the space and to change it in a way that suitable with their own conditions. The emergent of learner autonomy as an affordance to make a learning space becomes a real place of learning can be seen there.

In the learning spaces they usually join, the learning space that most of

them think it should be very effective, but they still cannot ascribe meanings to is the physical classroom at school (18.1%). Besides they classroom, they wish to be able to make the learning at self-study area of the school more efficient (7.5%) as well as the learning space at school for group work (7.1%). They also want to make their learning at home more effective, which accounts for 11.9%. The virtual spaces also get the attention of the students. 8.4% of them want to make the virtual platform which teacher creates along with the classroom more effective, 4.9% want to join an online course and 3.1% want to join an online community. Another 8.4% want to develop the activities of English club. From this, students show that they are concerned about the available learning spaces around them. They may see these spaces' potential, but they are still stuck with the difficulties they face there.

Figure 12

The learning spaces they want to make effective



There are no big differences between where the students had their high school education with the learning spaces that they choose. Students who graduated from high school from other provinces also did not show particular differences in comparison with high school students from Ho chi minh city about the spaces that they find difficult to make effective.

Figure 13

The percentages of students who had high school education in HCM and other places want to make the learning spaces at home and at school more effective

Place of high school education	Learning spaces at school			Learning spaces at home		
	Classrooms at school	Self-study area (KLF)	On the school yard	Self-study space at home	Extra classes at teachers' houses	Classrooms at home
Other places	15%	6%	5%	9%	5%	3%
HCMC	21%	8%	3%	14%	3%	6%

Figure 14

The percentages of students who had high school education in HCM and other places want to make the learning spaces at home and at school more effective

Place of high school education	Virtual learning spaces			Other learning spaces			
	Google classroom	Online courses	Online learning community	Part-time jobs	Communities of interests	English club	Communist Youth Union
Other places	5%	6%	4%	6%	6%	8%	4%
HCMC	18%	4%	14%	4%	2%	8%	3%

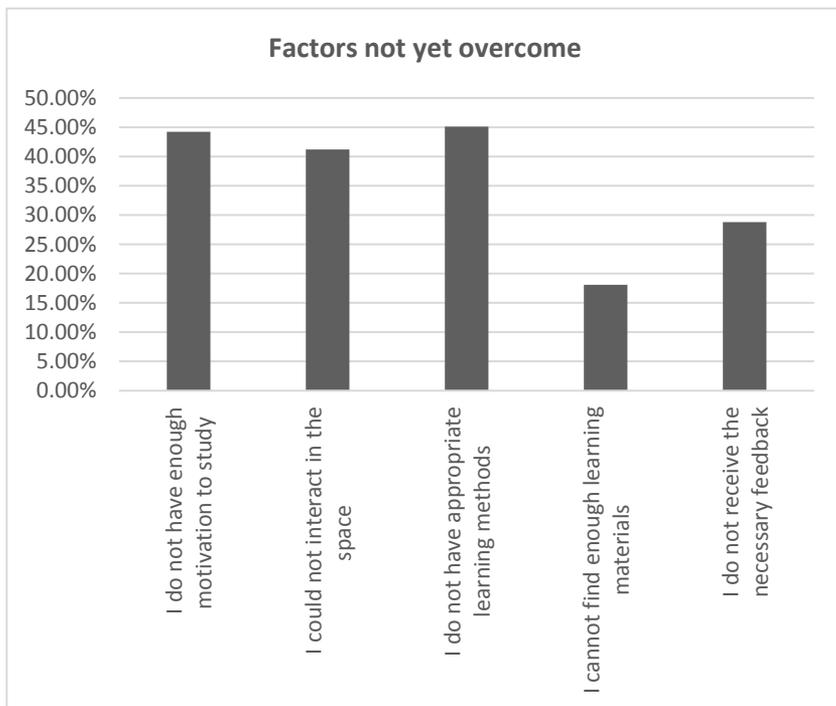
Virtual learning spaces seem not to be problematic for students who were graduated from high schools in other places; in contrast, they even have less difficulties when they join the online platform organized by their teachers or online learning communities of their own interests, yet they just feel a little more difficult with the online courses. In comparison with students from Ho Chi Minh City, they have more difficulties when they join learning spaces that require them to have more face to face interactions such as the environment of their part-time job, communities of interests, English club or Communist Youth Environment.

The problems that they cannot overcome to make these learning spaces into learning places are quite similar to what they encountered but managed to overcome in their favorite spaces mentioned above. The

problem of motivation was marginally overpassed the problem of not having the suitable learning strategies in that learning space with 44.2% and 45.1% respectively. With the percentage 41.2%, students said they need more interactions. 28.8% want to receive feedback. Finally, the problem that they could not find learning materials concerns only 18.1%. So, to make a learning space meaningful, they wish to have a lot of support from the contexts, such as teachers and friends.

Figure 15

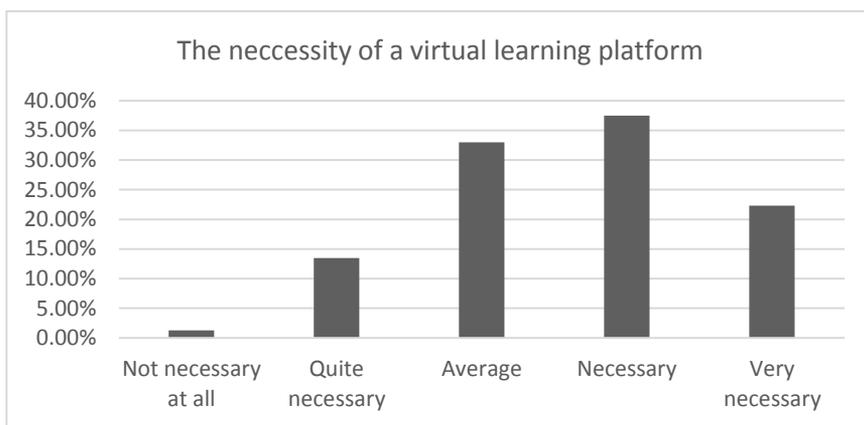
The factors which stop students from making those learning spaces effective



The last two questions concern about students' preference with virtual learning spaces created by their teachers along with the physical classrooms. Considered it as an urgent necessity to support students in the era of technology invention, students' ideas about their expectations to the space are really useful. Nearly 93% of them think that a virtual platform is significant for their studies and they also have different opinions about how to make that learning space effective.

Figure 16

The necessity of a virtual learning platform that teacher create along with the physical classroom



The majority have the desire to receive the support from the space. They want to receive detailed instructions because even though they know online learning is very necessary for their lifelong studies, they did not know clearly how to study effectively on that new learning space, so they need their teachers to scaffold the self-learning strategies, the skills to set up the short-term and long-term plan, to select the materials, the sources that they can exploit, how they evaluate their learning skills. They want a fun and high interactive learning space. They highlight the need to be able to talk with the teacher when they need their mentor, to raise the questions, to be reminded what they need to hand in the assignments, to receive valuable feedback which shows the teacher's concern for the different characteristics of each student and so on. In other words, they want to have the mentor of the teachers at high frequency and enthusiasm. They also want to interact with friends when studying and create a social bond in the learning space.

From these opinions, it turns out that learner autonomy should be looked from a different perspective in Vietnamese context, which will be discussed fully in the discussion part.

DISCUSSION

Thanks to the advent of technology, information is everywhere and knowledge is no longer a privilege in the hand of an institution which exclusively comprised of resources and teachers as before. Everybody can start their own learning and lifelong learning is the requirement of the modern time. Vietnamese students are also taking advantages of the

omnipresence of technology. From the data collected above, it is clear that students at tertiary level are participating in different learning spaces and learning is taking place not only in the classroom, but mainly outside the classroom. It is worth noticing that students can study the most effectively in spaces even with no presence of teachers such as their learning spaces at home, their part-time job, communities of their interests, the coffee shops and so on. Moreover, when the majority of students do not think that the learning space of the physical classrooms at the university is the most effective learning space, it is time to think about how educators can improve the situation. Reasons to explain for this can be from the ineffective program or lack of facilities, but the most important factor is students cannot find the attachment with the classroom. To support for this attachment, they need to see that what is going on in the classroom is what they will use when they join the workforce after graduation. In addition, it must be done in a way that they are interested in and feel motivated enough to care about. From that, the jobs of schools and teachers are more and more challenging, and clearly the traditional classrooms could fail if not being updated in that way.

Students have ascribed a lot of meanings to the spaces they like to study in. The spaces become a place of learning because they can make friends there, they can communicate with the foreigners, they can practice English there, they can improve their self-study skills to decide what they want to study, how to study and also the location and also the length of study, and so on. When they attach the meanings to the spaces, learning has taken place, and the spaces are turned into learning places. To achieve that result, they have had to overcome the difficulties they encounter. The difficulties can be lack of motivation, laziness, no suitable learning strategies, but it is learner autonomy that helps them to take actions to overcome that obstacles. For example, a student said that he had a list of what he needed to do before going to the coffee shop or another student tried to be as productive as other people in the coffee shop. If they are shy, they will ask friends to go with them to the English club. If they cannot self-evaluate the speaking and writing test results, they will compare it with the samples or record and take photo of it to ask someone to judge for them. If they cannot find the answers they satisfy, they will find other resources, or they ask others in the community. Those are the performances of learner autonomy, because learners can set their learning goal, have strategies to learn, evaluate the learning process and modify it when needed. When they have ascribed meanings to the space, they can control the learning content, learning management and cognitive process. Students reported 16 learning

spaces that they usually go to in their studies and their reported actions to give meanings to those spaces show that even though students do not have official training for learner autonomy, they are still trying to study in many ways. The learning outcomes can be much better if students receive the scaffolding and mentoring from teachers about how to study themselves.

To minimize the shortcomings of the traditional classrooms as well as full online classes, blended learning has been used more and more in language teaching context. It is believed to bring fruitful outcomes to the language teaching and learning process. Therefore, creating a virtual platform along with the physical classroom is what being done more and more by teachers around the world. In the context of tertiary education in Ho Chi Minh City, blended classrooms are applied in many universities, even though it is not yet popular in the university where the research is conducted. The results show consistence with literature when students also express their desire to have a good virtual learning platform for them to maximize the learning in class. In order to do so, curriculum designer, teachers and sometimes the IT technicians (if the teachers cannot do the IT infrastructure) need to work together to decide how students can use the platform effectively. Students strongly hope that the platform can provide help with their learner autonomy, such as how to set up the learning goals, choose the suitable materials and resources and receive feedback from teachers. In their opinion, increasing social interactions with platform is the key element to make students find attachment with the learning spaces.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study acknowledges the concern that whether learning is mainly taking place in the classrooms at tertiary level. The information collected about the learning spaces that students can actually learn, what difficulties they have there and their actions to give meanings to the spaces can help not only learners understand more about their learning process but also teachers think about what they should do to support learners. It also points out that spatial dimension is a good perspective to trace the development of learner autonomy and further research should be done to be able to sketch out what teachers should do to support learners and what learners need to do to take the most advantages of any space they join. Last but not least, it also provides teachers with students 'expectations about a virtual platform which teachers can take into consideration when they design the virtual platform in their blended classroom.

The study is only conducted in a university in HCMC, so the results can be different when being done in other contexts. The students' learning history is not known and the study is only a slice at a point of time for students to reflect about their control in learning, so it can be short to trace the development of learner autonomy, which usually requires a longer period of study.

CONCLUSION

The study has explored further into the spatial dimension of learner autonomy. The research's results have contributed to the understanding of what actions learners have done to change learning spaces into meaningful learning places and will be the foundation for further research about space, place and learner autonomy in the context of Vietnam.

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APPENDIX

1. Questionnaire (translated into English)

Exploring the spatial dimension of Learner Autonomy for students at tertiary level

QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear students,

Learners today can join different learning spaces, but learning only takes place when you can ascribe meanings to them. Language learner autonomy, the capacity to control one's learning, is one of the factors that help you to do so. I hope you save some time to answer the questionnaire so that data can be generated about the actions that students take to make a learning space meaningful to them. Thank you very much.

1. What is your email address?

2. Which year are you in?

Year 1

Year 3

Year 2

Year 4

3. Where is your household registration?

HCMC

Different from HCMC

4. Which learning spaces do you usually attend? (you can choose more than one option)

<input type="checkbox"/> Classrooms at school	<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at school
<input type="checkbox"/> Classrooms at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The environment of part-time jobs
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra classes at teacher's home	<input type="checkbox"/> Online classroom environment created by teachers along with the physical classroom (Google classroom ...)

<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The learning environment of an online course
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the school yard	<input type="checkbox"/> A learning community of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the school self-study area	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning community of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> English club environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Communist Youth Union environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

5. In your learning spaces, please choose ONE learning space that you feel you can study the most effectively:

<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom at school	<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at the school
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The environment of part-time jobs
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra classes at teacher's home	<input type="checkbox"/> Online classroom environment created by teachers along with the physical classroom (Google classroom ...)
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The learning environment of an online course
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the school yard	<input type="checkbox"/> A learning community of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the school self-study area	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning community of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> English club environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Communist Youth Union environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

6. With your most effective learning space chosen in question 5, which meanings have you ascribe to it? (you can choose more

than one option)

<input type="checkbox"/> I can control my studies there	<input type="checkbox"/> I can improve my English there
<input type="checkbox"/> I can develop my self-study ability there	<input type="checkbox"/> I can make new friends there
<input type="checkbox"/> I can interact there	<input type="checkbox"/> I can develop soft skills there
<input type="checkbox"/> I can contribute to the ongoing activities there	<input type="checkbox"/> I can communicate with foreigners there
<input type="checkbox"/> I become a real member there	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

7. With your most effective learning space chosen in question 5, your capacity to control over the learning content (choosing what you learn) is:

1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all				Very well

8. With your most effective learning space chosen in question 5, your capacity to control over the learning management (plan, organize, evaluate your learning) is:

1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all				Very well

9. With your most effective learning space chosen in question 5, your capacity to control over your cognitive process (attention, awareness, mental process) is:

1 <input type="checkbox"/>	2 <input type="checkbox"/>	3 <input type="checkbox"/>	4 <input type="checkbox"/>	5 <input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all				Very well

10. What are the difficulties you have to face when joining the most

effective learning space chosen in question 5? (you can choose more than one option)

<input type="checkbox"/> I do not have enough motivation to study	<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot find enough learning materials
<input type="checkbox"/> I could not interact in the space	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive the necessary feedback
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not have appropriate learning methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

11. How did you overcome those difficulties? (you can choose more than one option)

<input type="checkbox"/> My determination	<input type="checkbox"/> The support of friends outside the learning space
<input type="checkbox"/> The support from the members in the learning space/ its organization	<input type="checkbox"/> The encouragement of family
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	

12. In the learning space you often participate in, please choose ONE learning space which you think will be very useful but I have not really attached the meaning to?

<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom at school	<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at the school
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The environment of part-time jobs
<input type="checkbox"/> Extra classes at teacher's home	<input type="checkbox"/> Online classroom environment created by teachers in parallel with the classroom (google classroom ...)
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> The learning environment of an online course
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the	<input type="checkbox"/> A learning community of

school yard	interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Self-study space at the school self-study area	<input type="checkbox"/> Online learning community of interest
<input type="checkbox"/> Group learning space at home	<input type="checkbox"/> English club environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Communist Youth Union environment	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

13. What difficulties did you encounter but could not overcome when participating in this learning space?

<input type="checkbox"/> I do not have enough motivation to study	<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot find enough learning materials
<input type="checkbox"/> I could not interact in the space	<input type="checkbox"/> I do not receive the necessary feedback
<input type="checkbox"/> I do not have appropriate learning methods	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)

14. In your opinion, how does/will the online learning space created by teachers play a role in your study?

1	2	3	4	5
<input type="checkbox"/>				
Not necessary at all				Very necessary

15. What kind of help would you like from the lecturer to develop language learner autonomy through an online learning space?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ANSWER!!!

2. *Email (translated into English)*

Dear students,

Thank you very much for doing the survey online about learning spaces. You have been chosen randomly in 5% of the total 226 participants. I hope that you will help me answer 1 more open question.

My question is:

In the most effective learning space you have chosen, what actions have you taken to ascribe meaning to it? In other words, what actions have you done to make the space more suitable with your own condition?

For example:

Joining an English café can be a good way to practice English because we can have a chance to interact with foreigners there. However, with Asian students, some are shy, so they choose to come to the foreigners to ask about vocabulary first, not to talk.

How about your actions?

Thank you very much for your help.

Quyen

GLOBALIZED CURRICULUM | MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

ESTABLISHING AN INTERNATIONAL STUDIES CURRICULUM FOR ENGLISH MAJORS: A NEW DIRECTION OF ENGLISH EDUCATION IN VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT

The age of globalization has posed many challenges to as well as generated opportunities for the education of English majors in Vietnam. While the standards of English have been diversified, a curriculum focusing on building nativelike English technical quality is inadequate. Intercultural competence is emphasized in the new context, but it is not enough to distinguish majors from non-majors. In giving English majors an advantage, apart from training professional skills such as teaching English to speakers of other languages, translation and interpretation, marketing, etc., one possible path is to develop a kind of English education equal to English education in English-speaking countries, which highlights not technical skills but intellectual capacities. Incorporating cultural studies and elements from other academic disciplines into English language education, during the last years, a program in international studies has been established for English majors at VNU University of Languages and International Studies since 2017. This paper elaborates on the context and development of the program.

Keywords: *history, English major, curriculum, international studies*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

'English' does not have the same meaning in every context. English education also varies across contexts. For example, English in England is the native language, and English in Vietnam is a foreign language. English studies, usually called simply English, an academic discipline taught in primary, secondary, and post-secondary education in English-speaking countries, is distinguished from English for speakers of other

languages (ESOL). In higher education, an English Department in the UK or the US and that in Vietnam are supposedly different. English majors in the former context pursue literary and cultural studies whereas those in Vietnam traditionally focus on technical skills to do particular jobs, e.g. teaching, translation and interpretation, business, etc. This contrast can be understood as a contrast between liberal education and professional training though in practice there are certainly overlaps between the two.

Now we can speak of English as a global lingua franca. This fact intervenes into the dichotomy between English as the native language and English as a foreign language (EFL). English as an international language (EIL) has been changing the ESOL landscape. English medium programs have recently proliferated in Vietnam. Despite the lack of a thorough review, to the best of my knowledge, it is safe to say most of them are STEM-oriented. In English-speaking countries, English is often seen in opposition to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Encompassing mostly humanities, the field's conceptual and empirical works interrogate the relations between human, language, society, and the natural environment. It (re)presents and examines the key ideas that have circulated in our world. In Vietnam, higher education institutions that teach humanities traditionally teach them in Vietnamese and are slow in using English in their curriculum. The job of teaching humanities in English is carried out by English departments. English departments in Vietnamese universities of foreign languages have been teaching courses in Anglo-American literature and culture for decades. There is little scholarship on how this academic strand is growing and reshaping itself in the presence of EIL.

I am interested in English education endeavors in Vietnam that keep in touch with the developments of English studies in English-speaking countries. They should be creative ventures in response to particular Vietnamese contexts rather than copies of a model deemed superior from 'the center'. As a university lecturer, I have fortunately had the opportunity to lead the installation of a program in international studies (IS) for English majors at my university. The work has been a platform for me to act upon the interest.

RESEARCH PROBLEM STATEMENT, STRUCTURE OF THE ESSAY, AND THESIS STATEMENT

This essay addresses the question of how the modes of English education in native-speaking countries and those in non-native-speaking countries can converge and diverge in response to EIL and a

postnational higher education situation. Undoubtedly, it cannot answer the question comprehensively. In order to shed some light on the issue, I attend to the case of the IS program for English majors at my university, making sense of it with historicizing strategies. Accordingly, the study reviews the history of the English major in the US, its counterpart in Vietnam, and the development of IS programs in the world and Vietnam. It then focuses on describing the initiation and development of the IS specialization for English majors at VNU University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS). I argue that the program exemplifies one possible path to develop a form of English education equal to English education in English-speaking countries. While supported by enthusiasm around EIL and the need for IS in the age of globalization, the IS curriculum is marginalized and institutionally fragile amidst current neoliberal reforms.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND MODE OF INQUIRY

As the present essay presents a humanities oriented inquiry, it is not supposed to adhere to principles of objective, linear, and systematic sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The study has started with my personal experience in establishing the IS specialization for English majors within my university. As I tackle the task, I have to make sense of why there is such a task, what it means, and how to do it. Thus, I place the task in its historical contexts. Basically, this study is an exercise of sense-making where, from the perspective of EIL and with the strategy of historicization, I trace relevant resources, analyze and synthesize them into meaningful narratives.

Historical Background of the Curriculum: An Array of Informing Educational Scenes

College English in English-speaking countries

In higher education, there is no single agreement on the names of the major branches of English studies. The list of courses offered by English departments keeps lengthening. In introducing the discipline(s) of English in the US, McComiskey (2006) invited discussions on the development, controversies and problems in six subfields, namely linguistics and discourse analysis, rhetoric and composition, creative writing, literature and literary criticism, critical theory and cultural studies, and English education. His selection was criticized as glossing over some important things such as developmental writing, technical writing, reading, and English as a second language (ESL) (Bateman, 2008). Nonetheless, currently, English linguistics is commonly observed

as a distinct discipline, taught in a department of linguistics. In most English-speaking countries, the study of texts in non-English languages takes place in other departments, such as departments of comparative literature or foreign language. The separation and combination of English studies, English linguistics, ESL, comparative literature and their corresponding departments vary across contexts and have been undergoing transformations. To illuminate college English in changing social contexts, I will concentrate on the case of the US.

The history of English in modern universities in the US began in the second half of the nineteenth century. Very soon after, the English major rose to prominence as an outcome of the introduction of the elective system in American education, the colossal increase in the populations of college students, and the need for guidance in life that could no longer be satisfied by the classics— whose language was accessible to a very few, the loss of philosophy in metaphysics, and religions— whose role struggled in a modern worldview of education (de Vane, 1941).

For many years, English courses constituted the soul and substance of a liberal arts program. The English major was the most important major and often the most populous in American colleges until about 1930 (de Vane, 1941). After 1930, with respect to providing instructions for personal and social life, English professors have had to compete with historians, economists and other social scientists, who could argue for the greater significance of their fields primarily with supplying objective social descriptions, causal explanations, and cures to the ills of the world. “Ade Ad Hoc” (2004) reported fluctuations in the number and percentage share of baccalaureate degrees in English from the 1970s until early 2000s. Accordingly, the 1970s and early 1980s witnessed a dramatic decline in the number of bachelor's degree recipients in English, which caused distress throughout the field. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the number increased 75%. Each year between 1993 and 1997, it declined modestly. The figures in the early 2000s remained stable. Numerous explanations for these fluctuations have been offered. Although the insiders of the profession have sometimes been blamed for losing touch with life in trying to cover their subjects, it has been consistently clear that the changes reflected broader social trends. For example, between 1968 and 1986, the plummet in the number of BA degrees awarded to students majoring in one of the fields within the arts and sciences, from 47% of all BA degrees to about 26%, becomes more apparent and understandable when seen as which that ensued a steady and seemingly relentless post-World War II increase in the arts and sciences share (“Ade Ad Hoc,” 2004). Thus, the sharp decline between

the 1970s and early 1980s in the number of bachelor's degree recipients in English did not mean a shrinking role of English studies. From the data available for 1985 to 1997, English, together with psychology, social sciences, health professions, education, grew while there was a marked decrease in the number of degrees in subjects directly tied to economic growth (business, engineering, and computer science) (“Ade Ad Hoc,” 2004). The situation could be partially explained by the growing number of female college students (“Ade Ad Hoc,” 2004). According to Digest of Education Statistics (2019), the figures of BA degrees in English and literature conferred in the 2010s demonstrated a moderate decline if compared with those of the previous decade. The decline is not surprising given that the contemporary discursive sphere is dominated by increasingly utilitarian goals of education and fervor for STEM. Discussions about the specific functions of English departments have abounded.

The diversity of English poses the question of whether this diversity itself could be problematic. McComiskey (2006) argued that English studies’ disciplinary opacity, murky content, and uncertain boundaries might have prevented the public from understanding the field and even hampered communication within the field. To avoid such problems, McComiskey (2006) proposed a way of unifying the various English disciplines: ‘English studies should be the analysis, critique, and production of discourse in social context. And all of the various disciplines that make up English studies [...] contribute equally important functions toward accomplishing this goal’ (p. 43).

‘Discourse’ is a concept pointing to all the thoughts, bodies, and objects that make up our understanding of the world. McComiskey’s proposal reminds us that English today is no longer limited to English literature or the printed book. English departments usually host a variety of courses in cultural studies, area studies, gender studies, ethnic studies, disability studies, film studies, theater and play-writing, screenwriting, journalism, communication studies, technical communication, digital media and electronic publishing, etc. Furthermore, the recent years have seen a rise beyond discourse to attend to non-humans and the environment, best exemplified by new materialism and ecocriticism. The breadth and adaptability of English defy definition, but these qualities have been key strengths of English as a centerpiece of liberal education. English departments have acted as ‘a traditional locus of curricular experimentation’, ‘nurturing and then sending out into the world such former fledglings as American studies, African American studies, and women’s studies’ (“Ade Ad Hoc,” 2004, p. 184).

In the past a degree in English usually meant an intensive study of Anglo-American literary masterpieces. An English major now covers a much broader range of topics over multiple disciplines. English majors are educated to reflect upon, analyze, and interpret literature, media, cultural phenomena and to present their interpretations in clear, cogent or/and creative writing. Job postings rarely seek for English majors specifically, but a degree in English boosts critical thinking skills vital to a variety of career fields, including writing, editing, publishing, teaching, research, advertising, public relations, and law. The skills gained from studying English, including understanding the ever-changing media and describing one's own world, will never lose value.

English also differs from STEM for its explicit political and ethical considerations, which, many scholars argue, are essential for democracy (e.g. Nussbaum, 2010). The political dimension of the field is usually related to the notion of a political turn, the perception that at some point within the early 1980s mainstream English studies came to acknowledge the political dimension of its scholarship and the political ramifications of its work (Comas, 2006). However, this does not mean the forebears of the field had previously denied or ignored the political bearings of their work. One result of the political turn was a new attention to ethical concerns (Comas, 2006). The reconfiguration of the classroom as a political space has elicited debates regarding the role of the teacher, which have been framed primarily in ethical terms.

Since English is less and less native speakers' property and to be shared with the millions of speakers from other countries for whom English is a significant medium of communication and self-expression, English departments in the US and other native-speaking countries today engage in re-evaluating their roles as 'sole guardians' of English studies. In that context, Isip (2012, p. 95) recommended a radical approach to creating an undergraduate 'English' curriculum as follows.

I propose a complete redefinition of the English Major. Those who are currently 'English' Majors seem to be increasingly less concerned with studying a national literary tradition, but seek a world literary tradition. My proposal, thus, changes the name of the department and the major to Department of Literature and Language.

According to the proposal, the distinction between an English department and a comparative literature department would dissolve.

THE ENGLISH MAJOR IN VIETNAM

Historical studies of academic disciplines are underdeveloped in Vietnam. Without any previous historical accounts tracing the development of the English major in the country, this section would be the first attempt to do so. However, constructing a thorough genealogy of the English major in Vietnam deserves a separate project. The present attempt is an initial sketch with a specific purpose. I only try to assemble relevant pieces of information into meaningful narratives to provide a context for making sense of the IS curriculum for English majors at my university. While the history of the English major in native-speaking countries is a history of richness, one that is filled with the flourishing of intellectual traditions and creative endeavors, the history of the English major in Vietnam has been a history of poverty and modesty as it is governed by instrumental reasoning. This is not a derogatory comment. The Vietnamese have their own language. Moreover, Vietnam was a country with a history of bloody warfare and extreme poverty where English was a minor foreign language. Since Doi Moi in 1986 until now, from one of the poorest, Vietnam has grown to a low middle-income country. English has become popular and is increasingly seen as an international language. Nevertheless, it is still thought of as a tool to earn economic benefits instead of a space for personal growth and democracy. In this essay, the English major in Vietnam includes a major in English language teaching (the ELT major) and a major in English, which have stood as two separate codes in the list of majors for admission into universities. The two tracks, however, do not differ in their nature. For many years, the English major without the teacher training element was synonymous with a focus on translation and interpretation training. Later a variety of ESP (English for Specific Purposes) programs came into existence.

To begin with, how English education took place in South Vietnam between 1955 and 1975 as well as its heritage after 1975 remains under-discussed. Little is known about the issues apart from some general ideas such as the existence of colleges and departments of language and literature and of teacher education that produced English majors, the popularity of English as a foreign language, and a higher education system that followed a Euro-American model and hence underscored liberal education. The official history of the English major in Vietnam started in the north, where English was not popular and treated as the language of the capitalist enemy. When the two first leading higher education institutions to teach foreign languages in Vietnam, the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at Vietnam Boarding

School and Hanoi University of Foreign Languages (HUFL), were founded respectively in 1955 and 1959, they taught Russian and Chinese. In 1958, SFL joined Hanoi University of Education, becoming its Department of Foreign Languages. An English division was formed within the department, with a staff of only four lecturers and an enrollment of only nine students (FELTE, 2018). In 1964, the department developed into four distinct departments of Russian, Chinese, English and French. From these departments, Hanoi University of Foreign Language Teacher Education (HUFLTE) was established in 1967. In the same year, an English department was founded in HUFL. HUFLTE and HUFL were two leading producers of English majors in Vietnam before Doi Moi. In the center and south, Hue University of Teacher Education, Ho Chi Minh City University of Teacher Education, and General University of Ho Chi Minh City also educated English majors. No official records of the numbers of BA's degree recipients in English during these years have been made available. However, English was obviously a minor foreign language in the education system.

Telling a story of his learning and professional trajectory in ELT, Le (2018) shone a light on English majors' classroom experience during the 1970s. From his autobiography, we recall that although students took part in the national university entrance exam and had the right to register their choices, a central planning approach to admitting students to universities made their major frequently unpredictable by the registered choices. At HUFLTE, English majors were trained in a grammar translation method and had very limited exposure to English.

Listen-and-repeat and reading aloud were two main classroom activities. My classmates and I listened and repeated sounds and words after the teacher because there was not any tape recorder at that time. In terms of speaking, we never went beyond a short single sentence as the teachers tended to ask each individual student to make up their own sentence with a particular grammatical structure or a word or a lexical phrase. Regarding writing, we were often asked to write either dictations or an essay but the primary focus in writing was on grammaticality. (Le, 2018, p. 4)

During the period, the English majors were also introduced to English linguistics and the history of English literature, according to Prof. Nguyen Hoa, the rector of ULIS from 2008 to 2016 (personal communication, October 24, 2019).

After 1986, especially in the late 1990s, when I was searching for a

student position at a university, the English major was in high demand and attracted the best students. Due to Vietnam's economic and cultural integration into the world, English has become 'a fever gripping the nation' (Nguyen, 2017, p.33). English is being studied at kindergartens, primary and high schools, colleges and universities, and foreign language centers throughout Vietnam. Vang (2004, cited in Nguyen, 2017) reported that 98% of Vietnamese students at all school levels were learning English. Together with the transformed role of English has been a changing landscape of higher education. A multitude of new universities, new English departments, and new programs for English majors were established. Due to the unavailability of relevant statistics in Vietnam, I cannot provide specific figures about different aspects of extant BA's degree programs in English. I have looked at the admission scores for different majors in the universities in the whole country, identified the ones offering English majors, followed the websites of these universities and the faculties in charge of the majors, and read information about the history and structure of the faculties and descriptions of their English programs. Within the constraints for this study, instead of a systematic report, I only afford to share some informal, salient observations as follows.

From the late 1990s to the 2000s, English majors were added to the range of programs in universities tied to foreign affairs and business (e.g. Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam: English, 2006; Foreign Trade University: Business English, 2007), newly founded private universities (e.g. Duy Tan University: English for Tourism; Đông Á University: English for Translation and Interpretation, English for Tourism, and Business English, 2009; Nguyen Tat Thanh University: English), newly founded provincial universities (e.g. Ha Tinh University: ELT and English, 2007), and key state universities devoted to disciplines in technology, business, and law (Hanoi University of Technology: English for Science and Technology, 2000 and International Professional English, 2011; University of Commerce: Business English, 2007; Hanoi Law University: English for Law, 2014). As it can be seen, ESP programs proliferated. Apart from courses in their specialized area, most programs offer courses in English culture or/and literature. When an English major does not feature a specialization, it usually maintains a balance among courses in linguistics, culture and literature, ESP, translation and interpretation.

It is often said that the quality of English education at all levels remains low and does not meet the country's socio-economic development demands and that Vietnamese learners of EFL have few opportunities to

use English outside the classroom (e.g. Nguyen, 2017). However, it is also a fact that thanks to widespread internet access, Vietnamese students now have been exposed to a greater deal of English. While the demand for English has not decreased, many students think English is so common that an English major does not give them a competitive advantage. If they can learn English at English centers, why do they have to major in English at a university? The English major has not faced a crisis like the situation in China (see Chen, 2019), but the zeal for it has lessened. The admission scores for majors in Korean and Japanese language at ULIS have equaled and even exceeded those for English majors during the last three years.

International studies

As globalization intensifies, together with the rise of EIL has been the emergence of countless study programs titled ‘international studies’. The meaning of IS and the research agendas it opens up are rarely spelled out (Aalto et al., 2011). IS engages those working on ‘international’, ‘foreign’, ‘global’, ‘interregional’ or ‘transnational’ issues in a wide range of social sciences and humanities disciplines such as political science, economics, law, history, cultural studies and literary studies. IS is often mistaken for international relations (IR) since IR has at times named itself as international studies. In the present context, IS is much broader than IR.

In Vietnam, establishing departments of IS was a trend between the late 1990s and the 2000s (Pham, 2018). HUFL started offering a BA degree in IS in 2002. In 2006, HUFL became Hanoi University, officially marking its status as a multidisciplinary university. Hue College of Foreign Languages and Da Nang College of Foreign Languages have offered a BA degree in IS since 2006. IS has also stemmed from departments of history in state universities that teach social sciences and humanities. Private universities such as Dong Do University and Hong Bang University also have IS programs. Within colleges of foreign languages, IS does not necessarily come from the English department. Among the IS programs, only the one at Hanoi University is taught in English.

THE INTERNATIONAL STUDIES SPECIALIZATION AT ULIS: INITIATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Initiation

In 1993, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNUH) was established by merging three major universities in Hanoi: HUFLTE, Hanoi University of Education #1, and General University of Hanoi. HUFLTE became College

of Foreign Languages (CFL). In the same year, the English Department was renamed Department of Anglo-American Language and Culture (DALC). In 2009, CFL was renamed University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS). DALC was divided into two faculties, Faculty of English Language Teacher Education (FELTE) and Faculty of Linguistics and Cultures of English-speaking Countries (FLCEC). ULIS also welcomed another department of English, Faculty of English, which is in charge of teaching English to non-English majors within VNUH. The rector of ULIS at that time, Dr. Nguyen Hoa, declared the university's three missions in research and education as language education, language studies, and international studies. However, ULIS was not allowed to establish a major in IS to avoid overlaps between programs within VNUH. The IS major has been hosted by the Department of International Studies at University of Social Sciences and Humanities.

In 2012, the English major at ULIS was divided into five specializations: ELT, translation and interpretation, administration, applied linguistics, and international studies, the latter three of which were newly added. Administratively, the ELT specialization is a separate major since it enjoys a distinct tuition policy. Apart from the set of courses for their specialization, all the programs for English majors share a core set of courses including Introduction to Linguistics (1+2), Pragmatics/Discourse Analysis, Intercultural Communication, Literature of English speaking Countries, and Introduction to British and American Studies.

FELTE, comprising six divisions: English 1, English 2, Fast-track (BA Honors), English Language Teaching Methodology, ESP, and Translator & Interpreter Training, is responsible for the specializations that train skills and knowledge for practical jobs. FLCEC, consisting of three divisions: Country Studies, Intercultural Communication and Literature, and English Linguistics, is in charge of the applied linguistics specialization and the IS specialization, which are not anchored to any practical job. While the other two new specializations were put in motion right after the decision in 2012, the IS specialization only came into existence in 2017. The task of designing and running the IS curriculum has been given to the Division of Country Studies. Five years of incubation mainly resulted from a lack of qualified faculty. During 2012-2016, none of the faculty members was a PhD degree holder. Two had a master's degree in American Studies from the UK and the US. The others had a background in TESOL and applied linguistics.

Development

The process of developing the program has been complex. Instead of describing the difficulties we have encountered, which without doubt includes 'the elephant' of handling heavy workload in the face of low salary, I choose to focus on the intellectual substance of the program and the principles have enabled its success.

The courses within the IS curriculum, namely Globalization and Its Impacts on Contemporary Societies, International Organizations, US Foreign Policy after World War II, Advanced Topics in American Studies, Advanced Topics in British Studies, Cultural Citizenship: Ethnicity and Overseas Communities, Migration in Contemporary Era, China in Asia and the World, Approaches to Research in IS, were selected by the Head of the Division between 2011-2016. They retain a strong orientation to studying Anglo-American cultures although there are spaces for exceeding and exiting Anglocentrism.

In 2016, upon completing my PhD program in curriculum studies in the US, I came back to Vietnam and assumed head of the Division. The mission of installing the IS specialization overwhelmed me. However, I really wanted to dedicate myself to the task since it could generate opportunities to bring faculty members together and develop ourselves intellectually. Official qualifications in the field are not necessary since IS encompasses a wide range of disciplines. IS opens up space for us to grow from our existing knowledge and passion and bring in the best of ourselves. In figuring out some directions for our work, I have come up with three principles.

- Give ownership to the course designers: they should invest in what they are passionate about.
- Cultivate strength in cultural studies.
- Build a strong sense of community.

From the given list of courses, most of my colleagues could fortunately choose one course resonating with their existing passions and make it their signature course. Two have undertaken the courses left for them rather than making an active choice. However, their willingness to shoulder responsibilities and to learn from what they do pronounces exactly their best tendency.

The focus on cultural studies instead of international relations is in harmony with the tradition of ULIS since the university has long

emphasized language and culture as intertwined. Such a concentration also keeps in touch with scholarship within English studies in English-speaking countries. Our division's engagements in cultural studies can be seen in the issues that student graduation theses over the last three years have addressed. The opportunity to do research under the guidance of the Division is extended to all English majors. The students from the other specializations had only enrolled in courses in British and American Studies and hence usually conducted research in the area. Among the graduation theses from 2017 to 2019 as listed below, only one came from a student in the IS specialization; it deals with diasporic Vietnamese nationalism.

- 'Fresh Off the Boat' & the model minority thesis: A Foucauldian discourse analysis
- Americanism in 'The Thin Red Line'
- Asian Americans in stand-up comedy by Asian Americans
- British Euroscepticism in Margaret Thatcher's key speeches
- Cool Girl Aesthetic in British culture: Historical conditions & the Case of i-D
- The representation of European colonialism in Age of Empires III
- 'The art of happiness: A handbook for living' and self-help books on happiness: A Foucauldian discourse analysis
- Wes Anderson, quirky style and his approach to constructing middle-aged American men with traditional roles
- White feminists in Donald Trump age: The case of Women's March on Washington 2017 American civic and ethnic nationalism: History and the debate over the removal of confederate symbols
- Afrofuturism and the case of Black Panther
- Neoliberal self-realization in Vietnam and the case of Wechoice Award
- Diasporic Vietnamese nationalism: An analysis of The Sympathizer
- Zootopia: The depiction of multicultural society through a

tale of animals

- Social exclusion and inclusion: *The Shape of Water* (2017)
- "It" girl identity in American culture: A case of Kendall Jenner

As I am writing this paper, I am supporting five other IS students in doing their graduation research projects. One of them studies the American movie *Her* (2013), exploring its characterization of intimate relationship between humans and AI. Another student is exploring the contestation of globalization in the rise of nationalism through the case of US-China trade conflicts. The other three students examine issues related to Vietnam in transnational and global contexts: the construction of "little adults" in *The Voice Kids of Vietnam*, Orientalism and Vietnamese women's subjectivities from *The Scent of Green Papaya* (1993) and *The Third Wife* (2018), and impermanence in Trinh Cong Son's songs.

To build a strong sense of community, we gather to discuss relevant intellectual issues. We act upon the simple idea of not wasting time whenever we meet. Each meeting is prepared carefully so that it can be informative and intellectually stimulating.

Eight years have passed since 2012, when the administrative frame for the program was initiated. Until now, we have successfully recruited students in four consecutive academic years. After the first 21 students, each year later has attracted about 40 students. The students' feedback about the program has been positive. I have also experienced profound satisfaction from working with my colleagues and students. As we do what we like, have a clear direction, and a community of practice that makes room for intellectual growth, now we no longer think of ourselves as inadequate.

An uncertain future

Despite its success, the IS specialization is going to be suspended due to a transformation in the curriculum for the English major in response to the new challenge of financial autonomy posed to state universities. To increase the revenue from education programs and rely less on state funding, since 2020, ULIS has stopped recruiting new students for the standard program for English majors (except for that of the ELT track) and replaced it with a 'high quality' program, which asks for a higher tuition fee. The shift is in line with Circular #23 issued by the Ministry of Education and Training in 2014, which specifies instructions for

national and regional universities on establishing high quality bachelor programs. The revised program does not feature further specialization. Students will be given a wider range of elective courses. More courses in business, economics and translation and interpretation training are listed in the set of compulsory courses. None of the courses in the IS specialization has been selected to the compulsory list. Such a change reflects the pressure to re-organize higher education institutions into a business model and the dominant discourse of education for economic benefits. English departments in English-speaking countries, particularly those in state universities and colleges, are also subjected to this pressure (e.g. Bowser & Fournier, 2013). However, English in these countries has been a very broad field while English in Vietnam is mostly restricted to practical communication, a situation that tends to be reinforced in neoliberal reforms.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The English major in Vietnam occupies a peculiar space. It does not fit in a model of liberal education and is traditionally oriented to technical skills. The IS specialization for English majors at ULIS exemplifies one possible path to develop a form of English education that keeps in touch with English studies in English-speaking countries. Although it has been made possible by the enthusiasm for EIL and the need for IS in globalization, the program has been marginalized and has a very fragile institutional position. However, it has been a successful endeavor and by no means contradicts the goal of efficiency. If the language of choice is characteristic of neoliberal reforms, the curriculum offers another viable choice. The existence and operation of a similar curriculum in the current context of English in Vietnam, for the fledgling nature of the curriculum, would require tremendous negotiation.

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DEVELOPMENT OF FIFTH-GRADE MATERIALS IN A GLOCAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Taking into account the needs of developing learners in both linguistic, scientific and cultural knowledge to prepare them for their future in the glocal world, IEG educators have chosen the approach to develop original materials and curriculum of EFL teaching and learning. The current paper is to give an overview of the key elements in developing learning materials for fifth-grade students to fulfill the purposes of (1) language development, (2) real life and cultural knowledge awareness and (3) 21st century skills. The first goal requires a clear and linear outcome framework applied for the whole primary curriculum, in which grade 5 is the final stage, which is equivalent to A2 high or B1 low. This framework, generated with CEFR as the guide and practical issues as fundamental elements, has played the role of the backbone of 4 language skills, grammar and vocabulary of the program. The second and third goals involve the search for authentic relevant materials and the creation of original ones to bring the world to students, preparing them for real life since very young age.

Keywords: *curriculum and material development, K-12 teaching, globalization, IEG, 21st century skills*

INTRODUCTION

Globalization has given English a growing role and status as an international language (Marlina, 2014). The international language, imported to other countries, gradually adapts to local culture for

communication purposes of local community, which have created many local varieties of English across the world (Crystal, 2010). The so-called glocalization of English requires a drastic shift in TESOL, from teaching native-speaker English toward Teaching English as International Language (TEIL) (Sharifian, 2009).

At the same time, globalization has reshaped the world from manufacturing economy toward knowledge economy (Trilling & Fadel, 2009), which requires employees' effective communication skills, strategic and analytical thinking and IT skills (Levy & Murnane, 2005). This has changed the roles learning and education play in our daily life and has created new demand on learning and education (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

The 21st century has recognized attempts by ESL curriculum developers and textbook writers across the globe to bring cultures of world into learning materials. However specific local ones like those in Viet Nam to teach Vietnamese students have not been covered enough, which leaves a gap for IEG curriculum and material developers to fill.

Likewise, the roles involve preparing students for rapid changes in the labour market and jobs that have not been created thoroughly (Robinson, 2011; Hesse, Care, Buder, Sassenberg & Griffin, 2015) by bringing the 21st century skills into education programs. Despite being claimed in various textbook for young learners, 21st century skills have not been applied enough in specific context of certain schools. This motivates us, IEG researchers to do so in our own circumstances.

The discussion of glocal knowledge and 21st century skills leads to the current paper to fill in the gap that previous researchers have left. Hence, this paper will present IEG curriculum developers' effort to make more specific glocal features of English and 21st century skills were incorporated into the EFL/ ESL curriculum and materials for grade 5 students. Through the study, teachers, curriculum developers and educators can find helpful ideas to design a teaching plan that equips students with essential language and life skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English as a lingua franca and the need for glocalizing ESL/ EFL curricula

It is obvious that the role and status of English in economy and culture are growing as English has become the dominant language in most of the fields, from international trade, education to publications and film

industry (McKay, 2002; Crystal, 2012). Besides, that a growing number of countries are making English, either as a second language or a foreign language, a compulsory subject in their national curriculum proves the privilege the countries give the language (Crystal, 2012).

Recognized as “the most taught foreign language” of the world (Bastardas-Boada, 2012), English has overrun the UK’s border to become the global language. The idea of learning the language to communicate with native speakers has proved obsolete because English ‘is used widely for intercultural communication at a global level today’, which takes place mainly among non-native speakers (Sharifian, 2009, p. 4). Politically, English is recognized as the working/ official language of basically all international institutions such as WTO or WHO and regional organizations/ associations across the globe like EU, ASEAN, USAN, where no or a few nations consider the language their mother tongue (Kirkpatrick, 2010; Beco, 2012; Heath-Brown, 2015). Globalization and regional integration with their impacts in transnational economy, culture and education make it inevitable for citizens from all corners of the world to know and use English, whether they are manual or knowledge workers (Gut, 2011). As an international working and communication medium, English should not be taught in view of British, American or Australian culture only; instead, its instruction should be paired with ways of life of people across the globe because ‘a language must be at the service of the people who use it’ (Chew, 2010, p. 67). From sociocultural perspective, this is to build and improve mutual understanding among global English users, which helps to avoid cross-cultural communication breakdown (Honna & Takeshita, 2014). Socio-linguistically, localizing English allows students to learn English through real life experience and ‘learn more about their own culture and how to present it to others in English’ (Park & Kim, 2014, p. 58), making the learning of English more engaging and relevant to their needs. Ethnologically, as an international language, English has its own life with world’s cultures that needs to be respected and reflected in the glocal context (Yazan, 2018).

In turn, glocalizing English education is the key to enhance transnational collaboration and to put the notion “globalization” at its true meaning instead of being misunderstood as “Westernization”, and the goal of English teaching should be to develop the competence in intercultural communication to prepare students for their future in the increasingly global society (Sharifian, 2009).

Materials developments in a glocal context

Three dimensions of glocal curricula

John, Caniglia, Bellina, Lang and Laubichler (2017) all state that unlike traditional curricula that put knowledge the top priority, the glocal curricula need to allow students to build practical, professional skills and mindsets and attitudes, reflected through three dimensions as follows (John et al., 2017, p. 38):

Knowing: Answering the questions of what knowledge to teach students, and how the knowledge can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Acting: Answering the questions of what practical and professional skills for students to develop, and how the skills can be incorporated into the curriculum.

Being: Answering the questions of what mindsets and attitudes for students to develop, and how the mindsets and attitudes can be incorporated into the curriculum.'

Figure 1

Glocal education (John et al., 2017, p. 32)



Such glocal curricula are much needed because they can help students shape appropriate awareness of culture and positive attributes (openness to change, adaptation and cooperation) and develop higher-order thinking abilities, which are indispensable in the ever increasingly interconnected and interdependent world (Saifer, 2018; Trilling &

Fadel, 2009).

Essential elements of ESL/ EFL materials in a glocal curriculum

Instructional materials, including textbooks and other materials, are considered key elements to implement a curriculum and facilitate teachers as well as learners to reach educational goals (Gut, 2011; Schleicher, 2015).

Regarding ESL/ EFL, materials need to be relevant and satisfying to the learners; the materials need to meet language needs, which are linguistics behaviors learners need to acquire ultimately (Brown, 1995). Sharing the same opinion, Nation & Macalister (2010) also listed situation factors such as administration, finance, pedagogy, culture, personnel to be considered in developing materials.

When it comes to content matter, “local” cultural features have to be incorporated to make learning more relevant and engaging for the learners (Park & Kim, 2014). Besides, intercultural and multicultural encounters must be given for learners to develop competence to use English for both local and international purposes (Honna & Takeshita, 2014; Park & Kim, 2014).

Concerning character building, instructional materials should also make room for students to build the skills that are needed for their long-term success. Those skills are commonly referred to as *21st century skills*: collaboration, content, critical thinking, creative innovation and confidence (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016). This is because given the rapid economic growth, what the students-the future workforce need to stay desirable in the labour market goes beyond basic skill sets but the ability to deal with high-level tasks in both local and global settings (Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Moreover, possessing such skills means they have higher thinking level and therefore become more prudent citizens (John et al., 2017). Positive effects of integrating those skills in K-12 teaching practice have been confirmed by researchers worldwide (Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009; Kerdpol, 2016), which promises the feasibility of delivering them on an intensive and extensive scale.

Glocal material practice around the world

World renowned publishers such as Cambridge, Macmillan or National Geographic Learning (NatGeo) have released many book series with an attempt to address the issues of glocal content and glocal skills, i.e. 21st century skills. Among them is Our World series for primary students by NatGeo. The series feature a wide range of learning content,

illustrations, many of which mainly target at Asian context and situations from other parts of the world. The way in which activities are organized partly reflect the mindset of growing children to collaborate, boost their creativity and critical thinking.

In Viet Nam, National Foreign Language Project (NFLP) 2020 has been expected to innovate the whole system of learning and teaching English in view of globalization and integration. NFLP 2020 set its start at compulsory English learning for students from grade 3, expecting young learners to finish primary level with A1.3 on CEFR-V, equivalent to A1 on CEFR global scale. (Chuong Trinh Giao Duc Pho Thong – Chuong Trinh Mon Tieng Anh, 2018; Thong tu so 32/ 2018/TT-BGDĐT, 2018). To localize the context of the textbooks for primary level, the cooperation between MoET Vietnam Education Publishing House and MacMillan Education for the development of primary English textbooks and Pearson Education for the development of lower and upper secondary has been established. Communicative approach, for which Vietnamese traditional teaching used to be criticized, has been embedded in the new textbooks series. However, other sociolinguistic factors like bilingualism, cross culture, did not seem to be reflected adequately (Dang & Seals, 2016).

PROCEDURES

Overview of IEG Curriculum

IEG educators aim to develop a global EFL/ ESL program that would improve students' language competence and equip them with the 21st century skills since their primary level.

While MoET's compulsory English program starts at grade 3, that delivered by IEG begins at grade 1. The outcome of each grade is defined clearly from Pre-A1 to A2 (or A2.2 on CEFR-V) for mainstream program with 5 weekly face-to-face sessions or A2+/B1- (or A2.3/B1.1 on CEFR-V) for advanced one (7-8 weekly face-to-face sessions) (Chuong Trinh Giao Duc Pho Thong – Chuong Trinh Mon Tieng Anh, 2018; Thong tu so 32/ 2018/TT-BGDĐT, 2018).

This paper focuses on only grade 5 of advanced program in Hanoi and its relevant practices. Spreading over a school year, the program employs English as its only teaching medium by qualified NS and NNS teachers of English. The outcome of the program is judged via TOEFL Primary Step 2, an independent standardized test by ETS.

The program has been designed with topics and language input from

Our World (Hereafter, OW) 5-Student’s book. Based on the OW book, teaching and learning materials, including those for four language skills, vocabulary and grammar, tests and quizzes were developed to meet the language proficiency outcomes as well as the demand of a global curriculum in terms of both knowledge and skills. An overview of the material development process is demonstrated in Figure 2:

Figure 2

IEG’s material development for grade 5 course

Step	Task	Output	
1	Analysis	Learners’s profile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grade 5 students (9-10 years old) Entry language competence: A2 Class size: 20 – 25 students/ class Instructors: Native English- speaking teacher and Vietnamese academic coordinator Classroom instruction time: 7 sessions per/ week; 40 minutes/ session
2	Design	Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linguistic outcome: A2 high/ B1 low Other objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students develop 21st century skills (collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) ✓ Students develop their awareness of living healthy and responsibly through different values learnt in each topic. ✓ Students develop their academic learning and researching skills through projects and learning contents.
		Approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CILL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) PBL (Project Based Learning)
		Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oral and written tests Formative and Summative assessment
		Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OW level 5 student’s book OW level 5 work book
3	Development	Teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Worksheets Test papers PowerPoint slides Flashcards Audio Online games and quizzes Classroom activities
4	Implementation	Training	Training teacher and academic coordinator about course objectives, teaching approach, the use of material and assessment instruments
		Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classroom instruction Learning support
5	Evaluation	Formative assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Class observation Teacher’s report Material revision and adaptation
		Summative assessment	Oral and written assessment (mid-term and final term test)

IEG materials vis à vis glocalization of English

Increasing local and multicultural exposures in learning content

IEG educators added local features of Vietnam, which was not much included in OW book, so that students might learn about their own culture with the medium of English. An example can be seen in Figure 3. The activity was designed for students to learn unit vocabulary, with a conversation between two friends about a trip to Vietnam being provided.

Figure 3

IEG's worksheet – Vocabulary – Unit 5 – Arts Lost and Found - Grade 5

Activity 2. Read. Fill in each blank with ONE word. You DON'T need to use all of the words.

traditions	language	local	generation
community	tourists	future	proud

Anna: Hi, Jenny. How are you? How was your trip to Vietnam?

Jenny: Hi, Anna. I'm alright. The trip was amazing. I visited a few places there and experienced (1) _____ culture.

Anna: Really? Where did you visit?

Jenny: I visited 3 places, Hanoi, Da Nang and a small town called Hoi An.

Anna: What did you do there?

Jenny: I tried some food, which was amazing. And I also visited some museums to learn about their history and (2) _____.

Anna: Which (3) _____ do the people there speak?

Jenny: They speak Vietnamese. But many people can speak English very well.

Anna: What do you like about the country?

Jenny: It has very unique culture, I think, and the local (4) _____ are very friendly.

Anna: That's awesome. I wish I could go there one day.

Jenny: You will love it. But I wouldn't recommend you to spend too much time in Hanoi and Da Nang. There are too many (5) _____ in the cities.

Multicultural encounters were also given in tasks for vocabulary, grammar, reading and listening skills. As can be seen from the worksheet below (Figure 4), knowledge about different countries such as the US, India, China and Korea were introduced through a vocabulary

activity to teach students about different countries across the globe.

Figure 4

IEG's worksheet – Quiz – Unit 5 – Arts Lost and Found - Grade 5

Part I. Read. Fill in each blank one word from the box. (10 pts)

culture	community	held on	share	pottery
traditional	proud	local	pass down	language

1.

Jimmy: Which (1) _____ do you belong to?

Jenny: I was born and raised in America.

Jimmy: What are (2) _____ costumes of men and women in your country?

Jenny: Cowboy hats and boots are American styles, but nowadays jeans and T-shirt are more popular.

Jimmy: Are you (3) _____ of your culture?

Jenny: Absolutely yes!

Jimmy: Are you interested in another land?

Jenny: Yes, I'm interested in Indian culture. I wish I can go there someday to learn about its (4) _____ culture. How about you? Where are you from?

Jimmy: I'm from England. It's well-known for our afternoon tea culture. The English have (5) _____ to this for more than 100 years.

2.

Mom: Welcome home sweetheart. How was your summer vacation in China and Korea?

Kate: It was amazing! I made friends with many Chinese and Korean people who taught me about local (6) _____ and brought me to beautiful places. We had great time together. While in China, I learnt how Chinese (7) _____ was made, and I made a pot myself.

Mom: Good job. What else did you do?

Kate: I also learnt about Korean pottery, and I got to know that Chinese pottery and Korean (8) _____ some characteristics.

Mom: That's interesting.

Kate: They both have traditional villages that make pottery. People there (9) _____ pottery making traditions from generations to generations.

Mom: Cool! It seems you have learnt a lot from the vacation.

Kate: Yes. I also joined (10) _____ classes to learn Chinese and Korean.

The embedment of local and multicultural knowledge into learning contents serves two purposes. First, the contents would acknowledge students about their own culture, through which they are taught to value it. Second, given the fact that multicultural working environment is becoming a norm, the ability to work effectively in a team regardless of

cultural differences is a must-have life skill for 21st century citizens (Trilling & Fadel, 2009), and exposures to diverse cultures in the learning contents aim to help students build this multicultural competence (Park & Kim, 2014).

Fostering communication and collaboration through team work

As communication and collaboration are essential 21st century skills, our curriculum and materials aim to maximize chances for students to work on them. To elaborate, pair work activities were designed for every speaking session for students to get used to working with their peers. Besides, by the end of each unit, they have a session named “Speaking Workshop”. This is a team project when students watch a video relevant to a unit topic, have guiding questions and work in groups to prepare a presentation. Their teacher, as a facilitator, guides students for effective group work and ensures that all students engage in the activity. This team learning project was selected because communication and collaboration skills ‘are best learnt socially’, ‘either physically, face-to-face, or virtually, through technology’ (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 56). Through the project, students are expected to experience three elements of collaboration including ‘communication’, ‘cooperation’ and ‘responsiveness’ (Hesse, Care, Buder, Sassenberg & Griffin, 2015, p. 38). This is because this type of group work requires beyond information exchange but the share of knowledge and opinions. Besides, students might learn to work effectively and respectfully with their peers, value peers’ contributions and make necessary compromises to achieve the common goal (Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

Boosting logical and critical thinking

In the specific context, IEG material designers focus on students’ reasoning skills, mainly induction reasoning introduced in two ways. The first method is to expose students to main idea and inference questions in reading and listening tasks (Figures 5, 6 and 7). Both types of questions involve making inference from available evidence, triggering students’ ‘analysis-level thinking’ (Brookhart, 2010, p. 43). It should also be noted that these types of questions are scattered in every listening and reading tasks in each unit because such thinking skills cannot be acquired overnight but need constant exposure.

Figure 5

IEG's worksheet - Reading Skills – Unit 5 – Arts Lost and Found - Grade 5

Modern Music with Ancient Roots

Did you know that modern music comes from traditional music? Every generation changes the music of the past. They make it their own. Reggae music began in Jamaica but it has its roots in African music. African came to Jamaica and brought their music. It mixed with music from Europe. Now, reggae impacts music all over the world. Dancehall and hip-hop music came from reggae!

Shaabi music is based on Egyptian folk music. It's played with the saxophone and electronic keyboard, which are modern instruments. But it is also played with a kanun, a traditional string instrument. The instruments are different, but the musical roots are the same!

Norteno is a modern type of Mexican music with folk roots. Old Norteno music was played with an accordion and a Mexican guitar. Then Norteno bands heard rock music. They added drums, saxophones, and electronic keyboards to their band! Modern Norteno has a stronger beat than the traditional music.

In Japan, many people listen to J-pop music. J-pop is the name for all modern Japanese pop music. It includes many modern music types and instruments like electronic guitars and keyboards. In the 1920s, when Japanese pop began, performers used harmonicas and string instruments. The music combined Western jazz and soul with a traditional style of Japanese singing. Today, every J-pop artist or band selects and combines the instruments and music rhythms they like the best with Japanese-language songs.

This is an inference question for the above reading text:

Figure 6

IEG's worksheet - Reading Skills – Unit 5 – Arts Lost and Found - Grade 5

2. What does the author mean by the sentence “reggae impacts music all over the world”?

- A. Reggae music is the most popular all over the world.
- B. We can see characteristics of reggae in many styles of music.
- C. Reggae music only appears in some parts of the world.

Figure 7

IEG's worksheet - Listening Skills – Unit 7 – Volcanoes - Grade 5

Part I. Listening. Circle A, B or C. (5 pts)

1. Where is the interview?

- A. A TV show B. A workshop C. A university

2. What is NOT true about Adam Bell?

- A. He studies volcano eruption.
B. His job is dangerous.
C. He doesn't enjoy his job.

3. What DOESN'T Adam do?

- A. collect data B. store samples C. analyze data

4. What does Adam like about his job?

- A. It has flexible working hours.
B. He works away from home.
C. He can work at home sometimes.

5. What is the interview about?

- A. Adam's study about volcanoes
B. Adam's job as a scientist
C. Adam's difficulties at work

The second way is to introduce reasoning questions into speaking and writing activities. The so-called reasoning questions bring some sorts of challenges to the students because their answers are not available somewhere like on the internet or in the textbook, and they require beyond a right/ wrong answer. Instead, students are pushed to think on their own, analyze and evaluate knowledge they have to find the answer. An example can be seen in the cue card for a Speaking Workshop about *Space exploration* (Figure 8).

Figure 8

IEG's cue card - Speaking Workshop – Unit 4 – Life Out There - Grade 5

<p style="text-align: center;">Student 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is your group name?• Who are members in your groups?• Introduce your opinion	<p style="text-align: center;">Students 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What is space exploration?• What do people do when exploring space?
<p style="text-align: center;">Student 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How much do you think space exploration costs?• What knowledge can we get from space exploration?	<p style="text-align: center;">Student 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should we explore space? Why? Why not?

Undoubtedly, questions “*What is space exploration?*” and “*What do people do when exploring space?*” are fact-based, helping students build basic understanding about space exploration; these questions are absolutely not reasoning questions. Questions “*How much do you think space exploration costs?*” and “*What knowledge can we get from space exploration?*” require students to analyze and evaluate evidence they have. The last question “*Should we explore space? Why? Why not?*” encourages students to reflect critically on what they know about space exploration and draw a conclusion based on the discussion of the previous questions.

Stimulating creativity

Our focal points on *creativity* are two core skills: imagining and generative thinking (Saifer, 2018) and three core attitudes: openness to experience, risk-taking and group trust (Piiro, 2011).

The activity below (Figure 9) was designed to foster students’ imaginative thinking. To facilitate such thinking at a very basic level, the students are asked to write about what they would do if they had a day on Mars. This is an imagination-provoking activity because it forces students to think about things unreal to their senses (Robinson, 2011).

Figure 9

IEG's worksheet - Writing Skills – Unit 4 – Life Out There - Grade 5

Imagine you have a day on Mars. Write a paragraph (at least 100 words) about what you would do on Mars.

Regarding generative thinking, students are encouraged to take part in brainstorming (Saifer, 2018), during the Speaking Workshop. This part and teamwork activities in other sessions also help students build openness to experience, risk-taking and group trust when they have opportunities to exchange their ideas with their peers about a particular topic and make their voice heard.

DISCUSSION

It can be seen that the IEG's curriculum and materials were built on three elements of a glocal curriculum including *knowing* (knowledge about local and international culture), *acting* (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) and *being* (openness to experience, risk-taking and group trust) (John et al., 2017).

Concerning glocal features of language, the priority is local and international culture, especially that of Viet Nam rather than other elements such as grammar, lexicon or dialect for two reasons. Firstly, the English speaking context in Vietnam is multilingual and multicultural; therefore, to build students as multicultural users of English is necessary (Doan, 2014). Secondly, the students have intensive exposures to the local English speaking community, which facilitates their acquisition of elements of local varieties such as dialect, grammar and lexicon; therefore, adding the elements into their learning content appears superfluous.

Regarding 21st century skills, the focal points of the curriculum and materials are collaboration skills, critical thinking skills and creativity. This does not mean the other skills are not equally important. As educators, we set a comprehensive education as the ultimate goal. However, given the social context, current ESL/EFL teaching situation at the school and students' cognitive competence, some skills should be prioritized and others compromised.

CONCLUSION

The paper has presented how features of glocal English and 21st century skills (communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity) were taught via our exercises and classroom activities. Hopefully, the paper can give teachers, material designers, curriculum developers and educators examples on how to teach glocal English and 21st century skills through ESL instruction. It is essential to acknowledge a limitation of the paper, which is the investigation of the effects of the curriculum and materials on students' improvement in the target 21st century skills, which leaves a space for further study to examine.

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K-12 | YOUNG LEARNERS

ORGANIZING ENGLISH CLUBS IN A REMOTE MOUNTAINOUS AREA: LESSONS LEARNED

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ABSTRACT

English clubs as an extracurricular activity can be considered a channel to help improve the English language proficiency of students of different levels. Taking place in a relaxing environment, the club encourages students to use English as naturally as possible while bringing about the excitement and enjoyment. However, the organization of such clubs in a remote mountainous area often faces various difficulties from planning, promoting to operating due to the insufficient financial support and human resources. This article shares the experience of Mini English Corner- MEC, an English club in a mountainous Northwestern area of Vietnam. Established in October, 2019, the club has both adequately addressed these problems in organizing English activities in a disadvantaged province and successfully supported 13 secondary students in the area to improve their English speaking skills. It features the participants of nine high school students as key members who directly involve in the club organization and also receive huge benefits from the club. Detailed plans, methods and activities are presented to help guide and instruct similar club activities in the future in a remote mountainous area.

Keywords: *English club, Mini English Corner - MEC, remote mountainous area*

INTRODUCTION

Since 1986, English has been playing an important part in the national education, expanding rapidly to likely be the only dominant foreign language in Vietnam (Hoang, 2010). Better chances of social mobility and future jobs are contributing to the popularity and expansion of English (Hoang, 2010; Nguyen, T.T.T., 2018; Nguyen, T.T.T., 2017;). The 10-year National Plan for *Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Formal Education System in the Period of 2008 – 2020* was presumed to thoroughly enhance the education of foreign languages, especially English. Since then, there have been huge changes in language

policies, facility development, teaching materials and methods. The new General Education Program 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Training is accelerating radical reforms in the whole education system, aiming to make English as the tool to create a high-quality Vietnamese labor resource. The program reassures the dominant role English – a global language and clarifies the goals of English language education for each school level, e.g. primary students to achieve A1 level; secondary students, A2 and high school students, B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages or CEFR. The new program mentions the use of Communicative Language Teaching as a key approach to increase communicative English competence for learners. Apart from formal classes, the program encourages “the diversity of English learning environment, e.g. English clubs, English singing contests” (MOET, 2018, p.47). It is partly true since learning language in class setting is not sufficient. As for Malu and Smedley (2016), the time in English class is normally dedicated to acquiring theoretical knowledge such as vocabulary or grammar and little is spent on polishing oral skills. This is taking place in many regions of Vietnam, resulting in a quality inconsistency throughout the country. Nguyen, T.H.M.’s (2017) study shows that many Vietnamese learners at different levels are unlikely to communicate in English at competent level. She further states that “The situation is even worse in remote areas [...]” (p.4)

As a result, English clubs can be a good place for learners to get involved in conversations and discussion. By doing this, they have an opportunity to make use of the strong knowledge of the written English to achieve fluency and confidence in the spoken English.

However, the organization of such clubs in a remote mountainous area is not an easy task as it can possibly be in a metropolitan area. Schools in a disadvantaged area do not normally have sufficient financial supports, good facilities as well as adequate human resources, e.g. qualified teachers and cannot achieve the goals of English education (Vi, 2019). English clubs in those places, as a consequence, often face difficulties from planning, promoting to operating their activities.

In this article, the author presents the model of MEC or Mini-English Corner, a club launched in October, 2019 in the X city (pseudonym) in a remote mountainous province in the North-west of Vietnam. The experience gained from running MEC can be served as the guideline for similar club activities in a disadvantaged area.

CONTEXT

X is a city in the North-west of Vietnam, about 30 kilometers from Laos' border. Although administratively categorized as a "city", X is listed as a *KV1* area whose students can receive some benefits in education, e.g. bonus point in the National High School Graduation Exam ("Doi tuong uu tien", 2020; "Tra cuu ma khu vuc", 2020). It is possibly because the education system in the area is still facing difficulties. The report 2327/BC-SGDĐT dated 13 October, 2017 by the local department of education and training also states that the province has socio-economic disadvantages and the people's intellectual level is uneven.

The city has nine primary schools, eight secondary schools and five high schools. There are five private English centers, operating separately from the education system to provide English courses for local learners. Extra-curricular activities have not been developed until recently, with some clubs in major high school, mostly sports, photography, dancing or drama clubs. However, there are no English clubs in action, partly because English, although essential, is still a difficult and an *alien* subject, in comparison with traditional subjects like math, physics, or chemistry. Data from the local department of education and training suggests that English is likely a challenging subject as the average score of students from five schools in X city is mostly under five.

Table 1

Average English score in the National High School Graduation Exam in 2018-2019 in X city

School	2018	2019
Gifted High School	4.91	5.75
Luong The Vinh High School	N/A(No grade 12 students)	4.78
Boarding School for Ethnic Minority Students	3.56	4.27
Municipal High School	3.59	3.65
Phan Dinh Giot High School	2.96	3.25

Note. Data provided by local department of education and training

Difficulties of running club in a remote mountainous area

The rapid blooming of English education in Vietnam does not always correlate with the results achieved. The immediate situation of English language training in Vietnam is being faced with various problems in textbook writing, teachers' training or classroom constraints (Hoang, 2010). This is even more challenging to teach English in a remote mountainous area.

According to Document No 1182 /SGDĐT- GDTrH, dated August 23, 2011 by local department of education and training, activities to enhance the use of English and build English-speaking environments in the local should be promoted at all schools, e.g. English corner, notice boards in English or English clubs. However, being administratively categorized as a city does not mean X city is in a favorable condition to organize activities such as English clubs because of some following reasons.

- (1) Lack of model examples and concerns of legal status: There have been no English clubs in the local, especially those for secondary and high school students, so there are no model examples or instructions available for organizers to consult. There are also concerns on the legal status of the club, e.g. whether it operates under any organization or sponsored by any government departments. The more involvement there is in the club establishment, the more complicated the operation is, as it may take more time to get the permission from related bodies, and organizers will not be able to actively manage the club.
- (2) Learners' background: Learners of foreign languages often suffer from shyness and stress (Mohammadian, 2013), especially are confronted with difficulties in speaking skill (Hosni, 2014). In addition, learners need motivation to promote their learning process, whether it is extrinsic or intrinsic (Dörnyei, 2000; Richard & Deci, 2000; Ur, 2012). According to local department of education and training's report 2327/BC-SGDĐT dated 13 October, 2017, it is hard to undertake English listening and speaking assessment in the province due to the lack of teachers and facilities. It means that students need focus on mastering reading, writing or English grammar. As a result, despite their grammatical competence, students (a) might not be motivated to practice speaking English and (b) might not have opportunities to practice English speaking, which can possibly lead to their shyness or stress when being asked to

speaking English. How the club, an extra-curriculum voluntary activity, should do to get them involve in speaking tasks, remains a question.

- (3) Human resources: English clubs need members or organizers in a Leadership Team whose jobs are to organize activities for the club, and participants who will benefit from the project. Leadership team members have to voluntarily work in the project. They should be able to speak English confidently to instruct the activities and to establish an English-speaking environment to encourage participants to communicate in English. In addition, there are also other tasks for members, like, Facebook fanpage administration, handout design or video and photo taking. The club also requires an academic advisor to supervise and guide the whole team in its operation. As a result, it is challenging to find a strong team meeting all the requirements of the club in a remote area. On the other hand, participants must have a considerable level of English, love speaking English and are willing to join the club as well as committed to attending all the meetings. The number of participants is also limited to ensure the quality of the club. It puts pressure on the application process such as the criteria for participants in terms of age or level of English, or how to find good and enthusiastic participants.
- (4) Financial support: The club needs to pay some expenses for organizing activities, e.g. printing handout or buying prizes. A sponsor, like a company can help ease the burdens, but it is likely that the club must work under the supervision of that sponsor, and lose its self-control.
- (5) Other difficulties: Students in X city, like their counterparts in Vietnam, often run heavy schedules. The club's activities can be affected by personal timetables, semester examination or even unfavorable weather conditions. In addition, according to local department of education and training's Report No 546/BC-SGDĐT, dated March 31st, 2020, most foreigner teachers are working only for private English centers while there is only one American volunteer is allowed to teach in a short time every year in the gifted school of X. Local students, as a consequence, do not have many chances to practice English with native English speakers and teachers.

MINI ENGLISH CORNER MODEL

Mini English Corner (MEC) was launched in 2019 and based on the instructions provided by Malu (2018) with some special modifications to be suitable with the local conditions and available resources.

Leadership team

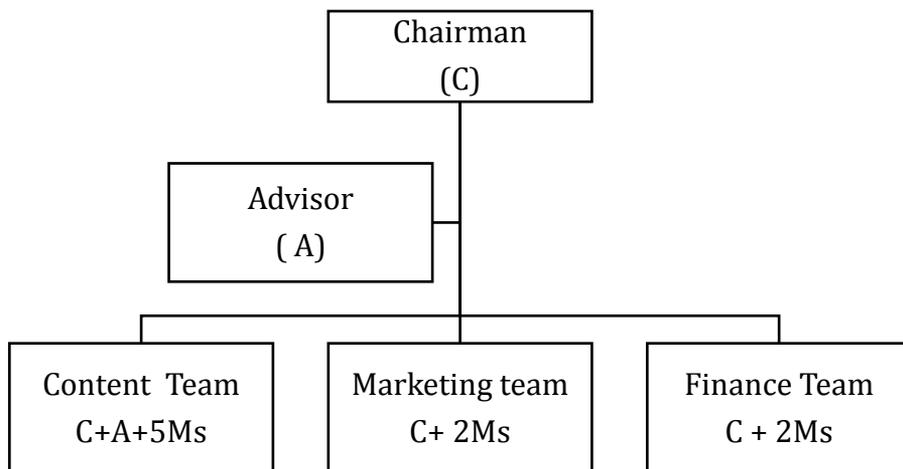
It was determined that MEC would work separately under no organizations or departments. It gave MEC a better chance to act flexibly while satisfying the legal requirement and safety reasons. MEC, founded and operated by high school students, has the organization boards of nine members with one advisor. The reason for this large number is to ensure there are always enough members to run the club in one session in case some are busy studying. As the leadership team is the decisive factor for the success of an English club (Malu 2018), member selection of MEC was carefully calculated. Due to the shortage of human resource, it was decided that the advisor and the chairman would play the key role. They could help train and establish a strong leadership team to satisfy the demand of the club.

The chairman is a grade-11 student, well-experienced in various projects in and out her school. The advisor is a lecturer of English in a local college with ten years of experience. The chairman and the advisor had met and discussed carefully before the launch of the club to agree on the club's activities. Other team members are those from English class in a high school (grade 10 and grade 11) who demonstrate great English competence and have some experiences in previous projects, e.g. in budgeting, marketing and video design. Enthusiastic members were welcome and trained. The chairman even has her acquaintances teach new members some necessary skills for MEC.

The team was divided into three sub-teams. The chairman (C) was member of all the sub-teams. Some members (M) were members of two sub-teams. As a result, MEC members are very active and multi-tasked. Especially, all members can be MC for each session, thanks to the huge efforts of the whole team. One member, a student in grade 10 is responsible for designing posters, leaflets and other products like badges. It is essential that English clubs should have one member who can design to support each activity.

Figure 1

MEC leadership organization



Timeline, marketing and promotion

The club was planned in August, 2019, officially launched in October, 2019 and completed in January 2020. The team met several times before its launch to finalize the topics, set the timetable for each session carefully to avoid busy time, e.g. examinations and agree on other issues. A general marketing plan was discussed in details to attract the attention of local students. Two detailed plans of marketing, promotion and each session's activities (timeline) had to be completed. After each session, the team ran a brief meeting to reflect on the activities, gain experiences and prepare for upcoming sessions.

A Facebook fanpage was created at <https://www.facebook.com/minienglishcorner/>. Videos and news were uploaded weekly before the official launch, and after each session. The page went viral and in a short time, the project was known to many students.

Financial support

Initially, the cost had been estimated at maximum VND 50,000 for each session, totaling around VND 400,000 and would be donated by the advisor. Many activities were done by members at no cost, so it helped partly reduce the expense. The place was a small house owned by the chairman's parents. They were willing to let MEC organize the club free-of-charge.

The cost included handout printing (13 copies for each session), gifts (affordable items like colorful pens, notebooks or school things), markers and A0 papers (cheap and can be reusable), badges and certificates. Fortunately, parents paid huge attention to MEC and the team received 2.5 million from three parents of the participants. Other parents were willing to donate more but the team refused as the money was much higher than expected. Apparently, running an English club is still doable with a limited budget thanks to careful calculation. Additionally, parents can be very enthusiastic in contributing their money for the sake of their children if the club can prove its effectiveness.

Figure 2

Badges of MEC for participants and guest



Participants

After careful consideration, the leadership team decided that MEC is aimed at secondary school students, preferably students in grade 7, 8 and 9. They are supposed to acquire considerable English communicative competence, have better self-discipline and be more willing and committed to join the club. Grade 6 students can be considered if they can provide their latest academic results to prove their potential competence.

A Microsoft online form was put on the Facebook fanpage. There were questions to help choose a suitable candidate, e.g. English competence and the commitment to the club. The club received over 60 applicants and another 20 applied directly via phone as they missed the deadline.

Although only 13 official members were selected (grade 6, two; grade 7, five, grade 8, five; and grade 9, one), the extensive and careful selection round proved to be effective as all the meetings were well-attended by all participants.

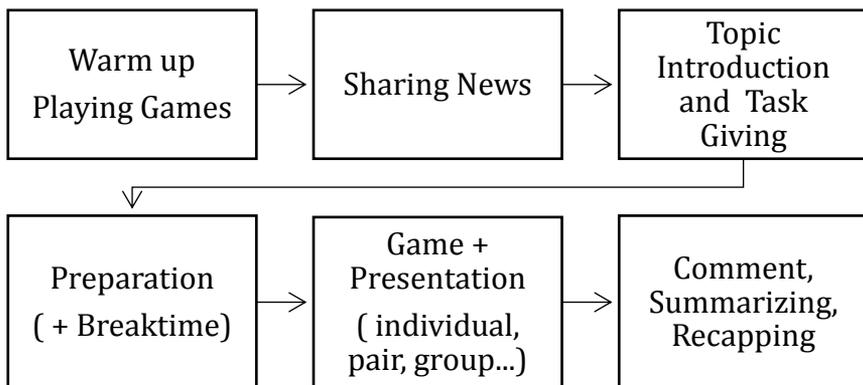
A day before each session, an SMS was sent to the parents of each participant to remind them of the time, place and necessary preparation (if any) for the upcoming meeting.

Activities

Due to constraints in time and busy schedules, the leadership team decided to organize only eight sessions of one and a half hour from 8 a.m. to 9.30 a.m. on Sunday. This was unavoidable because, despite their strong commitment, participants informed that they had exams and extra-classes, as well as personal plans, so they preferred an on-off schedule. Each session had a special topic, and there was one “Big Activity” every two sessions in which participants could win the special badges. Winning four special badges, the participants could see the hidden message of MEC “Be Confident to Shine”. There were some “core activities” and some “flexible activities” in every meeting.

Figure 3

MEC instructional sequence for each session



Speaking English was a must, but Vietnamese was still used occasionally to explain difficult terms or giving clear instruction. Core activities are those that require individual participants to use English to communicate and present their ideas, e.g. share interesting news happening to them during the week. Flexible activities are more relaxing as participants can present in groups, play games using English or perform in a play.

Figure 4

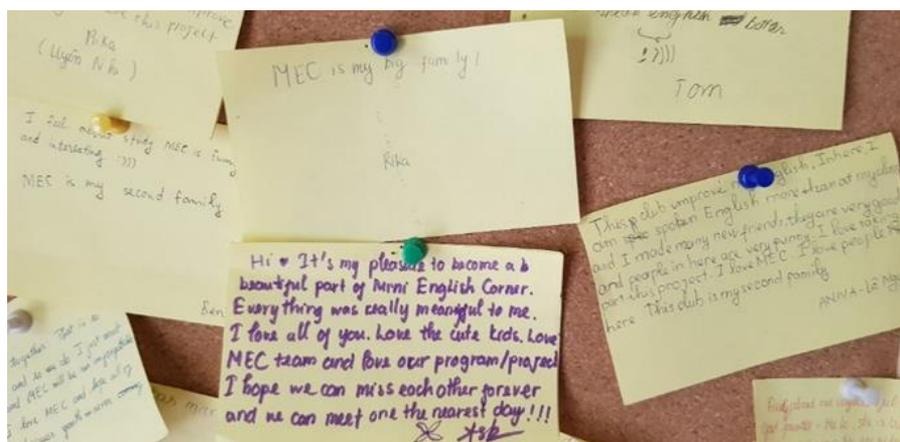
Participants performed Red Riding Pig



The game was modified according to the aim of the session to entertain and motivate the participants. The handout provided some vocabulary items related to the topic, and the instruction for the speaking activities in simple English to assure the participants properly understand their duties. Excellent participants were rewarded small gifts to encourage them to make more progress. On the final session, there was a small party to celebrate the success of the club. Participants wrote notes to express their thoughts on MEC, and all demonstrates their wish that MEC could launch the second season, which made the team extremely motivated and inspired to plan future projects for MEC.

Figure 5

Messages from MEC's participants



Moreover, by planning and organizing MEC activities, leadership members also developed their skills, not only English but also other non-language skills like public speaking, writing and gained more confidence.

TIPS TO ORGANIZE ENGLISH CLUBS IN A REMOTE MOUNTAINOUS AREAS

Less is more.

At first, the leadership team was too ambitious to run MEC for a long time to achieve considerable improvement in students' speaking. However, speaking as a productive skill is more energy-demanding than receptive skills like reading or listening (Golcova & Hubackova 2014) and a difficult task (Zhang, 2009; Ur, 2012) while an English club needs to be fun while improving participants' speaking performance (Malu, 2018). The team decided to become less strict to force its participants to practice English, and reduce the number of sessions. Provided that participants and members could overcome their shyness and embarrassment to speak English, it was a remarkable achievement to be encouraged and rewarded. It turned out to be more effective as everyone was relaxed and willing to attend all the sessions without being overwhelmed or getting fed up with speaking English all the time. In addition, students in remote areas seem to be reserved, shy and quiet, so making them getting out of their shell to speak, even a little must be superior to practicing and correcting their speaking.

Game is a must.

Game is crucial to the club activities. The leadership team made enormous efforts in searching different games to be used in each session. Normally, two games were played to raise the spirit and create humorous moments for everyone. One game at the beginning was to warm up the atmosphere while the other was organized before the official presentation to change the mood, release the stress and encourage presenters. They also made everyone become more closed and fully cooperated.

Small talks are a contributory factor to speaking improvement.

Sometimes, speaking and presentation about the assigned topic was boring and stressful. Right in session 1, some members revealed the reasons why they felt, sometimes, reluctant to practice speaking English expressed their boredom and tiredness when being forced to stand up and make public speaking. They considered it "an oral test" in class,

which was associated with anxiety and worry. As a result, the leadership team initiated small talks before each meeting and at break time. Leadership members sat with participants and communicated with them about different topics in a more relaxing way. This partly helped participants practice their speaking without realizing that.

A small-scale club run by students is more suitable in a remote area.

Although being administratively categorized as “city”, X is a remote mountainous area with unique features. As a result, MEC, independently run by local students rather than teachers, aims at supporting a small number of participants who are carefully selected from different schools in the area. MEC is more suitable in this case to simplify the establishment process, help easily manage the participants, lower the cost and ensure the quality.

CONCLUSION

Organizing English clubs is beneficial in supporting the use of English language in real situation (Malu & Smedley 2016). In a remote mountainous area, however, it is not always easy on the account that there are financial shortage or limited human resources. MEC, the very first model of this type in a disadvantaged area, could possibly perform well within the limited condition of the area. The club, established by a leadership team of nine high school students and one advisor, assisted thirteen secondary students in the local to improve their English speaking skills. The leadership team detailed every session of the club, from timeline, marketing to promotion. The cost was calculated carefully to release financial burden. The activities were varied with some special events to motivate the participants. This model, hopefully can provide some insight into organizing English club in similar areas.

THE AUTHOR

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IMAGE USE EFFECTS ON YOUNG LEARNER VOCABULARY ACQUISITION

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ABSTRACT

Images have long been recognized as an important tool in vocabulary learning, with the majority of research supporting the view that labels for concrete (i.e., easily pictured) concepts and ideas are more readily learned than more abstract ones. This is usually theorized to be an effect of our tendency to think in images, thereby creating a correlation between concreteness of a concept and its memorability. If imageability affects memory, however, would the use of images in L2 instruction facilitate memory of new L2 vocabulary? In this study, Japanese 4th through 6th graders were taught a list of English vocabulary words over a 20-minute period, and then tested for retention/recognition via a computer test the next day. Whereas some students were taught the vocabulary format using pictures to establish meaning, others were taught by providing L1 equivalents to new L2 vocabulary. The results suggest that students using images to teach vocabulary (i.e., pictures) resulted in students processing new vocabulary more efficiently than those who were taught via L1 translation among younger students, but this effect disappeared by the 6th grade. This suggests image use to be an effective vocabulary instruction strategy among young, low-level learners.

Keywords: *vocabulary instruction, young learners, imageability, memory*

INTRODUCTION

It is a relatively uncontroversial statement to note that vocabulary learning is a critical component of L2 acquisition (e.g., Ko, 2012; Nation, 2001). The National Reading Panel lists vocabulary as one of the five main components that undergird literacy acquisition (NICHHD, 2000).

Biemiller (2005) asserts that inadequate vocabulary or word identification skill will necessarily lead to failure on the part of individual readers. Research on how learners introduce new vocabulary items to their lexicon is one of the keys to understanding how human language is processed and used (e.g., Yamamoto, 2013; Crossley et al., 2009). Research on vocabulary learning has long acknowledged a host of different categorizations of individual word classes and instructional procedures that can directly impact the relative difficulty of instruction, learning, and acquisition. Vocabulary instruction should be conducted in light of these various distinctions in type (e.g., Hiebert & Kamil, 2005). Among them are aspects of relative imageability, and the use of images in classroom vocabulary study is a nuanced issue which merits in-depth investigation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For practical reasons, teachers should be aware of a broad host of issues in vocabulary study, including distinctions such as word classes and oral vs. written vocabulary. Assessments of student vocabulary acquisition should always take into account the differences between student passive vocabulary (i.e., words the student recognizes) and active vocabulary (i.e., words the student uses). More subtle distinctions nevertheless have been shown to impact acquisition at the mental processing level – differences which could well have pedagogical implications. Studies have shown, for instance, that content words are processed quite differently from function words – to the point of showing quite divergent brain activation patterns (Diaz & McCarthy, 2009). Hulstijn (2001; 1992) distinguishes between vocabulary that is learned explicitly and implicitly. Intentionality in vocabulary study unsurprisingly is linked to higher rates of retention and functionality (e.g., Elgort, 2010).

The role of imageability in vocabulary learning

Among these more subtle variations in vocabulary classifications is the idea of concreteness. Generally, concrete vocabulary is distinguished from abstract vocabulary according to its greater imageability, and it is widely accepted that, generally, more concrete images are more easily remembered (and thus vocabulary more easily acquired) than more abstract ideas. Still, there have been some intriguing findings regarding the nature of how concrete and abstract ideas are learnt. In a study on L2 learners of Chinese, Zhao and Macaro (2014) studied how presentation in L1 or L2 conditions would impact abstract and concrete vocabulary acquisition, and found that presenting vocabulary in

students' L1 produced significantly higher test score gains versus L2-only presentation. Taking this study and extending it (while simultaneously applying it to a new population by testing Arab EFL learners), El-Dakhs, ElHajj, & Al-Haqbani (2019) found that L1 instruction facilitated the learning of concrete vocabulary more so than abstract vocabulary, but only in the immediate test condition (i.e., the distinction disappeared in the delayed test condition). Carpenter and Olson (2011) intriguingly investigated both the effect of images on vocabulary instruction *and* test subjects perceptions regarding the degree to which images would help them to remember the vocabulary. They found that subjects exhibited unfounded overconfidence in their ability to retrieve Swahili (L2) vocabulary from pictures vs. translations. While the results suggested that pictures can indeed facilitate L2 vocabulary learning, overconfidence in the efficacy of pictures for vocabulary-learning can actually impair this ability. In order to realize the facilitation effects, such overconfidence had to be eliminated through practice.

Pedagogical effects on teaching image-able vocabulary

Using pictures in vocabulary study is a sufficiently common practice as to not really come under question or to attract attention on its own. Most studies on the use of pictures in L2 instruction focus on issues such as comparing the effectiveness of using pictures (along with L2 instruction) vs. giving learners L1 equivalents for new L2 vocabulary directly. For example, Emirmustafaoğlu and Gökmen (2015) showed that Turkish junior high students taught with pictures outperformed those taught via L1 translation, and suggest that this is because the pictures themselves act as recall cues. Another well-represented strain of research that has produced copious information on the role of pictures concerns conceptual access. The Revised Hierarchical Model (Kroll & Stewart, 1994; hereafter RHM) was devised to explain prior findings which suggested that low-level L2 learners could only connect L2 vocabulary to pre-existing mental concepts by first translating the L2 term to L1; however, at the same time prior research had also suggested that more advanced learners were able to directly access mental concepts via L2 vocabulary. RHM posited that links between L2 and mental concepts are not initially available, but are formed gradually over time, with much practice, thus accounting for the proficiency variable. Comesaña, Perea, Piñeiro, and Fraga (2009), testing Spanish-L1 elementary school students for conceptual access in L2 vocabulary learning found a semantic interference effect (thereby suggesting that the children were indeed accessing mental concepts directly), and this

effect was strengthened when learners had learned the L2 vocabulary via pictures instead of translation to the L1. The same testing procedure was repeated with native Portuguese-speaking elementary school students with similar results (Comesaña, Soares, Sánchez-Casas, & Lima, 2012). Williams and Naganuma (2018) testing Japanese elementary school 4th-6th graders for L2 conceptual access in a reaction time study similarly found students were faster across the board at matching (aurally received) L2 vocabulary to pictures than to (written) L1 word equivalents, and that teaching the vocabulary using picture input, rather than translating to the students' L1, significantly intensified this effect.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study investigates the practical effects of using images in L2 vocabulary study, focusing on the potential efficacy of doing so. While it is usually assumed that much of our knowledge is stored and even processed in a conceptual (and, in the case of concrete actions/events, visually) manner rather than a verbal manner – refer to Pinker's (1994) idea of “mentalese” – it is less certain whether pictures would enjoy any direct advantage toward aiding vocabulary recall versus direct L1 translation. To put it simply, by using pictures/images in teaching L2 vocabulary, we are certainly providing a sort of recall cue (to use the terminology of Emirmustafaoglu & Gokmen, 2015), but that recall cue may only truly be exceptionally useful if the test employs the same image, which would simply imply that short-term memory is being primed. If, however, image-use in vocabulary instruction correlates with faster word identification and lower overall error rates than found with those instructed via L1 translation, this would suggest something else. Considering that instruction via both pictures and L1 translation would potentially prompt students to access their default L1 concept for that word, any significant differences in performance would suggest differences in neural pathway construction. As such, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1 Which teaching procedure (using images vs. using L1 translation) produces higher accuracy among L2 learners?*
- 2 Which teaching procedure (using images vs. using L1 translation) produces faster response time among L2 learners?*

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Four hundred and seventy-five elementary school students, grades 4-6, were recruited from elementary schools located in northern Japan for participation in this study. The breakdown for individual grades was 132 4th graders, 131 5th graders, and 212 6th graders. All participants spoke Japanese as their L1. In Japan, 5th and 6th graders receive one 45-minute English class each week, but 4th graders, in principle, have yet to begin formal study of English. All students had normal or corrected-to-normal vision, and no students with physical disabilities were included in the results.

Materials

A total of 42 vocabulary items were chosen in conjunction with a panel of home room teachers of some of the learners tested. As the Japanese language has a copious amount of terms borrowed from English, and additionally, the students would likely be exposed to certain English vocabulary via popular entertainment, video games, etc., the researchers wanted to avoid such easy-to-recognize vocabulary in the test. Thus, a total of 42 vocabulary items were selected with the help and consultation of a panel of home room teachers in one of the first schools visited for the project. The main goal in vocabulary selection was to choose words that would be familiar items/concepts to the students, but which they were unlikely to be familiar with the English equivalent of the Japanese word. Once the vocabulary was selected, two sets of laminated cards – one containing picture representations (different images than those used for instruction, however) of the individual vocabulary words, and the other having the Japanese translation (written in *kana*) were created. Additionally, a 19-item computer test script was written using DMDX software (Forster & Forster, 2003).

Procedures

For each class tested, the research would be conducted in a two-day cycle. On the first day, the class would be divided (randomly) into two groups, which would be separated into two classrooms, each with a different teacher (usually graduate or undergraduate students recruited for the research project), and they would proceed to have a 45-minute English lesson. The first 20 minutes of the lesson would be spent learning and reviewing the 42 vocabulary words. In one group, the instructor would teach the vocabulary using the picture cards, but was not permitted to use Japanese (or to directly acknowledge students if

they said anything pertaining to the vocabulary in L1). In the other group, the instructor used the Japanese translation cards to teach the vocabulary, and was free to use the L1 equivalents to explain the English vocabulary. The remaining 25 minutes of the lesson was composed of games and speaking exercises not directly related to the study.

On the following day, the students would again have a 45-minute special English lesson, but this time, they would all be grouped together. During the class period, students were brought out, 6 at a time, to a separate room to take the computer-mediated vocabulary test. The test would play an audio recording of individual English vocabulary words (taken from the vocabulary studied the day before), which the participants would listen to using ear phones. Immediately upon presenting the audio file, the test-takers would be shown either two side-by-side pictures or two side-by-side Japanese words (written in *kana*), and were asked to push one of two designated buttons (the right and left SHIFT keys) to designate which side of the screen contained the image/word that best corresponded to the English vocabulary word that they had just heard. Reaction times and error rates were recorded for analysis of relative accuracy and efficiency in processing.

RESULTS

Mean reaction times can be seen in Table 1. While all groups were significantly faster responding to pictures than to text, regardless of how they were instructed, still, some differences emerged in the effect of instructional styles according to grade level. T-tests show that students in the 4th grade who were taught via pictures were significantly faster than those taught via L1 translation ($p < 0.005$), as were those in the 5th grade ($p < 0.017$); however, the difference in instructional styles became negligible by 6th grade ($p < 0.47$).

Table 1

Reaction Times According to Instructional Style

Grade	Mean RT taught with Pics	Mean RT taught via L1 translation
4 th Grade	1463*	1540
5 th Grade	1385	1462
6 th Grade	1355	1362

Error rates also showed some variation both by instructional styles and by age levels. The mean error rates can be seen in Table 2. The fourth grade participants taught via pictures demonstrated significantly lower error rates, overall ($p < 0.046$), and sub-analysis revealed that this effect was almost entirely driven by increased accuracy in matching L2 words to L1 translations ($p < 0.028$); i.e., the students taught with pictures were significantly more accurate when identifying translations than those taught via translations, whereas the accuracy of matching L2 words to pictures was much more even between groups. The 5th graders did not show significant differences across the board ($p < 0.44$); however, there was a curious effect of instruction when sub-analyzing the different response types. Students taught via pictures were significantly more accurate when matching L2 to pictures ($p < 0.006$), whereas those taught via L1 translation were significantly more accurate in matching L2 words to L1 equivalents. The 6th grade students showed no statistically significant differences between relative accuracy of response between the two instructional groups ($p < 0.28$).

Table 2

Error Rates According to Instructional Style

Grade	Error %: taught with Pics		Error %: taught via L1 translation	
	Matching Pics	Matching L1	Matching Pics	Matching L1
4 th Grade	17.26%	30.9%	18.1%	34.53%
5 th Grade	13.23%	28.26%	17.83%	24.99%
6 th Grade	14.78%	25.92%	15.69%	23.26%

DISCUSSION

The results seem to indicate a clear advantage for using pictures/images for vocabulary instruction among younger learners. While all students were generally faster at matching L2 vocabulary to pictures than they were to matching to L1 translation equivalents (which very well may simply reflect lag time for reading among young learners), the 4th and 5th grade students demonstrated clear differences between the experimental groups (i.e., the group taught via pictures vs. the group taught via L1 translation). In both grades, students taught with pictures

appeared to evince a clear trend of more efficient overall learning, as evidenced by faster reaction times. Additionally, both 4th and 5th graders revealed sizeable effects of instructional style on their recall ability, as evidenced by error rates. The fact that those 4th graders taught via pictures show higher accuracy in matching L2 vocabulary to L1 translations may be indicative that the picture instructional condition triggered more efficient overall acquisition of the L2 vocabulary. In a sense, the 4th graders used the pictures as a mental “hook” for recognition, and that this mnemonic use of the image was more effective than L1 translation alone. By the 5th grade, however, the students appeared to be able to use both instructional styles effectively, as indicated by the lower error rates in picture recognition by the group taught with pictures, and the lower error rates in L1 translation by the group taught via L1 translation. This increased versatility in learning styles may be driven by the fact that 5th graders have begun weekly English lessons, allowing them the opportunity to develop conscious learning strategies which they may have been employing during the vocabulary-learning session. It must be noted that while 6th graders showed no significant difference for instructional strategies, they nevertheless were, on average, the fastest and most accurate overall of all subjects tested. This is likely explicable as an effect of development, but like the 5th graders, the increase in speed and accuracy is likely to have been in part due to being in the 2nd year of their formal English studies, and therefore having had significantly more time to develop their learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study should not be taken as an across-the-board endorsement of using images as a fixed method of vocabulary instruction. Instead, they make plain the considerable degree of variability in learning styles across ages and language experience, and how instructional methods may interact with these differences. The study demonstrates a general trend that use of images in vocabulary instruction was more effective with younger and/or lower proficiency learners, and it suggests that the explicit use of images in vocabulary study would be more effective among young beginner learners than oral/written vocabulary translation. This finding could help to shape both the methodology and the content of vocabulary instruction for young learners (i.e., if images are key to vocabulary retention and processing, it would behoove curriculum planners to emphasize vocabulary with high levels of imageability at these levels of instruction). Further study – especially across different ages and

national groups – would be invaluable towards verifying this, however. The disappearance of both reaction time and accuracy facilitation among 6th graders does intriguingly suggest either an age-dependent critical period or an L2-proficiency/experience factor which is impacting learning styles. Extending such research to both older and younger learners, as well as looking at populations where beginning L2 instruction starts at earlier ages would both be helpful in clearly identifying which factor is driving the lack of significant differences in instructional categories that we see her in 6th graders.

Vocabulary study will always be a critical part of L2 study, and it is important to develop a nuanced and complete understanding of the many factors that will facilitate learners in their attempts to acquire and recall new words. To the extent that this can be made more effective by the introduction of visual aids in vocabulary study, it is incumbent upon us as instructors to use every tool we can to enable students to learn easily and effectively.

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SPEAKING WORKSHOP: KIDS' JOURNEY TO BECOME JUNIOR PUBLIC SPEAKERS

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ABSTRACT

The global context of English education to young learners has seen an increasing emphasis on communicative competence, which is reflected in MOET's set of English learning outcomes applied on primary level and the curricula of most schools. Specifically, speaking performance, however, has commonly been interpreted as "*the ability to converse in simple social circumstances*". Innovative Education Group (IEG) has made a determined attempt to develop students' communicative competence beyond that. In the IEG's EFL primary curriculum, beyond fun games and simple conversations, speaking instruction comprises of creativity, collaboration, critical thinking in form of public speaking. One of the vehicles to reach such a seemingly ambitious goal is *Speaking Workshop*, a monthly project-based learning activity, which includes in-class group presentations besides individual home recorded performance. The current paper, employing such research tools as in-depth interviews with teachers, followed by a qualitative analysis students' performance, is an attempt to investigate (1) teachers' perception of the activity and (2) the effect of the activity on students' oral performance. Positive results have been recognized in both areas after 2 years implementing *Speaking Workshop*. This implies a practical foundation to realize a curriculum to promote learners' development of 21st century skills besides traditional language skills.

Keywords: *speaking performance, 21st century skills, EFL young learners,*

INTRODUCTION

Oral communication competence is considered the goal of English learning, especially for young learners. Teaching and assessing speaking are considered initial elements in the system of teaching English. The increasing trend of globalization gets educators exposed to integrating 21st century skills into teaching and learning. Project-based learning (PBL) is one of the methods recommended to be used to achieve such purposes. In Vietnam, PBL has been known for a long time but it has been rather new in practice; instead, traditional approaches are still dominant in many schools, especially for teaching young learners due to some practical constraints.

Innovative Education Group (IEG) is a premier provider of educational products and services with head office based in Hanoi and a Ho Chi Minh City branch. IEG has developed curriculum, and instructing, testing materials aligned with international standard and cooperation with leading publishers like National Geographic or Pearson. The curriculum and materials are provided to high quality primary schools in both cities, such as Doan Thi Diem, Marie Curie, Archimedes, Vinschool to name but a few.

In an attempt to implement the new model of teaching and learning English, IEG has integrated PBL activities namely *Speaking Workshop* (SW), the in-class presentations and its subordinate *Speak like a Kid* (SLAK), the home presentations into the curriculum. These activities are expected to improve students' speaking skills while facilitate them to develop essential 21st century skills. This research focuses on the practices of SW, in-class and home presentations, in teaching primary students. The research attempts to find out if such activities could improve learners' speaking skills and equip them with 21st century skills or not; what speaking aspects and hands-on skills are promoted; and how SW assists in such improvements. The objective of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of this PBL practice in teaching speaking skills and other 21st century skills, and if such PBL practices should be widespread.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An overview of teaching speaking

Of all four language skills, speaking is often considered to be the most important aspect of learning a language. Students used to be taught to only repeat model speech; however, research has revealed that repetition alone is insufficient for the acquisition of any language. It also suggested that people learn languages best by means of interaction, which led to the introduction of new approaches to teaching English like Communicative Language Teaching, and Project-based Learning (Ho, 2003).

Despite the growing interest in developing children's communicative competence, the actual practices do not reflect this trend. Speaking is either neglected or utilized for other pedagogic purposes like modelling language or highlighting accuracy rather than developing learners' communicative competence (Sarac, 2007). Research shows that primary teachers still stick to activities requiring repetition and recalling single words and phrases such as listen-and-repeat and chant-and-act (Muñoz, 2007; Szpotowicz, 2012). In Vietnam, the practices of teaching speaking in most primary schools are neglected or confined to simplistic tasks to cater for vocabulary and grammar development (Pham, 2000). Inadequate facilities, teachers' limited competence and students' lack of autonomy hinder the changes in teaching and learning English in general and speaking skills to be specific.

Assessing speaking

CAF – three dimensions to assess speaking performance

The assessment of speaking performance has long been linked to the notions of accuracy and fluency since the 1980s (Kuiken & Vedder, 2012). Complexity was later introduced as the third element by Skehan in 1996, marking the widespread utilization of these three measures: complexity, accuracy and fluency (or CAF) to analyse language gains and development (Housen et al, 2012).

Complexity refers to elements making up a language system, including linguistic complexity, propositional complexity and discourse-interactive complexity (Bulte & Housen, 2012). Linguistic complexity consists of syntactic, morphological, lexical and phonological complexity. Propositional complexity is the number of information or idea units a speaker uses in a language task to convey a given message while discourse-interactive complexity is the number and type of turn

changes that learners initiate and the interactional moves and pattern they engage in. This study will focus mainly on two components of linguistic complexity: syntactic and lexical complexity. Syntactic complexity consists of five subdomains: complexity via subordination, complexity via coordination, overall complexity, complexity via phrasal elaboration and the sophistication and acquisition timing of linguistic form (Norris & Ortega, 2009). Complexity via subordination and coordination is analysed by dividing the total number of subordinate or coordinate clauses by the total number of units. Overall complexity relates to the number of elements composing a multi-clause unit, subclausal complexity refers to the composition of the clause, and finally the sophistication and acquisition timing is studied by frequencies of forms believed to be sophisticated or later acquired. Due to the level of young learners, it is suggested that coordination and subordination are used to investigate syntactic complexity (Blasco, 2014). As for lexical complexity, Bulte and Housen (2012) identified three dimensions of lexical complexity namely lexical diversity (number of different words), lexical density (proportion of lexical words), and lexical sophistication (use of infrequent and advanced words).

The second element of CAF, accuracy, refers to 'the extent to which a learner's performance deviates from the norm' (Housen et al, 2012, p.4). There are two methods to analyse accuracy which are global accuracy and specific accuracy. While all errors are counted in global accuracy approach, specific accuracy only deals with the correct use of specific linguistic features, for example verb form or preposition.

Finally, fluency is 'the capacity to produce speech at normal and without interruption' (Skehan, 2009, p.510). It comprises of three sub-dimensions: breakdown fluency, repair fluency, and speed fluency. Breakdown fluency is the number, length, and location of pauses, repair fluency refers to the number of false starts, self-correction, and repetitions, and lastly speed fluency is the rate of linguistic units produced.

CAF is a comprehensive approach to analyse oral production. It can be utilized to assess language learners of different ages and levels with adaptations to suit specific targets.

Assessment of young learners' speaking performance

Regarding young learners' speaking performance assessment, assessment criteria from standardized speaking tests may provide useful ideas. There are three widely known exams on children's

proficiency in English: Cambridge Young Learners English Tests, Pearson Test of English Young Learners and TOEFL Primary. The speaking assessment criteria of aforementioned tests focus on grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation together with some other different criteria. While TOEFL Primary speaking tests add speed fluency through the description 'smooth, confident rate of delivery', Cambridge Young Learners English Tests attempt to assess the communicative nature of speaking through the criteria interactive communication (ability to maintain exchanges). Judging from the criteria of the above tests, CAF constructs can be used to assess children's speaking performance with appropriate modifications.

Project-based learning (PBL) - benefits and challenges

Applying PBL in learning and teaching process not only provides learners with knowledge, but also equips them with skills for real-life situations. PBL is reported to help students have a deeper understanding of the learnt contents, build practical skills and increase the motivation, enjoyment and engagement in their studies

Applying PBL poses many challenges for both teachers and learners. When using PBL in a large class of young learners, teachers struggle with making students concentrate, raising their motivation, instructing them to link all learnt contents, and helping them cooperate performing skill with learning tasks. Young learners, who are inactive and lack group work experience, may have a difficult time to interact, express ideas, and perform effectively in a PBL class. (Pham, 2018)

Due to various challenges when applying PBL in teaching speaking to young learners, there has not been much research into its actual practices. In a study by Maulany (2013) on 4th-grade students in an Indonesian primary school, PBL helped students become more creative and confident in speaking in front of the class. In another study, PBL was applied to teach vocabulary to young learners aged 5-6 in Turkey, proving that students were more active and engaging in PBL classes than traditional classes (Kimsesiz et al, 2017).

21st century skills

The purpose of education in the new century is not to solely fill children with facts and theories but to equip students with both knowledge and skills for a global world. These skills, referred as 21st century skills, are commonly known as the 6Cs: collaboration, communication, content, critical thinking, creative innovation, and confidence (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016).

Different formats of activities are being adopted across the world to promote 21st century skills, for example, Sea-Harvest project or the International Marine Science project and Rivers project. Such projects are directly related to real-world situations, helping students develop multiple skills, for instance communication skill (across other people, other cultures, other countries), collaboration skill (in teamwork activities) or creative and critical thinking skills (to think of solutions to solve practical problems) (Kesuma, 2014; Fragoulis & Tsiplakides, 2009).

IEG Framework for assessing speaking performance

IEG carries out PBL activities namely Speaking Workshop (SW) in class presentation and Speaking Workshop home presentation (*Speak Like a Kid* or *SLAK* for short) which aim at developing students' speaking skill and their 21st century skills. Topics of projects are varied, following topics provided in the course books - Our World by National Geographic Learning. Our World is a primary series with age-appropriate content, focusing on developing both language competence and 21st century skills through practical tasks. In the SW, students work in groups and deliver a presentation and a poster of their design. In SLAK, students film their presentations and submit them to their teachers for feedbacks.

IEG students' speaking performances are assessed using simplified CAF model together with 21st century skills namely critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and confidence. Teachers are provided with a marking sheet with criteria to evaluate their students' performances. It is also noted that the assessment practices for each group of students (3rd, 4th and 5th graders) may vary due to their different levels of language competence and cognitive abilities.

At IEG, CAF is utilized with some adaptations to the original measures. To be more specific, complexity is evaluated mainly through linguistic complexity (syntactic and lexical), accuracy is measured using global approach, and finally, fluency is measured mainly through speech rate.

Critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and confidence are target skills that students are expected to achieve after the courses at IEG. Critical thinking can be shown by students' choices of examples and reasons to justify their ideas while creativity is proved by their way of presenting and illustrating their ideas during the activity. SW requires students to showcase all three elements of collaboration, which are 'communication, cooperation and responsiveness' (Hesse et al, 2015). Students not only exchange information but also contribute toward the

goal of the activity with shared responsibility. Lastly, SW and SLAK are expected to push students' confidence or their willingness to try when they 'accept new challenges and stretch beyond their comfort zones' (Golinkoff & Hirsh-Pasek, 2016, p.196).

Research questions

This study aims at investigating the effect of PBL activities, SW and SLAK, on the quality of speaking performance of primary students at IEG. In addition, the researchers are interested in finding out teachers and academic coordinators' opinions about the effectiveness of these activities. Therefore, the research questions that this study seeks to answer are the following:

1. What are the effects of the PBL activities, primarily Speaking Workshop, on students' speaking and communication performance as perceived by teachers?
2. How has students' linguistic competence changed over time with the assistance of PBL activities?

METHODOLOGY

Settings

SW and SLAK are two PBL activities that IEG has been applying extensively in a primary school in Hanoi, Vietnam. They act as open forums for students to reflect their understanding of the learnt topics and open thinking beyond learnt contents. SW is the primary one organized in class, and SLAK acts as the subordinate activity which is done at home individually.

The number of SW & SLAK coincides with that of learning topics during the school year. The SWs' topics are assigned by Research and Development (R&D) department, who are in charge of material and program planning, while those for SLAK are decided by teachers. Both are derived from the learning themes of the learning contents.

In SW, teachers introduce the topics and divide students into groups of four members one week before the actual presentation day. The SW sessions are carried out in a public room, which has an open setting and atmosphere suitable for group work and presentations. Students work in groups to design a poster for each SW session. Then, all members would present in front of the whole class with the poster as a visual illustration.

Unlike SW, SLAK is the individual performance which requires students to prepare and video record their presentations, then upload their videos to their class Facebook group for their teachers to give feedback. Their presentations can be supported by drawings, photos, PowerPoint slides or any other visual aids. There isn't any time limit for this activity, but students usually deliver their speech during 2-3 minutes on average.

To make it appropriate for students' age and cognitive as well as linguistic competence, the PBL activities in practice are simplified compared to the standard one.

Participants

The research population includes students of nine classes, specifically three classes of grade 3 (expected to get level A1+ (or A1.3 on CEFR-V) by the end of the school year), three classes of grade 4 (level A2), and three classes of grade 5 (level A2+/B1- or A2.3/B1.1 on CEFR-V) (Chuong Trinh Giao Duc Pho Thong – Chuong Trinh Mon Tieng Anh, 2018; Thong tu so 32/ 2018/TT-BGDĐT, 2018). The program, with English as the only teaching medium, allocates seven face-to-face language learning sessions in all classes plus two to three sessions of science and math weekly.

The teaching staff of the programs comprises of Native Speaker (NS) and Non-native Speaker (NNS) teachers. Both groups are holders of either CELTA certificates or BAs in TESOL, having at least one-year experience prior to working at IEG. They have followed the program at the current positions for at least 2 years, during which there has been intensive on-the-job training, i.e. biweekly professional workshops and meetings, as well as regular contact with program planners, to help the whole system maintain the right track to students' expected outcomes.

As for interview, two out of three NS teachers who are in charge of the three grades and one NNS teacher are selected. These teachers have been working with these students for two to three years, so they have a quite thorough understanding of their students' abilities and improvement. Regarding the qualitative analysis of students' speaking performance, the researchers selected SLAK videos of nine students from three grades (three students from each grade). SLAK, as a subordinate of SW, is a chance for students to apply skills and knowledge gained from in-class SW presentations into their individual ones at home.

Data collection and analysis

In the first stage of the study, the researchers interviewed two NS teachers and one NNS teacher. The interviews were conducted individually, and English was used for both NS and NNS teachers. The interview consisted of four main parts to investigate teachers' perceptions of: (1) how SW and SLAK assist in developing students' fluency, accuracy and complexity, (2) how these activities help to develop students' 21st century skills, (3) how students applied skills gained from SW to SLAK, and (4) problems when applying these activities and solutions. During the interviews, the teachers could ask back to clarify the questions, and the researchers also gave explanation about certain terms or concepts. All the interviews were recorded, transcribed then analysed. Data was coded into four aforementioned categories. The researchers attempted to sum up similarities among teachers' opinions and relevant information which helps to answer the first research question.

In the second stage of the study, videos from SLAK activity of nine students from three grades were chosen and analysed. All students were evaluated through two videos, one at their previous academic year and one at their current grade to compare for any changes in their speaking performance over a time of applying SW and SLAK activities. The speaking topics varied among students and their grades; however, the second speaking topics are always more challenging. Students are allowed to speak freely without a time limit for their SLAK performance. These videos were transcribed and later segmented into Analysis-of-speech Unit (AS-unit) for syntactic and lexical complexity, accuracy and fluency. AS-unit is 'a single speaker's utterance consisting of an independent clause, or sub-clausal unit, together with any subordinate clause(s) associated with either' (Foster et al, 2000, p. 365).

In this study, syntactic complexity was measured by the percentage of subordinate clauses per AS-unit. As for lexical complexity, the focus was on students' lexical diversity, which was studied by the ratios (percentages) of noun, lexical verb and adjectives to the total number of words students produced. Accuracy was measured by calculating the percentage of error-free clauses per AS-unit. Errors in this context refer to any type of morphological, syntactic or lexical error. Lastly, fluency was analysed by speech rate in words per minute including pause time, which has been proved to be a reliable indicator of oral fluency among non-native speakers (Mora, 2006). It was calculated by dividing the total number of words by the total task time in minutes.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Teachers' perceptions of the effects of the PBL activities, primarily Speaking Workshop, on students' speaking and communication performance

From teachers' point of view, PBL projects or SW in this case, made considerable impacts on learners' communication competence. In term of fluency, both teachers agreed that their students paused a lot during the presentation but they improved as they practiced more. The progress in speed rate, as the teachers' comments, was not remarkable, however, students' fluency had improved corresponding with their confidence, showing better intonation, pronunciation and stronger voice. "When students get to speak about what they are confident with, they can say it clearly and faster", said teacher B. Regarding accuracy, students were reported to make some common grammar mistakes related to tenses, word order, and subject-verb agreement. There were no major mistakes in the use of learnt vocabulary, especially in grades 4 and 5. Regarding grammar mistakes, it was noted that "Students don't know how to switch between present and past tense sometimes." Teachers corrected students' mistakes after their performance, as Teacher B said he tried to "point out their mistakes after the lesson or spend some time at the beginning of the next lesson to explain and help them focus on it." In some cases, students could self-correct their own mistakes while speaking. Considering complexity, teachers noticed the learners' effort in using extra vocabulary and sentence types. "Students try to use vocabulary that is not in the book. Most of the times my students use compound sentences, only some individual cases use more simple sentences", said teacher A. Another essential rationale for more diverse and difficult structures and vocabulary usage was the competitive environment of team work practices; students were eager to show themselves and compete with each since "they don't want their groups to get penalized."

Similarly, SW was reported to assist with developing learners' 21st century skills. Students' creativity was demonstrated through their way of displaying the ideas. At first, students followed teachers' sample drawings, later they could illustrate their ideas effectively in different formats. "It's fascinating to see them try to illustrate their ideas and make one big picture with it. Each group and each student has different styles as you can see when you walk around" said teacher B. Learners' collaboration skill also experienced a marked progress. In a team, competitiveness made students work together to achieve the goal:

“I think it depends on the group dynamics. But most of them have the shared goal of winning or getting many points, so they try to work together to achieve this goal... Basically, it’s their competitive spirit that pushes them to work together to finish the activity.”

Among team members, students were responsive to different opinions and ideas. Specifically, such young learners themselves dealt with disagreements in their groups instead of seeking for their teacher’s help. “Each group have a leader who assigns a role for each member, and they try to sort the ideas out for themselves.” Critical thinking skill was also reported to improve, showing through how the students work together to tackle open-ended questions. Dealing with open-ended questions was a new concept for students of such grades, since young learners are more familiar with close-ended ones. Open-ended questions required learners to think outside the box and assisted boosting their thinking level. Teacher of grade 5 took another step in breaking down the questions into smaller ones before have students answer.

“Before, I had to make sure I provide them with small questions for them first before coming to the main question. But now, they are better and they can think of their own questions that they think I want to know about.”

SW tasks provided students different needed skills for their SLAK activities. Firstly, students gained skills in organizing and developing ideas from SW practices to apply to SLAK, as one teacher shared “they did learn about how to prepare for presentation, how to organize and develop their ideas into a presentation from SW, so I think it’s good for their SLAK or their individual speaking performance.” Secondly, SW helped to push their presentation skills, so students could deliver their presentation on their own in their SLAK video.

Differences in students’ linguistic over time with the assistance of PLB activities

After analysing students’ SLAK videos in their previous and current academic year, it could be concluded that students demonstrated improvement in complexity while their accuracy and fluency showed wide differences among three grades.

Regarding complexity, there was an increase in students’ syntactic complexity while the lexical complexity witnessed fluctuation over the time of applying the PBL activities.

Figure 1

Complexity change in Grade 3 students' speech

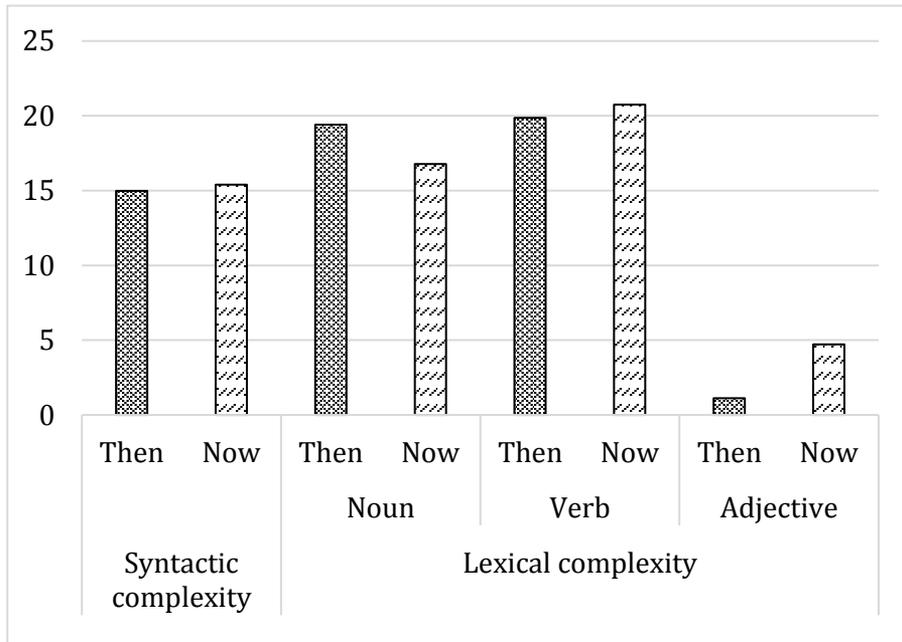


Figure 2

Complexity change in Grade 4 students' speech

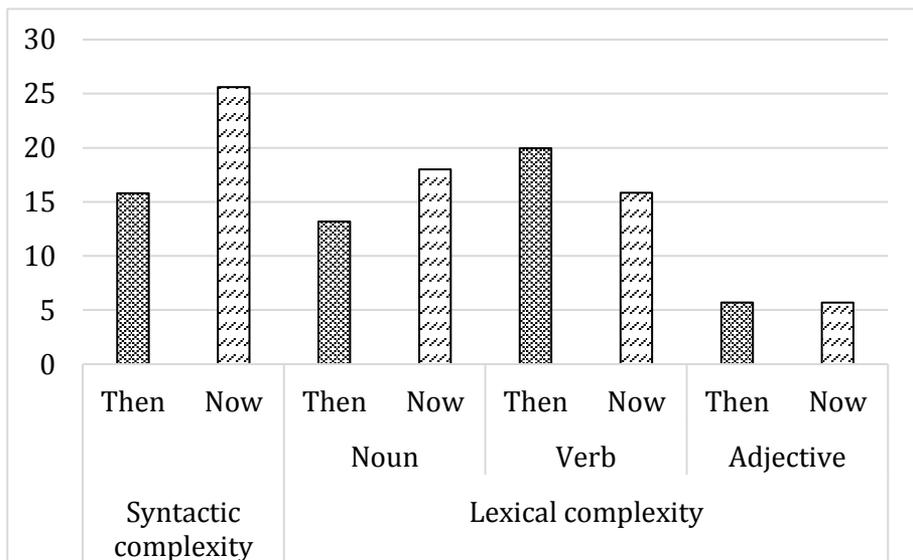
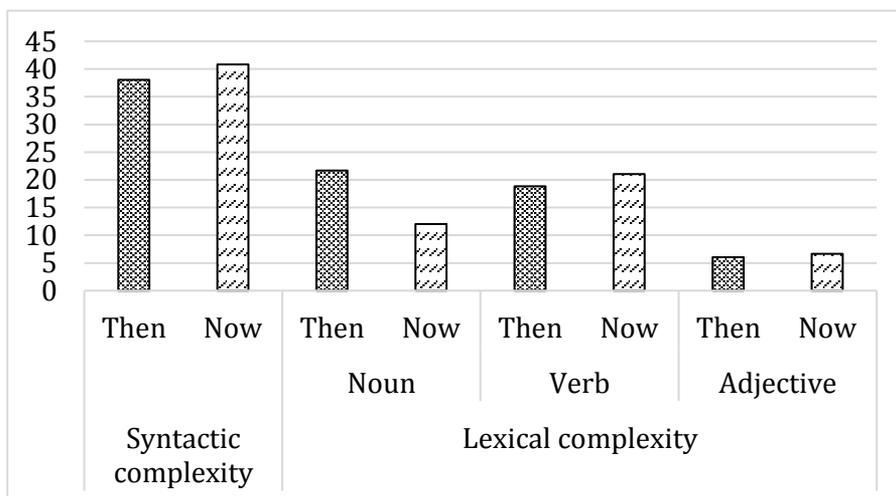


Figure 3

Complexity change in Grade 5 students' speech



In general, almost all students showed improvement in their syntactic complexity through their speaking performance for SLAK activity. They attempted to utilize a wide range of subordinate clauses during their speaking, and the ratio of subordinate clause per AS-unit increased significantly in the higher grade. As can be seen from Fig 3, 5th graders began with rather high level of grammatical complexity, ranging from 26.66% to 56.66%, and they achieved even higher levels over a period of time. One exceptional case even reached 71.42% for syntactic complexity for his/her current SLAK performance. As for 3rd and 4th graders, their level of grammatical complexity might have started at a much lower point compared to 5th graders, but they also improved over time. Not only did students utilize more subordinate clauses, but they also try to use a wider range of subordination and with greater diversity. While 3rd graders tended to use only adverbial clauses with *when*, students at grade 4 and 5 could use more complex structures like *if*-clause or relative clause during their speech.

Concerning students' lexical complexity, there was not a clear trend demonstrated through their speaking performance over time; however, their use of adjectives did increase gradually in all three grades. This improvement was most remarkable among students at grade 3 (see Fig 1) when all of the participants were proved to utilize more descriptive words in their speech, going from hardly using any adjectives (0.41-2.31%) to double or quadruple their use of such words. For students at grade 4 and 5, the differences over time were not as significant as those

of 3rd graders, but they did try to utilize more adjectives during their speaking performance. There was also a noticeable drop in the use of nouns among students at grade 5 with a sharp decrease by 13.89% compared to their performance from the previous academic semester. A closer look at students' speech revealed that although the lexical diversity of 4th and 5th graders decreased over time, they utilized more infrequent and advanced vocabulary. Students at grade 4 were quite ambitious when they tried to expand their vocabulary range out of what they have learnt in class. For example, they attempted to apply words of B2 level into their speaking like "disguise", "self-defence" or "delicate" when they were expected to reach A2 level at the end of the academic years. This phenomenon was also confirmed by the teachers that their students often asked for help from their teachers or other sources with new words and expressions to convey their ideas.

Contrary to complexity, students' levels of accuracy and fluency did not show any clear improvement after a time of applying PBL speaking activities, except for those at grade 3. The following figures showed the average level of students' accuracy and fluency among three grades.

Figure 4

Accuracy change in students' speech

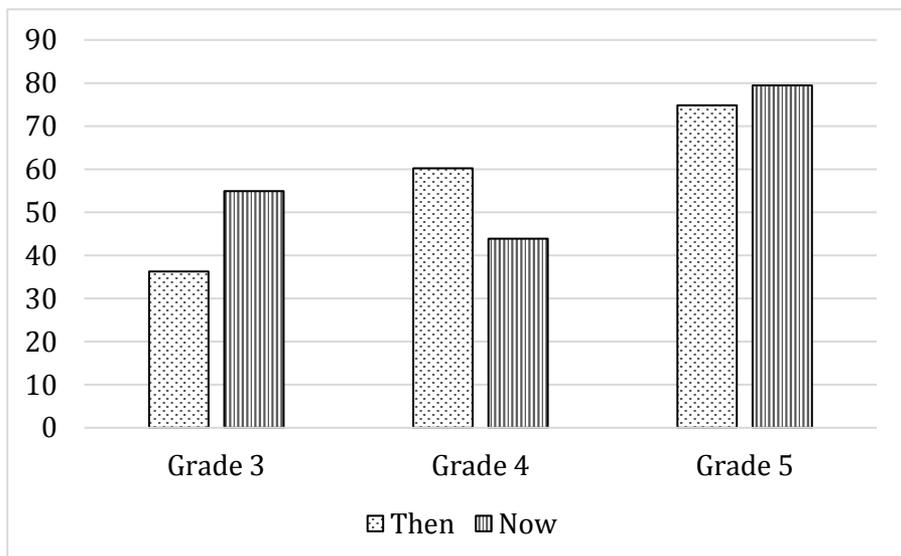
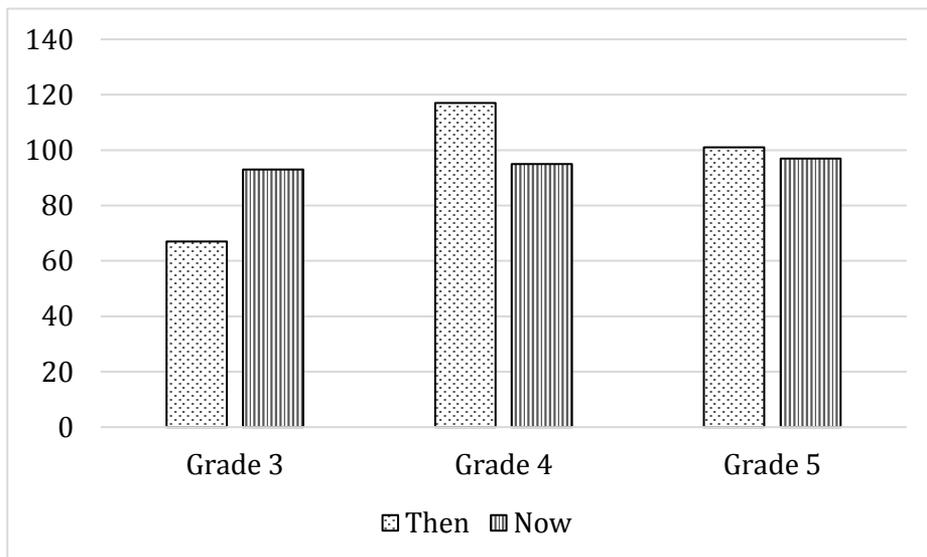


Figure 5

Fluency change in students' speech



As can be seen from Fig 4 and Fig 5, 3rd graders demonstrated a substantial rise in both accuracy and fluency after a time of applying SW and SLAK activities. Compared to their speaking performance from the previous academic year, students spoke with better vocabulary and grammar accuracy together with improved speech rate. They paused less during their speech and the use of fillers like 'ah', 'uhm' also decreased significantly.

Students at grade 4 and 5 showed contradictory results for their speaking performance. 4th graders made more mistakes and paused more during their speech while students at grade 5 spoke with better accuracy but slower speech rate. It was also worth considering the change in speaking topics of these two age-groups. The topics for their SLAK in previous academic years were quite familiar, including talking about your best friend or talking about your favourite people. For their current SLAK activities, however, students at these two grade levels were required to talk about more difficult and abstract topics like an imaginative creature (grade 4), a character trait you wanted to change and important things when choosing a job (grade 5). With such challenging topics, students had to use more complex vocabulary and grammar structures and they had to pause more often to organize their ideas during speaking. 4th graders were reported to be very ambitious when using a lot of new vocabulary and structures they had not been

properly introduced to while students at grade 5 tended to use learnt vocabulary and grammar. As a result, with more difficult topics, students at grade 4 made more mistakes while those at grade 5 did a better job using lexical items and structures they were confident with.

In conclusion, students of all three grade levels improved their syntactic complexity with frequent use of subordinate clauses and with greater complexity. They also utilized more descriptive words during their speech, while their use of nouns and verbs did not appear to improve over time. 3rd graders demonstrated a significant increase in their accuracy and fluency while students at grade 4 and 5 had more problems with accuracy and fluency when dealing with challenging topics.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

From the results of the study, there are some implications for teachers regarding PBL activities. First, the effectiveness of the PBL activities counts on detailed guidance that teachers should provide.

PBL activities like SW can be a good chance for students to not only review but also expand their vocabulary and grammar. Given opportunities, students can enrich their vocabulary and grammar by asking for their friends' assistance or working on their own. Nevertheless, teachers should provide guidance for students or their level of accuracy may decrease with over-ambitious use of new vocabulary and structures. Second, competitive spirit can be a crucial factor to develop students' communication and collaboration skills. When students participate in competitive activities, they might get the urge to work together to achieve their shared goals. Students also feel the need to help their slower friends during the group work to get a better result for their team. Lastly, shy and inactive students should be given special care to boost their confidence before getting involved in PBL activities with peers. It is suggested that teachers assign such students with simplified tasks, allowing them to speak in their linguistic comfort zone first. First language (Vietnamese) could be used to make sure they can contribute to the group work.

Despite the researchers' effort, there are still some limitations in this study. First, the research scope is rather small. The researchers only managed to interview two NS teachers and one NNS teacher for their perceptions of the effects of PBL activities. In addition, the number of students selected for analysis of their SLAK videos was confined to a modest number to reach a more comprehensive evaluation their

development in linguistics and other skills over a time with PBL activities. Second, the researchers could have utilized more data collection instruments. Due to the spread of coronavirus, schools have been temporarily shut down, making it impossible for the researchers to have student observation during their SW sessions. Those data could have provided insight into students' actual performance, ensuring a more well-rounded investigation into this field of study.

CONCLUSION

All in all, this study highlights the positive correlation between the practice of PBL activities and students' language competence and 21st century skills. Although students could have problem with accuracy when they attempt to incorporate new vocabulary and grammar structures into their speech, they have opportunities to develop their language complexity and fluency. Students become more confident, and pick up essential skills like collaboration, creativity or critical thinking. This study also provides some useful ideas for teachers regarding how to organize the activity and how to engage shy and inactive students. Involving students in slightly competitive PBL activities is proved to encourage them to communicate and collaborate with their peers. Teachers should also specify tasks suitable for their slower students' abilities to enhance their confidence and have them engaged in the activities with their classmates.

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APPENDIX

Interview question list

1 What do you think about Speaking Workshop (SW) and Speak Like A kid (SLAK)?

2 How do these activities help your students develop their language skills?

Fluency:

- Do your students pause a lot during their speech?
- How is their speaking speed during their presentation?
- How do they connect the sentences during speaking?
- What are the differences in fluency after practicing SW and SLAK for a semester?

Accuracy:

- What are some common grammar mistakes that your students make?
- What are some common word choice mistakes that your students make?
- Have you tried to correct your students' common mistakes? How?
- How have SW and SLAK helped in improving learners' accuracy?

Complexity:

A **simple** sentence consists of only one clause.

Alice goes to the library every day.

A **compound** sentence consists of two or more independent clauses.

Everyone was busy, so he went to the movie alone.

A **complex** sentence has at least one independent clause plus at least one dependent clause.

When the cake is brown, take it out of the oven.

- What sentence types do your students often use during these activities?
- Do they use compound and complex sentences? If yes, how often do they use such sentences?
- Do they use effectively the learnt vocabulary of the unit to talk about the given topic? Can they use extra vocabulary (not in the text book) in their presentation?
- What improvement can you see from your students throughout these activities?

3 How do these activities help your students develop other skills?

Creativity:

- How eager are they to learn new, extra contents?
- How do students show their ideas through their drawings?
- How do students link, organize and deliver their ideas in their performances?

Collaboration:

- How effective are the students in communicating among teammates?
- How do students contribute their ideas during group work?
- How responsive are the students to peers' opinions and feedback?

Critical thinking:

- How do students deal with the given open-ended questions?
- Can they give evidence when they give their opinions?
- Can students effectively analyze and evaluate evidence and arguments?

4 How have students applied skills gained from group work practices (SW) into individual practices (SLAK)?

5 What are the difficulties in helping inactive/shy students when implementing SW and SLAK?

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICY OF TEACHING ENGLISH TO YOUNG LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

Like several other countries in Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), in Vietnam, English teaching at primary level has been boosted through implementing educational reforms. In the case of Vietnam, the latest reform is the National Foreign Languages Project 2008–2020. As part of this language reform, language policy has been officially released, which has aroused considerable public concern. This paper analyses and evaluates that policy as well as the primary English language teaching situation in Vietnam and makes some recommendations for improvements in teaching English to young learners (TEYL). The findings reveal that the policy has brought considerable benefits to Vietnamese educational stakeholders. Vietnam has witnessed a lot of responses to this national language policy, such as restructuring the English programs, writing a new series of textbooks, and training and retraining English primary school teachers. However, the policy also shows a lack of alignment with its implementation due to poor planning.

Keywords: *primary school, National Foreign Languages Project, perceptions, challenges, policy*

INTRODUCTION

In the majority of non-English-speaking countries, including Vietnam, there has been a significant impact of English on the process of language policy planning, resulting in more English teaching in elementary schools. To strengthen competitive position in the field of international economics and politics, a number of measures are required to be taken to meliorate English proficiency. In other words, innovations in language policy planning are encouraged to implement to improve the English language acquisition of Vietnamese people. Although this policy may convey the desired justifications in English Language Teaching and Study in Vietnam, there are great concerns whether the efforts made

may be successful and may not lead to any expected improvement in levels of proficiency.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The current situation of English teaching in Vietnam at general levels

In the general educational system, there are three levels under the form of 12 grades: primary level (grade 1 to 5), lower secondary level (grade 6 to 9) and upper secondary level (grade 10 to 12) (Trines, 2017). According to Van (2018), English is considered as a compulsory subject since 2002 in all general levels. In addition, in the context of globalisation, the “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Formal Educational System in the Period of 2008 – 2020” project has shown the importance of teaching English in Vietnam. What is more, MOET (2007) has set English criteria for English level of students after finishing their general education, such as being able to communicate in English via four macro skills, to attain English phonetics and grammar and to understand the cultural aspects. Therefore, the English foundation for students is of importance since they are in primary level.

With the great efforts in enhancing English teaching and learning from both MOET and all general education system, there are many achievements have gained. However, there are still some issues remained such as the gap of English levels between urban and rural areas; the text books and teachers; English teaching in the situation of globalisation and cooperation; classroom facilities in Vietnam; passive learning of students and domination of teachers in classrooms; and the misalignment between teaching and testing. Also, at the primary level, the concerns are expanded into the national identity when letting students expose to another language at their young ages (Van, 2018).

Teaching English at the Primary level

Besides having common issues with higher levels, the primary level stands out for some significant differences in the situation. Firstly, the number of parents and students wishing to access English Language at the early age increased rapidly. As a result, Decision No. 50/2003 QD-BGD & DT was issued by MOET on October 30, 2003. Accordingly, English was applied as an extra subject for the elementary students (replaced the pilot program in 1996). Specifically, from 2003, English language was applied as an elective subject for students grades 3,4 and 5 with two periods each week; the duration of each period is 40 minutes.

Moreover, in 2006, students needed to have four 40-minute periods of English subject per week. However, English language teaching and learning did not achieve the results as MOET expected. Therefore, to help Vietnamese students improve their FL skills, the National Foreign Language Project for the period of 2008-2020 was issued by MOET as a comprehensive solution for teaching and learning English in Vietnam.

Especially, in Ho Chi Minh city, Based on Official Letter No. 2551 / GDĐT-TH issued on August 12, 2015, 100% of primary school students have to choose one of two English programs: Intensive or Project from grade 1 from the academic year 2015-2016. Accordingly, the amount of time for Project English program time is four periods/week (including supporting software and native teachers). The duration of the Intensive English Program shall not exceed eight periods/week (including supporting software and native teachers). Both programs are applied simultaneously in Ho Chi Minh City, including District 12.

Studies on English teaching policies at the primary level in Vietnam

In the Vietnamese context, English policies at primary schools have received many concerns from researchers. For two individual studies of Vu (2002) and Dang (2007), they pointed out that English teaching policy to primary children met their interests and characteristics. Meanwhile, they complained that they were not offered any guidance or materials which support them to design games, so they used only some games repeatedly. Moreover, Nguyen (2001) stated in her that the teachers had difficulty selecting appropriate activities, setting up a sustainable syllabus, or applying techniques relevant to students' level and in the big-sized classes. She provoked a conclusion that "teaching English to children not only fails but puts pressure on children's attitude towards the English language."

What is more, Nguyen (2011) said that most teachers in her study cannot attain the requirements of English proficiency. Additionally, the study points out the shortage of audio and visual supports in teaching speaking and listening. Also, Nguyen (2013) states in her article that most studies in this field mainly focus on: (1) the implementation of the language policies, (2) the impacts of the policies to schools, and (3) the factors affecting the implementation.

From these studies, it is concluded that most researchers concerns the implementation of English teaching policies from students' perspectives and levels, the teachers' inadequate standards and the related facilities. However, the perspectives of teachers were not paid enough attention,

especially, in the the context of teaching English at primary school at district 12. As a result, there is a need of conducting research on that field.

Research Question

From the literature and profound of the application of Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project in the context of District 12, HCMC, the aim of this research was to find teachers' perceptions towards this policy. Therefore, the research question is:

What are teachers' perceptions of Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English to young learners in the context of District 12, Ho Chi Minh City?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a survey research design. According to Creswell (2011), survey studies are suitable for identifying and exploring individual opinions and perceptions towards a phenomenon. The study aimed at investigating teachers' perceptions towards the National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English to young learners in the context of District 12, Ho Chi Minh City; therefore, this research design was suitable for the study.

Setting and Participants

The study conducted at four public primary schools in District 12 of Ho Chi Minh City. All the schools followed the English policies from MOET, and the grades involved in the study were 1 to 5.

Purposeful sampling was used in the study. Notably, ten female teachers in these schools were the participants of the study. Among them, eight teachers had above 5-year experienced in teaching English for primary students, and the other two had a 3-year experience.

Instruments

The study used questionnaire as the main instrument. Mackey and Gass (2005), and Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010) considered questionnaires as an effective tool for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Also, they confirm that questionnaires are time-saving data collecting instruments. In the study, there were 14 items. Specifically, five first items were on the participants' background. In addition, the other nine questions focused on the implementation, effects, and

recommendations of the teachers toward the English teaching program from MOET.

Procedure

Firstly, the data were collected through the questionnaires. To do this, the researcher sent all the participants online surveys in Vietnamese. Then, the researcher analyzed the data according to the constructs in the questionnaires. All the results were sent back to the participant in order to ensure that their opinions were the same as the researcher translated them into English.

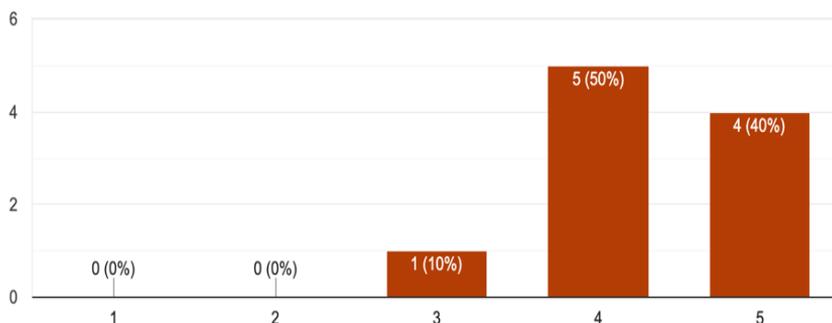
FINDINGS

All the data were gathered and analyzed in term of the constructs covered in the questionnaires, including (1) the implementation and (2) the effects of Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English from MOET in the participant schools, and (3) the recommendations of the teachers to improve the situation.

Firstly, the data revealed all of participants recognized the necessity of this project in their schools (see figure 1).

Figure 1

You think that the National Foreign Language 2020 Project is necessary.

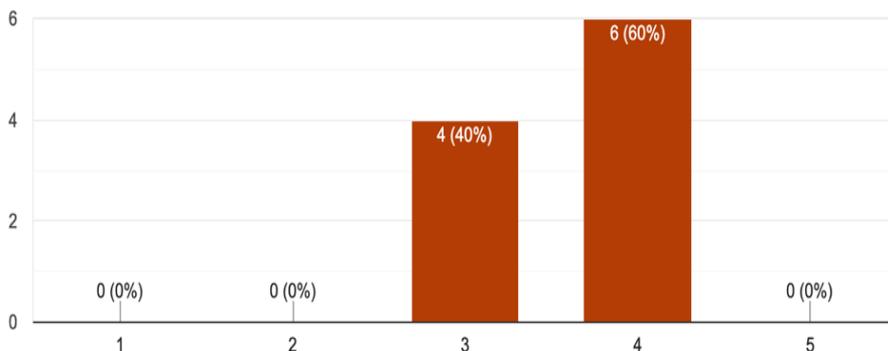


The reasons for their choice covered two main ideas: the students could be better equipped with English competence for the next level (secondary schools) and in the future, and they could easily communicate in the situation of globalization.

However, in light of the appropriacy of the coursebooks from MOET, only 60% of the teachers agreed that the coursebooks served the objectives and learning outcomes of the program well (see figure 2).

Figure 2

The current coursebooks are suitable to the objectives of National Foreign Language 2020 Project.

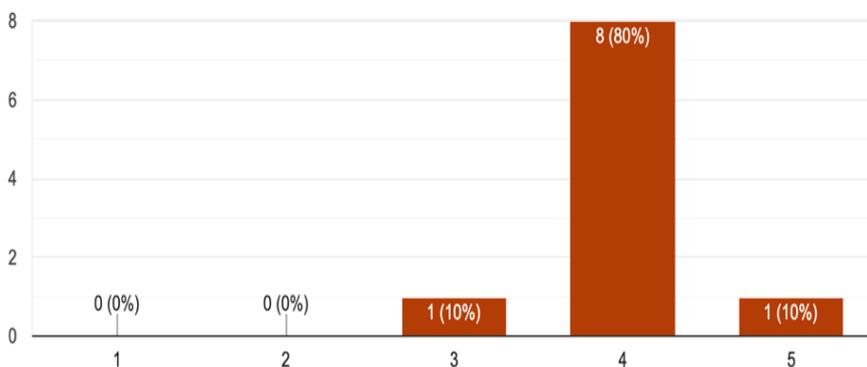


They explained that the coursebooks lacked activities related to Listening and Speaking skills. Also, the cultural factors and the alignment with the Cambridge exams needed to be reconsidered.

Also, the facilities of their schools could be a satisfying factor when all the teachers agreed with the equipment such as TV, projectors, and interactive boards, etc. could assist them in implementing the programs. However, the problem of the large-size class was a big problem in their teaching (see figure 3).

Figure 3

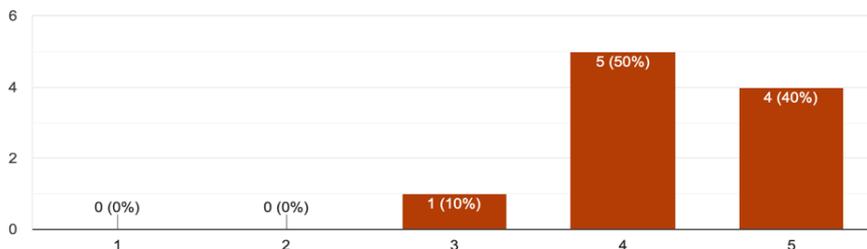
Adequate facility is provided by your school.



Turning to the effects of the project, all participants stated that their students felt interested in learning English (see figure 4).

Figure 4

Students are satisfied with the program.

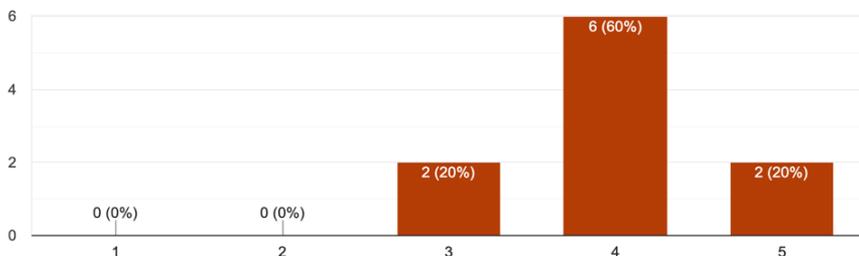


Particularly, they listed some positive effects such as the students used English more confidently, and the fluency as well as accuracy increased.

Additionally, these teachers showed that the parents also agreed with the programs (see figure 5).

Figure 5

Students' parents are satisfied with the program.



For example, parents of their students expected their children to learn English before secondary schools and they supposed that the program fee was not expensive, compared to what it had brought about. Nevertheless, some parents did not support the project due to lacking awareness of the importance of English.

To tackle some problems arisen, the researcher asked these teachers for some possible problems and solutions. Concerning the problems, they thought that the large-sized classes, the salary and the students' mix-levels were the primary barriers. To handle these problems, the participants recommended that the parent should pay more attentions to their children's learning. Moreover, the methods of teaching should be more straightforward and more inspired.

DISCUSSION

The research question of this study was, "What are teachers' perceptions about Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English to young learners in the context of District 12, Ho Chi Minh City?" From the findings part, it could be concluded that all the teachers agree with the opinion that Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English applied in their school were of importance. They also considered that the programs had positive effects on both students and parents (as stated in Vu, 2002; Dang, 2007). Explicitly, the study confirmed the enhancement in English language competence. Also, this program could equip students with the necessary skills for their future. These were aligned with the study of Kirkpatrick and Bui (2011) on the effects of language policies on students' competence and skills. Turning to the parent side, the teacher could realize that most parents were aware of English as an essential part of knowledge for their children. However, there were some problems in implementing the programs such as large-sized class (as stated in the study of Nguyen (2001)) and inappropriate parts in the coursebook (aligned with the studies of Vu (2002) & Dang (2007)). Besides, this study pointed out a new finding that parents also needed to be involved in their children's English learning to support students and teachers.

LIMITATIONS

The low response rate means the researcher should be cautious about our findings, which are considered as suggestion more than conclusion. Due to time constraints and the unwillingness of some teachers to take part in the survey, the number of participants was low. This has made us take the importance of involving the teachers more actively in research projects in their schools into consideration, which might help enhance the response rate to further surveys and thus the validity of the findings.

Moreover, the researcher could not reach the teachers from secondary and high school levels. Additionally, only the perspectives of the teachers were taken into consideration. Therefore, further research on wider ranges of participants could be conducted to enhance the teaching and learning English for young learners in public schools.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on the perceptions of Vietnam's National Foreign Language 2020 Project of teaching English to young learners in the context of District 12, Ho Chi Minh City. In short, the study confirmed the

necessity of this project in the context of primary schools from the teachers' perspective. In addition, another discovery of the research was that notwithstanding the problems in the implementation of the project were pointed out, most of the teachers are ready to face the challenges in order to improve the quality of English teaching and learning in District 12. It has been taken into account from the findings that the learning mode of Project program is gradually being shifted to Intensive one. As a result, educators of Primary English program in District 12 should prepare the necessary resources for English teaching and learning development such as human resources and technological resources to gain expected achievement in English teaching and learning at Primary levels in the future.

THE AUTHOR

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CULTURE IN ELT

INTERPRETING VIETNAMESE PICTUREBOOKS WITH A WESTERN SEMIOTIC FRAMEWORK

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ABSTRACT

The use of children's picturebooks has been reported as supporting both cultural and intercultural awareness in children. One of the well-known theories accounting for contemporary analysis of picturebooks is the social semiotics. However, research on intercultural awareness to date has not examined the ways in which non-Western picturebooks can be interpreted by Western semiotic frameworks. The primary aim of this paper is to demonstrate how images in East Asian picturebooks can be analyzed by a Western semiotic framework. To do this, we analyzed several selected double-page openings in one Vietnamese picturebook with a framework developed by Painter, Martin, and Unsworth (2013). The findings were that general meanings of the selected images can be interpreted with the proposed Western framework. However, the cultural meanings of these images are not revealed by using this framework. Further studies on a framework for interpreting cultural meanings of East Asian images in picturebooks are recommended. Findings and suggestions from this paper also provide helpful references for Vietnamese teachers of English to apply picturebooks in their classrooms.

Keywords: *picturebooks, intercultural awareness, social semiotics, East Asian images, Vietnamese teachers of English*

INTRODUCTION

Children's picturebooks have been evident to be beneficial to develop young readers' cognitive and intercultural awareness (Budd, 2016; Chen & Browne, 2015; Levin, 2007; Styles & Arizpe, 2001). In Vietnam, young readers are more familiar with Japanese manga style comics than picturebooks. Some popular comics read in Vietnam include *Dũng sĩ Hasman (Hero Hasman)* by Nguyen Hung Lan (1992), *Thần đồng đất Việt (Vietnamese genius)* by the Phan Thi Company, *Long thần tướng (The dragon general)* by Nguyen Thanh Phong (2014). These books have Japanese manga styles (Ngo, 15 July 2011; Brown 22 June 2014; Nguyen, September 2014).

In contrast to comic books, modern picturebooks are quite uncommon to Vietnamese readers. Not very recently, few picturebooks produced by young Vietnamese artists have been introduced to international readers. Among them are *The first journey* by Phung Nguyen Quang and Huynh Kim Lien (the winner of Scholastic Picture Book Award 2015), *The whale whisperer* by Le Thi Bich Khoa (the 2nd -runner of SPBA 2017), and *The mysterious princesses (Những nàng công chúa bí ẩn)* by Khoa Le (2016). Several scholarly works have been conducted on the development of comics in Vietnam (Nguyen, September 2014; Lent, 2014). To date, however, there are very few studies using contemporary Western frameworks to explore how Vietnamese artists express meanings in picturebooks. Moreover, no theoretical framework for analysis of picturebooks about Vietnam has been established yet.

Therefore, our paper aims to fill this gap in literature about Vietnamese picturebooks. In this paper, we are particularly investigating how Vietnamese images make meaning with a contemporary Western framework for interpreting picturebooks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Social Semiotic Approach to Analysis of Picturebooks

Social semiotics stems from Halliday's (1985) systemic functional grammar of English (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Serafini, 2014). Social semiotics is a structural approach for exploring possible meanings of multimodal texts with an emphasis on communicative context, text producers' concern and necessity (Serafini, 2014).

The social semiotic approach for analyzing meanings of multimodal texts is inspired by Halliday's concept of metafunction, in which every semiotic mode has the capability to convey three metafunctional

meanings, i.e. *ideational meaning*, *interpersonal meaning* and *textual or compositional meaning* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Ideational meaning denotes the semiotic mode's ability to convey representational meaning of the world while the interpersonal meaning reveals the relations between sign producers and receivers (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Textual or compositional meaning refers to meanings created through the way visual elements are arranged and distributed to produce an ordered, logical and consistent whole (Painter, Martin, & Unsworth, 2013).

Various frameworks have been developed for interpreting picturebooks based on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) work on *Grammar of visual design*. Some of these frameworks focus on interpreting meta-functional meanings of picturebooks (Painter et al., 2013), other frameworks explore ideological meanings (Serafini, 2010; 2014). Whereas these frameworks have been proven to be useful in interpreting picturebooks, especially picturebooks about Western cultures (Painter et al., 2013; Serafini, 2010; Unsworth & Thomas, 2014), very few studies examine the usefulness of these frameworks in analyzing picturebooks about Asian countries. To fill this gap in the literature, the present paper aims to explore the extent to which a contemporary semiotic framework developed by Painter et al. (2013) can be used to interpret images in one picturebook about an Asian country – Vietnam.

We will now briefly introduce the latest framework for picturebook analysis developed Painter et al. (2013), which is drawn mainly on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) early work on grammar of visual design. Such a framework is summarized in Figure 1.

Ideational Meaning

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) discussions on representational meaning of images, Painter et al. (2013) proposed a framework for analysis of ideational meaning in picturebooks, which includes the consideration of three narrative aspects, i.e. *Setting*, *Character* and *Action* (see Figure 1).

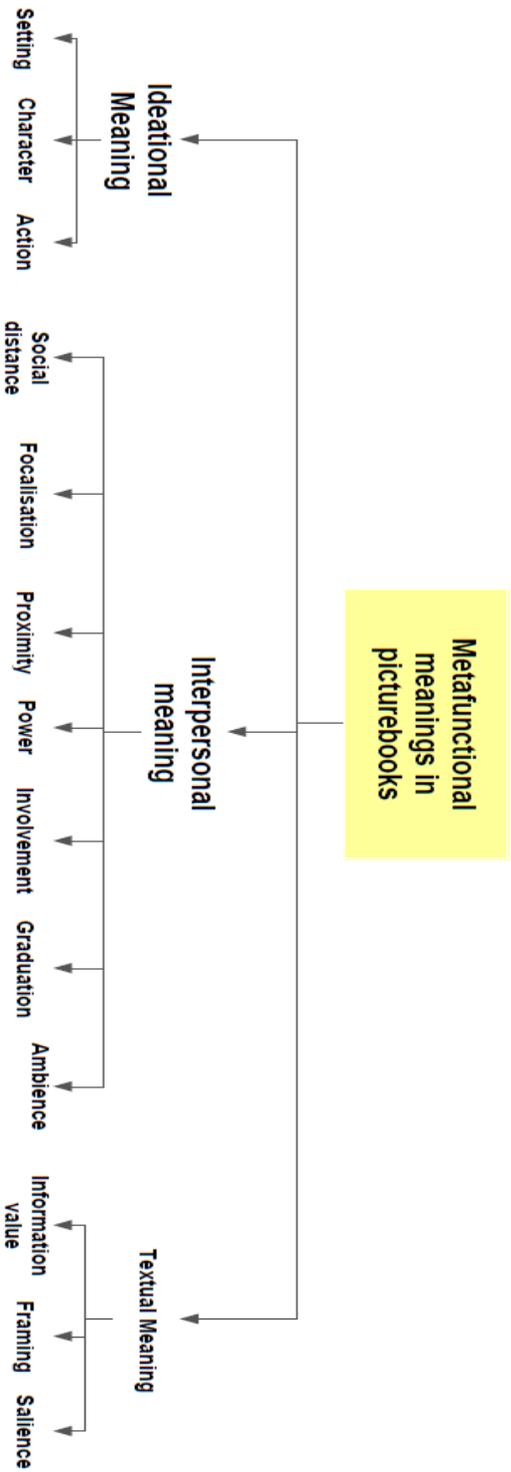


Figure 1. Summary of a semiotic framework for picturebook analysis. Adapted from Painter et al. (2013); Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

Setting refers to the depicted environment or the context in which characters of picturebooks appear and act. In picturebooks, setting or the background context offers information about visual location of surrounding environment in which the characters perform (Painter et al., 2013). Setting in picturebooks should be analyzed in not only a single image but also between sequences of images. Within a picturebook narrative, setting does not always remain unchanged, but it can be either similar or different between successive images (Painter et al., 2013). Any consistency or alteration in the depiction of setting details can provide important information to readers.

Characters in picturebooks refer to Kress and van Leeuwen's notion of represented participants (Painter et al., 2013). The ways in which a character's physical appearance is depicted in picturebooks help readers understand other important information such as age, ethnicity, family and social status (Painter et al., 2013). According to Painter et al. (2013), characters in picturebooks can be depicted with complete features of his/her physical representation with the head and/or clothes (complete). Readers can also recognize a character from his/her part of body shadow/silhouette with the choice of metonymic.

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) discussion of narrative processes was employed by Painter et al. (2013) to refer to system of *Action* in ideational meaning of picturebooks. Narrative processes reveal depicted actions engaged by visual participants. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), a narrative process consists of participants who are linked together by means of vectors. Figure 2 illustrates various kinds of visual processes recognized by vectors. Vectors linking participants in narrative processes can be either visible such as participants' bodies, arms or means to carry out physical action or invisible in mental action such as a gaze line (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Principal type of action depicted	Example picture
1. Action (single participant: intransitive, or 'non-transactional', structure) vectors created by limbs	
2. Action (two participants: transitive, or 'transactional', structure) vector created by arm, spout, water drops	
3. Verbal vector leading to speech bubble.	
4. Mental: cognition vector leading to thought bubble	
5. Mental: perception (‘transactional reaction’ structure) vector created by line of gaze from cat to fish	

Figure 2. *Visual processes with vectors (adopted from Painter et al., 2013, p. 69)*

Interpersonal Meaning

Interpersonal meaning in picturebooks refers to the analysis of relations between writers/illustrators and readers; relations between writers/illustrators and depicted characters; relations between characters and readers. The system for exploring interpersonal meaning in picturebooks proposed by Painter et al. (2013) is summarized in Figure 3.

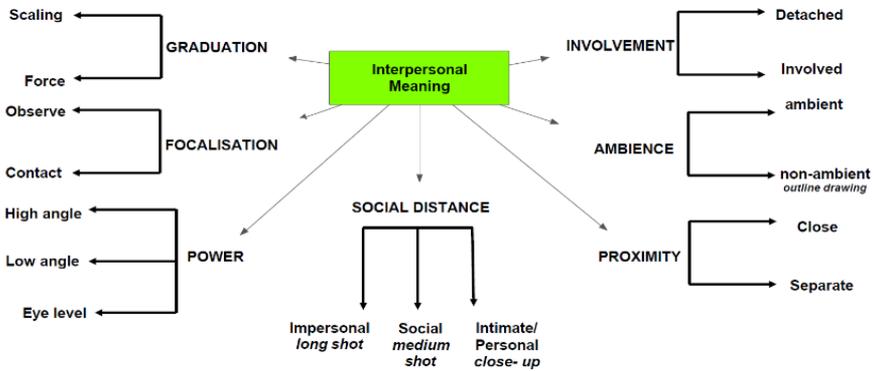


Figure 3. Summary of analytical systems of Interpersonal Meaning in picturebooks. Adapted from Painter et al. (2013); Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

As can be seen from the diagram, six analytical systems should be considered to explore interpersonal meaning in picturebooks. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the variations in the size of frame reveal the *social distance* or the relations between depicted participants and the viewer. Three common ways of presenting visual participants are *close shot*, *medium shot* and *long shot*, as illustrated in Figure 4.

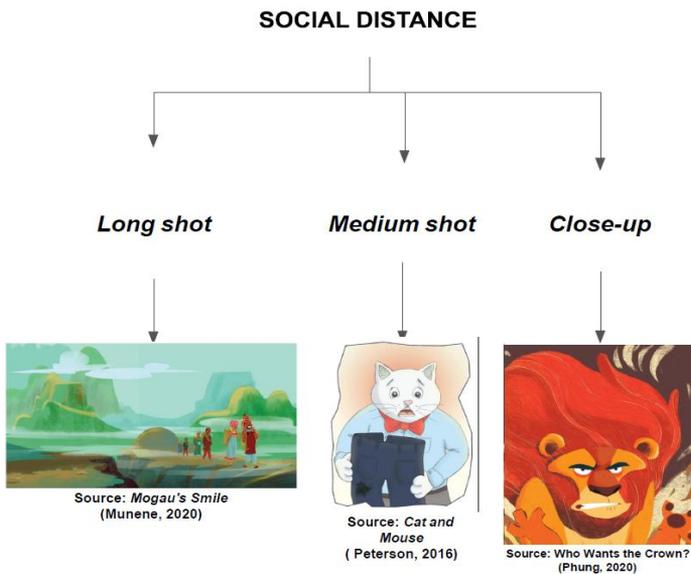


Figure 4. Common types of shot in picturebooks

A close shot indicates intimacy or close relation between depicted participants and the viewers. By contrast, the long shot suggests impersonal relation whereas the mid-shot reveals a moderate or social relation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Along with Kress and van Leeuwen's system of social distance, Painter et al. (2013) proposed the system of Proximity to refer to the relationship between picturebook characters based on their depicted distance (Painter et al., 2013). Two types of social distance in picturebooks are illustrated in Figure 5.

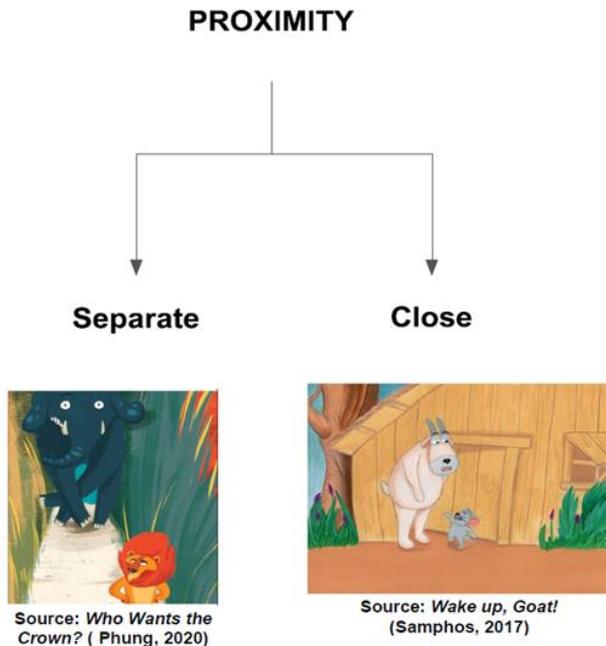


Figure 5. *Common types of Proximity in Picturebooks*

According to (Painter et al., 2013), when characters are placed at a far distance from each other, it suggests some issues in their relationship such as a quarrel, whereas characters in close personal relationship are positioned in close distance such as touching each other.

Drawing on Kress and van Leeuwen's system of *Contact*, Painter et al. (2013) proposed the term *Focalisation* to explore the interaction between depicted characters and readers in picturebooks (as illustrated in Figure 6).

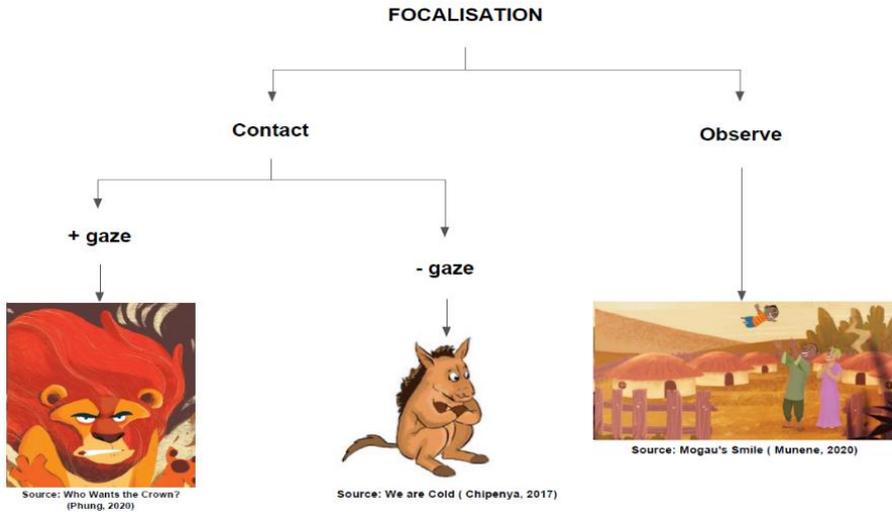


Figure 6. *Focalisation in Picturebooks*

When characters in picturebooks are depicted as gazing out at the readers, “an effect similar to the making of eye contact” will be established (Painter et al., 2013, p. 19). When there is no gaze such as a scene or character, readers are not “called on to acknowledge, affirm or contest” (Painter et al., 2013, p. 19). In particular, when the characters are depicted as looking at the readers, an effect of eye contact is created making the readers to engage into the world of the characters while the choice of *observe* suggests readers to observe the story world (Painter et al., 2013).

The system of *Power* refers to the use of vertical camera angles to reveal power relations between depicted participants and the viewer. There are three types of camera angles (i.e. high, low, and eye-level). They indicate three different power relations between represented participants and the viewer, as illustrated in Figure 7.

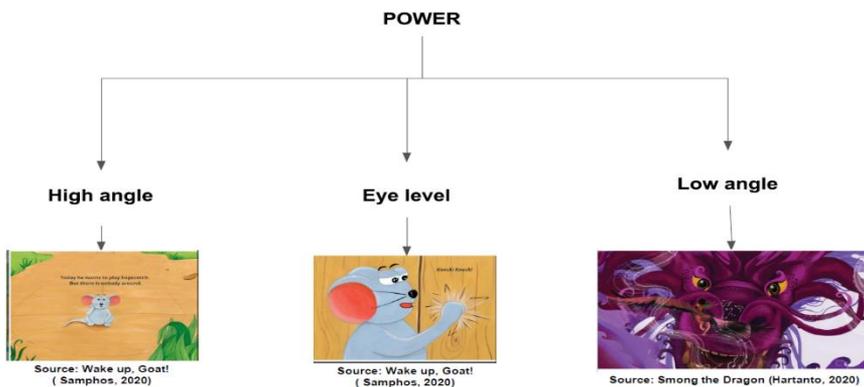


Figure 7. *Uses of Camera Angles in Picturebooks*

If the viewer looks up at the depicted participants (low angle), then the depicted participants are placed at the position of power in comparison to the viewer. By contrast, if the viewer looks down on the depicted participants (high angle), then the viewer has power over the represented participants. For images in which depicted participants are seen at eye level, there is no difference in terms of power between represented participants and the viewer (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In picturebooks, young characters are often depicted as vulnerable with the use of high angle and father characters at the position of superiority when they are seen at low angle (Painter et al., 2013).

The system of *Involvement* refers to the viewer's position based on the variations of horizontal angles (Painter et al., 2013). If represented participants are seen from an oblique angle, then the image producer and viewer position themselves as not part of the depicted participants' world or not involved with them. On the contrary, if the represented participants are put in the frontal angle then the producers and viewer position themselves as part of the world of the depicted participant or involved with them (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006) as illustrated in Figure 8. In picturebooks, where young readers are encouraged to keep away from characters' inappropriate behaviour, the depicted characters are placed at oblique horizontal angle (Painter et al., 2013).

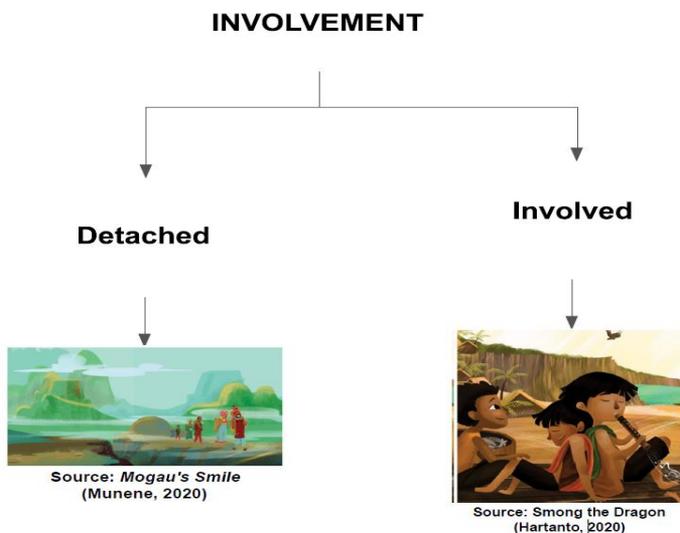


Figure 8. *Choices of Involvement in Picturebooks*

The subsystem of *Graduation* is used as means to enhance readers' emotional responses to the depicted characters or events in picturebooks. In picturebooks, the choices of Graduation are realized through two subsystems namely *Quantification* and *Force*. They can be realized through the extent of repetition of depicted visual elements and the amount of space occupied by these elements on a picturebook's spread (Painter et al., 2013). For instance, the depicted dragon (*Smong the Dragon*, Hartano, 2020) in Figure 9 takes up most of the available space of the frame with the Quantification choice of extent and upscaled Force.



Figure 9. *Extent Quantification and Upscaled Force from Smong the Dragon (Hartano, 2020)*

The term *Ambience* refers to a system revealing the ways colour is used to create mood in depicting picturebooks' setting (Painter et al., 2013). A picturebook with bright light colour will create significantly different effects on readers' emotion in comparison to one with darkness depictions (Painter et al., 2013). For instance, characters in a state of happiness might be depicted in bright, warm reds and yellows, whereas characters facing turmoil might be depicted in dark blues and purples.

Textual or Compositional Meaning

Textual meaning reveals the ways visual elements are arranged and distributed to produce an ordered, logical and consistent whole (Painter et al., 2013). Compositional meaning can be explored through three integrated systems, as illustrated in Figure 10.

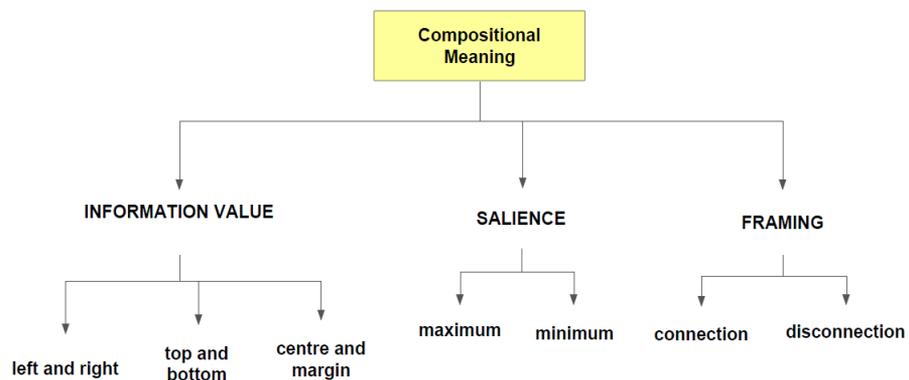


Figure 1. *Three integrated systems of compositional meaning. Adapted from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)*

As can be seen from the diagram, three integrated systems to be analyzed in compositional meaning are those of *Information value*, *Saliency* and *Framing*. The system of *value* of depicted participants in images can be realized through three main zones in the images. In particular, elements placed on the left side carry less important information than those on the right side of the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Given or already given information is put on the left side whereas new or key information is placed on the right side of an image. Therefore, viewers of an image often pay much attention to depicted elements in the right side (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Similarly, two opposing information values can be realized through the choices of *Top* and *Bottom*. The contrasting information value of the top and bottom choice is expressed in Kress and van Leeuwen's terms of *Ideal* and *Real*. Visual elements at the highest position contain "idealized

or generalize essence of the information” whereas elements at the lower part carry more practical and detailed information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 187). For the choice of Centre and Margin, the element placed in the middle carries the most important information (Centre) and the surrounding elements (Margins) represent less salient information (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the system of *Saliency* provides viewers with recognition of order of importance among depicted elements despite differences in the locations they occupy in an image. Viewers can identify the most important element of an image through their differences in positions (foreground vs background), sizes, uses of contrasting colours and so on (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). For instance, in Figure 9, the dragon is the most important element in comparison to other depicted elements.

Visual elements can be realized as being connected or disconnected together using *Framing*. In picturebooks, Painter et al. (2013) proposed two basic types of framing, namely bound and unbound images or images with/without border (Painter et al., 2013). Unbound images suggest no difference between the young readers’ world and depicted world in picturebooks (Painter et al., 2013). By contrast, a sense of separation between the readers’ world and the story world is created with bound images. Details of sub-options of bound and unbound images in picturebooks are discussed and summarized by Painter et al. (2006, p. 103).

In sum, the current semiotic framework for interpreting picturebooks explores three main types of meta-functional meanings based on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) work on visual grammar. However, the contemporary framework on visual analysis has its cultural constraints within the Western cultures (Kress, 2006). For instance, Jewitt (2001) found that the Japanese perceive given information in the right and new information in the left of the examined photographs. This pattern of visual realization is contrasting contemporary theories for analyzing images in which new information is recognized on the right while given information is realized on the left (Jewitt, 2001). Other points of contestations identified by Huynh, Thomas and To (2018; 2019) relating to interpersonal meanings. Particularly, in several images of picturebooks about Vietnam such as *The first journey* (Phung, 2017), although the main characters are seen from a low angle, they have no power in the narrative world (Huynh et al. 2018; 2019). These findings suggest that it’s worth examining the extent to which using a Western semiotic framework can be applied to interpret other picturebooks

about Vietnam.

Research questions

This paper aims to explore the extent to which a contemporary framework for visual analysis can be applied to interpret non-Western images in Vietnamese picturebooks. Based on this research purpose, the present study aims to seek answer to the following research question:

To what extent can a framework developed by Painter et al. (2013) for interpreting picturebooks be applied to analyze images in Vietnamese picturebooks?

METHODOLOGY

Based on the research purposes and research question, this study was conducted as a qualitative research. The main source of data in the present study are gathered from three selected images of one picturebook about Vietnamese culture written and illustrated by a Vietnamese artist - Khoa Le (2016). These images were selected based on their high significant levels in terms of content and quality. The three images correspond to three important stages of the story (which will be discussed further in the analysis section). The images were analyzed and interpreted within the analytical framework for picturebook developed by Painter et al. (2013), which is drawn from the theoretical framework of social semiotics (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Data collection and analysis

In terms of procedures for content analysis, images were analyzed in accordance with the following steps:

- Step 1: All images in the selected picturebook were analyzed by the first author with the Western framework developed by Painter et al. (2013).
- Step 2: The first author sent the first draft of the paper applying the Western framework developed by Painter et al. (2013) to the second and the third author for reviewing and cross-checking of the analysis.
- Step 3: The first author revised the analysis in response to the comments and feedback of the co-authors.
- Step 4: When the three authors reached mutual agreement on the analysis, all of the authors worked together to figure out the

most three significant images in the book to develop this paper.

Setting and Participants

As mentioned, the primary material used in this paper is a picturebook titled *The mysterious princesses* (Le, 2016). This book was selected because it meets our criteria on picturebook selection in terms of artistic quality and popularity. First, the book is written and illustrated by a Vietnamese artist (Khoa Le), and no attempt in interpreting images in this book with a Western semiotic framework was reported to date. Second, images in this book have high artistic quality which are quite different from images in an illustrated story or a comic book. In our view, images in picturebooks have an equal importance to written text. Therefore, visual elements in picturebooks are required to do much more of the storytelling work. An illustrated story does not necessarily need to use images to tell so much of the story, and visual elements in an illustrated story often simply reflect the same meaning as the words without differences in meanings. Moreover, the selected book has been published by the highly acclaimed Vietnamese publishing house of children's literature (The Kim Dong Publisher). The book is also published in various languages including French, Italian, and Chinese.

The mysterious princesses (*Những nàng công chúa bí ẩn*) consists of 21 double-spreads. It tells a story about a mysterious kingdom which is ruled by six mysterious princesses. Each of the princesses has one magical skill. One day, the kingdom was in danger as there was a giant and aggressive dragon spitting out fire everywhere. The dragon is the sixth princess, Hope. She is the youngest one among the six mysterious princesses. The sisters had to use all their magical skills to help their little sister. Finally, they were successful when the dragon calmed down and turned into a little princess. The story ends with the reminder that the little princess will turn into an aggressive dragon to destroy the kingdom whenever the children do not behave well. Therefore, children should be good in order to keep the small kingdom happy and peaceful.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Three double-spreads (11, 16, 19) of *The mysterious princesses* (Le, 2016) were selected for the analysis of this paper due to their high level of significance and contribution to the meanings of this book. Three types of meta-functional meanings namely *ideational meaning*, *interpersonal meaning* and *textual meaning* were analyzed in these spreads.

Meta-functional Meanings in Spread 11th

Interpretations of Spread 11th

In terms of *ideational meaning*, the setting of the 11th spread consists a dark background which contrasts with the bright foreground (with the use of red and orange colours) created by fires coming out from a giant dragon – The sixth princess of the kingdom. The dragon is presented in the manifestation choice of *complete* (i.e. the dragon’s body stretches both sides, and it is placed in the middle of the double-spread). Although this is its first depiction, the dragon’s appearance is illustrated in a very impressive way with a giant body shape and large streams of fire coming out from its big mouth destroying everything beneath. In terms of visual actions, the combination of non-transactional (the dragon is flying) and transitional action (the dragon is breathing fire down on the mountains and forest) evokes the feeling of frightening and dangerous in this image. The choice of inter-event relation by using an unexpected scene in comparison to the previous ones helps to strengthen the threat and fear caused by the dragon’s actions.

For *interpersonal meaning*, in its first appearance, the dragon is depicted in a medium shot and the viewers look at the dragon at an eye-level angle. One of the dragon’s eyes is widely opening and facing the viewers to invite contact from the viewers with the focalising choice of contact. Such a of establishing character-reader relationship makes the viewers understand that the dragon is getting extremely angry and aggressive. Moreover, the choice of middle social distance with the giant dragon flying in the foreground helps the viewers be “imaginarily located within the landscape” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 128). The choice of graduation (extent) in which the dragon takes up the large amount of available space of the frame. This strengthens the overwhelming superiority of the dragon. The extent of the dragon power and its destruction are also highlighted with the ambience choice of infuse, activated warmth, and vibrant in which most of the setting is covered with warm colours (red and orange). This evokes the feeling of the heat created by fires.



The Mysterious Princesses
(Spread 11th)

CHARACTER		IDEATIONAL MEANING		ACTION		SETTING	
Character manifestation	Character appearance	Visual Action	Inter-event relations	Circumstances	Inter-circumstance		
Complete	Appear: The first depiction	A giant dragon spitting out fire everywhere, the dragon is flying	Undoing successions between sequences	Background: dark foreground: bright in warm colour (orange) covered by green dragon	Change context: Recode Setting shifts to new location from previous image		

INTERPERSONAL MEANING

FOCALISATION	SOCIAL DISTANCE	PROXIMITY	POWER	INVOLVEMENT	GRADUATION (Force QUANTIFICATION)	AMBIENCE
Contact: invited gazing character turns eyes to face viewer mediated/inflected (extreme affective reaction of depicted character)	medium	x	eye-level	involved	extent (ideational item takes up large amount of available space - the dragon)	Infuse: activated; Warmth: warm (red, orange); Familiar: Familiar

TEXTUAL MEANING

INFORMATION VALUE	FRAMING	SALENCIE
Left-Right Top-Bottom	Unbound: Contextualised (setting fills depicted page)	The dragon has the highest salient level (moved towards the top, left, foreground, size, blue vs red and orange colours)

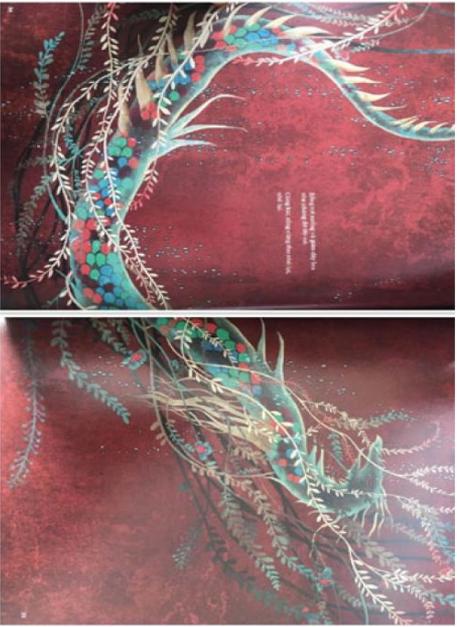
Figure 11. Analysis of Meta-functional Meaning in Spread 11th

Regarding *textual meaning*, the use of unbound framing in combination with the quantification choice of extent make the viewers feel the vast of the setting (nature scenes). Moreover, the power of the dragon is expressed in terms of its body shape, size, and the enormous amount of fire. Readers are also invited to share the feeling, emotions of the characters in the story world using unbound images across the analyzed spreads (Painter et al., 2013). For instance, the readers can have the frightened feeling when facing scene in which the giant dragon is spitting out fire everywhere. With respect to the salience, the depictions of the dragon in the 11th spread have the highest salient level. In this scene, the dragon has the largest size among other visual elements. Such a depiction highlights the power of the dragon and creates the feeling of frightening. In terms of information value, the dragon's body is placed in the foreground and depicted unusually big with the choice of left-right in combination with top-bottom. This makes the dragon's body reach both sides of the spread. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), visual elements on the left of an image carry old information and elements on the right present new information. In the 11th spread, the new information can be either the dragon (its first appearance within the story) and the fire spitted out from its mouth. However, the large stream of fire is placed on the very left of the spread instead of the right. This suggests that the viewers will be surprized with not only visual elements on the right, but also on the left, and even on the top due to such a special depiction of the dragon.

Meta-functional Meanings in Spread 16th

Interpretations of Spread 16th

With respect to *ideational meaning*, the 16th opening depicts a contrasting image of the dragon in comparison to its first appearance in the 11th spread. In its second depiction, with the choice of re-appear and varied descriptive details, the dragon is still shown in full body description, but with a smaller body size. The setting of the 16th spread is dark background and cool foreground.



The Mysterious Princesses (Spread 16th)

CHARACTER		IDEATIONAL MEANING			SETTING	
Character manifestation	Character appearance	Visual Action	Inter-event relations	Circumstances	Inter-circumstance	
Complete	Re-appear; varied attribution; descriptive detail (smaller size)	Non-transfactual actions: sleeping, lying on climbing flowers	Unfolding; succession between sequences of two images depicts unexpected next action or state	Background: dark foreground: cool with a blue dragon and flowers	Change context: Relocate Setting shifts to new location from previous image	

INTERPERSONAL MEANING						
FOCALISATION	SOCIAL DISTANCE	PROXIMITY	POWER	INVOLVEMENT	GRADUATION (FAVOR QUANTIFICATION)	AMBIGENCE
Observe	medium	x	eye-level	Involved	extent (ideational item takes up large amount of available space - the dragon)	Intrig. activated: Warmth: warm (reddish brown background); Activated: warm Familiarly: Removed

TEXTUAL MEANING		
INFORMATION VALUE	FRAMING	SALIENCE
Left-Right	Unbound; Contextualised (setting files depicted page)	The dragon has the highest salient level (placed in the middle of the frame, stretches towards left and right; blue against reddish brown background; long and big)

Figure 12. Analysis of Meta-functional Meaning in Spread 16th

This suggests that there is no more fire as the depicted scene in the first appearance of the dragon (spread 11th). Moreover, the choice of non-transactional visual action (the dragon is lying on clambering flowers) makes the dragon become less active and frightening as shown in the previous spread. This is an unexpected event which is illustrated by the choice of unfolding and succession. Also, the choice of inter-event relation together with the choice of inter-circumstance of changing context (relocate) help the readers understand that there are changes in setting as well as the dragon behaviour.

For *interpersonal meaning*, in comparison to the 11th image, the 16th spread depicts a completely contrasting image of the giant dragon. The dragon in this opening is peacefully lying on a 'hammock' made of clambering flowers. The viewers can see one of the dragon's eyes which are closing and falling into sleep through the focalising choice of *observe*. This is contrasting the wide-opening eyes as presented in the 11th spread. The dragon in this image is again shown at an eye-level angle indicating an equal power between the depicted character and the viewers. The social distance choice of *medium* makes the viewers engage (involved) with the world story to understand the peaceful atmosphere in which the dragon is enjoying. The dragon in this scene is depicted with a smaller body size (in comparison to the 11th spread) with the choice of *extent* in quantification evoking the feeling of completely collapsed and relax. The background is dark, but it is covered in warm colours (reddish-brown). This creates a harmonious combination with the cool colours of the dragon's body and the flowers. All visual elements seem to create an ideal condition for the dragon to relax and fall into sleep just like a baby lying on a hammock.

In terms of *Textual meaning*, the viewers may feel secured and peaceful just like the dragon's feeling in the 16th spread. Such a feeling is created by the ways the dragon is depicted in this spread. In particular, the dragon's long and big body stretches towards left and right of the spread without outstanding colour (blue) against the dark background (reddish brown). This makes the dragon be received the most attention (the highest salient element) from the readers when facing this spread. For the choice of arranging visual elements, in the 16th spread, the new information appears on the right in which the upper part of the dragon (head, eyes) informs the readers that the animal is going to sleep.

Meta-functional Meanings in Spread 19th

Interpretations of Spread 19th



The Mysterious Princesses (Spread 19)

CHARACTER		ACTION		SETTING		
Character manifestation	Character appearance	Visual Action	Inter-event relations	Circumstances	Inter-circumstance	
Complete	Re-appear, varied	Transactional action: the princess gazing out, kids kicking and chasing others.	Unfolding: succession/between sequences	Background: dark	Change context: Relocate	
	attention: descriptive detail the dragon turns into a princess)	Non-transactional action: dragon flying, kids crying, sitting angrily	Second of two images depicts unexpected next action or state	Foreground: a princess gazing out	Setting shifts to new location from previous image	
	Appear: First depictions of the children			midground: kid crying and getting angry		
INTRAPERSONAL MEANING						
FOCALISATION	SCALE DISTANCE	PROXIMITY	POWER	INVOLVEMENT	QUALIFICATION (FACE QUANTIFICATION)	ABBREVIANCE
The princess: direct (frontal gaze); mediated; Intended The Kids: Observe	Close: The princess Far: the kids	separate eye-level	involved (the princess) detached: the kids	upscaled/amount and extent	Intrase: activated; cool with Warmth: warm (red, orange, blue, white); Familiarity: Familiar	
TEXTUAL MEANING						
INFORMATION VALUE	FRAMING			SALIENCE		
Left-Right	Unbound: Contextualised (setting fills depicted page)			The princess has the most significant level of salience: occupies half of the spread; outstanding eyes, hair and horns on both sides of the head.		

Figure 13. Analysis of Meta-functional Meaning in Spread 19th

Regarding *Ideational meaning*, in the 19th, the sixth princess together with the dragon are presented verso (the left) in the choice of *metonymic manifestation* with head, two horns and full face of the princess and half-body of the dragon flying out from her head. This suggests that the dragon has turned into a princess, and in fact they are two kinds of the princess' appearance (i.e. she can turn into a dragon breathing fire). This is the magical power of the sixth princess. In addition to the images of the princess and the dragon, there are 5 children presented on the recto. These young characters are getting angry, crying, and chasing each other. There are two types of visual actions used again in this spread namely transactional (the princess is gazing out at the viewers; one child is chasing another while another kid is kicking at the other) and non-transactional (the dragon is flying out of the princess' head; kids are crying, sitting in anger). Such a use of both transactional and non-transactional visual actions creates a feeling of messy just like that in the 11th spread. Two series of characters' actions are depicted in two opposite openings in the setting choice of dark background with the princess gazing out in anger in the foreground and the children are behaving badly in the middle ground. This indicates that there is a connection between the children's behaviours and the princess' negative emotion.

For *interpersonal meaning*, the 19th spread depicts actions and emotions of two separate groups of characters (i.e. a girl - the sixth princess) and the children. The princess is presented in the foreground with two wide-opening eyes revealing her anger and uncomfortable facial expression through to contact choice of gazing out to the readers. This choice is to request the viewers to establish "an imaginary relation" with the presented character (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 89). In other words, the viewers may understand and directly feel the princess' emotions. Such an interpretation is strengthened by the close shot (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). The use of eye-level indicates the main character (the princess) and the viewers have the same level of power. There is still a blurred image of the dragon flying up from the princess' head. The dragon is again shown suggesting that the princess can transform into a powerful dragon and vice versa. On the recto (the right) of this spread, there are several children presented in various actions (i.e. crying, getting angry, and being naughty). The children's mood in this spread is very negative as we can see from facial expressions of the children and the princess. Moreover, the children are presented in an oblique angle with the social contact choice of *observe*. This means there is a wide distance between the young viewers and the children. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), when the character of an

image is depicted by a long shot, the character is understood as a stranger. In other words, the presented character does not belong the viewers' world. This suggests that young readers should not have similar behaviours of the depicted children in the scene.

With respect to *textual meaning*, the most prominent visual element in the 19th spread is not non-human, but human character (i.e. the princess). The depiction of the princess has the highest level of salience in this spread as it occupies almost half of the verso (the left). Her two widely opening eyes, which attract the viewers' attention the most, are gazing out to the viewers requesting them to establish contact. Other visual elements having a less significant level of salience are the depictions of the children presented in various actions on the recto (the right). For information value, in the 19th opening, the dragon transforms into a princess who is presented in the foreground on the left of the spread. With reference to the previous turning page, the princess is the old information (as she appears on the right in the previous turning page which is not analysed). This suggests that the viewers already get acquainted with the princess although this is the first time the princess' face is shown in full. The depictions of the children, which is placed on the right of the spread, indicate that their behaviours also need attention from the viewers.

IMPLICATION, LIMITATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we analyzed selected non-Western images in one children's picturebook about Vietnam based on a recent framework for interpreting picturebooks developed by Painter et al. (2013). Our analysis demonstrated that three types of meanings namely ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning can be explored via the application the framework proposed by Painter et al. (2013). Moreover, no point of contestation was identified through our analysis of selected images. As can be seen in the analysis, all analytical systems proposed by the framework of Painter et al. (2013) appear to work well with selected images. This is different from findings reported in other studies on other Vietnamese picturebooks (Huynh et al., 2018; 2019). This also suggests that further studies on the usefulness of Western framework in interpreting Vietnamese picturebooks should take more books into consideration.

Results of our study provide Vietnamese teachers with a reference to implement the use of picturebooks in teaching of intercultural generally and foreign language specifically. In particular, teachers can explicitly teach Vietnamese learners of English with metalanguage for

interpreting picturebooks. After that, students can use these terms to express their comprehension of visual elements/images illustrated in picturebooks. Teachers can also guide students to use the Western semiotic framework developed by Painter et al. (2013) for various activities such as making draws and writing their interpretations of the drawings, describing images illustrated in textbooks and so on. Such activities will help learners develop their use of English vocabulary and grammatical structures as well as learning to express their visual understanding. These activities can be organized in either writing or speaking lessons. Additionally, the Western framework for interpreting images can be integrated into the curriculum of pre-service English teacher education programme. This will help Vietnamese teachers English gain understanding of the ways Western images are presented and how to explore their meta-functional meanings in images. Such a knowledge in visual literacy will support Vietnamese teachers of English in their using of visual aids for teaching vocabulary, reading, listening, speaking and writing lessons.

However, the small number of selected images is one limitation of this paper. Therefore, future studies can take more images in various books to validate the usefulness of the framework used in this paper. Moreover, when applying the framework of Painter et al. (2013) to interpret selected images in this study, no culturally specific meanings were revealed. For instance, the images of dragon (spread 11th) and the hammock (spread 16th) are significant cultural images of Vietnamese cultures (Huynh et al., 2019; 2020), but the semiotic framework used in this study can't account for cultural meanings of these images. According to Serafini (2010), there should be more analytical frameworks to explore culturally specific meanings in picturebooks. Therefore, we recommend using an additional framework that cultural meanings of images can be revealed in addition to the current semiotic one. Future studies can consider developing or applying other frameworks to explore cultural meanings of images in Vietnamese picturebooks.

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APPENDIX

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Figure 4

- *Mogau's Smile*, written by Lorato Trock, illustrated by Shadrack Munene, published by Room to Read (© Shadrack Munene, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Retrieved from <https://literacycloud.org/stories/1613-mogau-s-smile/>
- *Cat and Mouse*, written by Phaswane Phokwane, illustrated by Jesse Petersen, published by Room to Read (© Jesse Petersen, 2016) under a CC BY 4.0 license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Retrieved from <https://literacycloud.org/stories/1771-cat-and-mouse/>
- *Who Want the Crown?*, written by Vu Thi Thuy Dung, illustrated by Phung Nguyen Quang, published by Room to Read (© Phung, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Retrieved from <https://literacycloud.org/stories/1411-who-wants-the-crown/>

Figure 5

- *Wake up Goat!*, written by Soriya Ley, illustrated by Try Samphos, published by Room to Read (© Samphos, 2017) under a CC BY 4.0 license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Retrieved from <https://literacycloud.org/stories/1528-wake-up-goat/>
- *Who Want the Crown?*, written by Vu Thi Thuy Dung, illustrated by Phung Nguyen Quang, published by Room to Read (© Phung, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
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Figure 6

- *We are Cold*, written by Kerri Thomsen, illustrated by Godwin Chipenya, published by Room to Read (© Chipenya, 2017). Retrieved from <https://literacycloud.org/stories/933-we-are-cold/>
- *Who Want the Crown?*, written by Vu Thi Thuy Dung, illustrated by Phung Nguyen Quang, published by Room to Read (© Phung, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
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Figure 7

- *Wake up Goat!*, written by Soriya Ley, illustrated by Try Samphos, published by Room to Read (©Samphos, 2017) under a CC BY 4.0 license
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- *Smong the Dragon*, written by Maya Lestari Gf, illustrated by Gilang Ayyoubi Hartanto, published by Bhuana Ilmu Popule (© Hartanto, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
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Figure 8

- *Mogau's Smile*, written by Lorato Trock, illustrated by Shadrack Munene, published by Room to Read (© Shadrack Munene, 2020) under a CC BY 4.0 license
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Figure 9

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TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHERS TO TEACH AND LEARNERS TO LEARN CULTURAL WORDS FROM EFL TEXTBOOKS

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ABSTRACT

Learning and memorizing vocabulary for a long time has popularly considered a significant issue among foreign language learners, including English ones. Students at Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE) have made their hardest effort to memorize a variety of new words, in general and cultural words, in particular from EFL textbooks in order to accomplish English tasks as well as possible. This brief research investigates several techniques utilized by English teachers to teach and by students to learn a large number of cultural words taken out from EFL textbooks chosen for the subject English at their tertiary institution. Such methods as in-depth interviews and online questionnaires for both lecturers of English (11 lecturers) and learners (21 students) from different faculties all over the university are implemented effectively so that the research paper is profoundly written and analyzed in details. The findings revealed that students knew for sure the importance of learning cultural words from EFL textbooks and developed their own effective techniques although a few of them did not show adequate effort to regularly memorize these words. As for lecturers, it was discovered obviously that they managed to assist their students to learn cultural words from EFL textbooks with specific techniques and closely followed their students' way to a much larger vocabulary range.

Keywords: *learning vocabulary, cultural words, Hanoi National University of Education, in-depth interviews, online questionnaires*

INTRODUCTION

New words tend to be something to bear in mind but hard to memorize and use in reality for all language learners. It can be seen obviously that the people who possess high competence of utilizing knowledge of English for gaining excellent bands in international English exams or working in the foreign language show their vast range of vocabulary of all cultural fields. To all these learners, they seem to be diligent in acquiring new words including cultural words from a variety of authentic and academic references. Certain students at Hanoi National University of Education also prove that mastering a huge number of vocabulary including cultural words from ELT textbooks enable them to reach high level of English in class and in English exams for international certificates such as IELTS, TOEIC, TOEFL, CEFR. On the contrary, a quantity of students encounter hardships in conquering high bands in English as their vocabulary is limited and not various.

Our research paper aims at introducing theoretical knowledge related to cultural words, teaching and learning cultural words from EFL textbooks in terms of applied linguistics, analyzing specific, practical findings from online questionnaires and interviews for teachers and students and finally proposing appropriate techniques of teaching and learning cultural words from EFL textbooks for students at HNUE.

The piece of writing is written in order to answer the following research questions:

- i) *How hard is it for students at HNUE to memorize cultural words from EFL textbooks?*
- ii) *What techniques are used to teach and learn cultural words from EFL textbooks?*
- iii) *How effective are the techniques lecturers use to teach and learners utilize to learn cultural words from EFL textbooks?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Cultural words

There appear a number of definitions of cultural key words in the history of linguistics. One researcher called Nurrohmah K. (2014, p.22) said that cultural words can be defined as particular words living embodiment of how a group of people interact or communicate with each other in a community and a period of time given which comprises ideas, customs, skills, art, tools and so on. A well-known author,

Wierzbicka A. (1997, p.5) owned another opinion related to cultural key words, in a sense, it may seem obvious that words with special, culture-specific meanings reflect and pass on not only ways of living characteristic of a given society but also ways of thinking. Owing similar opinion, author Goddard, Cliff (2015, p.386) explained that, “cultural key words” refers to particularly culture-rich and translation-resistant words occupying focal points in cultural ways of thinking, acting, feeling and speaking.

Several other researchers, namely Li F., Ran S., Xia T. (2010) called cultural key words as words with image culture, clarified that the words are the results of long lasting history and culture of tribes, closely associated with traditional legend or ancestors worship. They appeared in the man’s language and in literature, art works from generation to generation; then developed slowly as a signal of culture with comparative stability, typical cultural meaning; some even combine with universal cultural image. Thus, when mentioning these words, people figure out by themselves and they become more understandable in communication.

Another linguist discussed translating cultural words. Author Alousque N. I. (2009) expressed the idea that, a great deal of vocabulary in a particular language is culturally referent, which is specific for a language community. She added, meaning of recorded vocabulary on culture is normally hard to acquire without cultural knowledge, causing a lot of problems of translation, especially in case the words are associated with cultural fields.

In Vietnam, recently, Nguyen V. Chien (2004) confirmed that, cultural vocabulary is initially a fundamental unit of all the sources of cultural words of a language. Additionally, he analyzed that through meaning and semantic structure of vocabulary, cultural words are closely associated with definitions related to certain characteristics of people’s culture; they are forms of languages reflecting definitions of recording basic tribal cultural features; content of symbols from culture always reflects uniquely culture of a language when contrasting them with equivalent symbols of words in another language...; he further added, on the other side, cultural vocabulary, as fundamental symbols of languages, always shows distinctive things of the world outside the language. Author Nguyen T. D. My (2012), who did research on “means of translating Vietnamese cultural words in French”, mentioned means to figure out Vietnamese cultural vocabulary by French people. The author selected 3 fields that represent Vietnamese culture most obviously for her research, that is, customs, traditional costume and food.

Carrying out a doctoral thesis on cultural keywords, Nguyen L. Huong (2010) presented an overview of word's meaning in the relationship with culture in Vietnamese and international study, compared cultural and lexical semantics of Vietnamese and English cultural keywords, and also established a framework to compare cultural keywords. In details, her thesis contrasted and compared two groups: the semantics of cultural keywords with specific references and the semantics of cultural keywords with non-specific references between Vietnamese and English; as well, she identified and highlighted the similarities and differences on the linguistic (characteristics of semantics) and culture (characteristics of social life, perceptions, thinking...) between two cultural keywords groups of Vietnamese and England community.

As for types of words that carry culture, Wierzbicka A. (1997, p.17) clarified, "a key word such as *dusa* (roughly 'soul') or *sud'ba* (roughly 'fate') in Russian is like one loose end which we have managed to find in a tangled ball of wool: by pulling it, we may be able to unravel a whole tangled "ball" of attitudes, values, and expectations, embodied not only in words, but also in common collocations, in set phrases, in grammatical constructions, in proverbs, and so on." Hence, not only in single words but culture can also be found in collocations, set phrases, grammatical constructions and proverbs.

To classify cultural words, Newman P. (1988) assumed that, in a text all aspects of culture are expressed in cultural words. These aspects are divided in categories and sub-categories, namely:

- a. Ecology: It contains flora, fauna, mountains, rivers, plains, natural conditions, and so on.
- b. Material culture (artefacts): It is the culture specific element that consists of clothes, foods, housing, transportation, tools and equipment and so on.
- c. Social culture: work and leisure such as name of music, games or dance which are typical in certain areas.
- d. Social organization – political and administrative (Organization, customs, ideas, activities, procedures, concepts): Institutional terms, historical terms, international terms, religious terms, artistic terms.
- e. Gestures and habits: (often described in non-cultural language) are an activity or action carried out from generation to generation.

Also speaking about classification of cultural words, two other

researchers called Balaban A. & Çaylayan B. (2014) studied common cultural Turkish words in Albanian and Greek languages. The authors dealt with Turkish, Albanian and Greek common Turkish words which reflect the common cultural elements. These writers classified cultural words as followed:

1. Plant names;
2. Animal Names;
3. Food culture;
4. Goods, material or object words;
5. Maritime-related words;
6. Argo words;
7. Business and Money, weight, number and size;
8. Everyday cultural (abstract) words;
9. Urban Planning, building, building materials and related words with hand tools;
10. Nomenclaton words;
11. Games - fun words;
12. Military (war and peace) concepts and words;
13. Business, Occupational and Vocational names; Vocational Equipment and Supplies;
14. Geographical terms;
15. Clothing and Finery, Fabrics, Leather, Rope, Embroidery and Accessories;
16. Terms of Medicine and Health, Human and Animal limbs;
17. Paint, Color, Fragrance and Cosmetic.

Teaching and learning cultural words from EFL textbooks

Teaching and learning vocabulary has been widely studied all over the world. Waldvogel A. D. (2011) said that, an approach to facilitate vocabulary acquisition that has been gaining attention in L2 research and pedagogy is vocabulary learning strategies (VLS). The term vocabulary learning strategies in the present study refers to “any set of techniques or learning behaviors, which language learners reported using in order to discover the meaning of a new word, to retain the knowledge of newly-learned words and to expand one’s knowledge of vocabulary” (Intaraprasert, 2004, p.53). Studies reveal that adults are perfectly capable of actively engaging in the management of their own vocabulary learning; even more so than with other language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening, and grammar (Schmitt, 2000). Schmitt believes that this is the case because of the relatively discrete nature of vocabulary learning compared to more integrated language activities, which makes it easier to apply learning strategies to vocabulary learning.

Based on results from three landmark studies on L2 vocabulary acquisition conducted in the 1980s by Cohen and Aphek (1981), O’Malley et al. (1985) and Ahmed (1989), researchers developed some hypotheses on the VLS most commonly used by L2 30 learners. These authors argued that memorization, dictionary use, note-taking, visual and oral repetition are the most common learning strategies among L2 learners. The results of these studies also support the idea that many

beginning-level L2 learners prefer mechanical, less cognitively-demanding VLS over more complex metacognitive ones (Schmitt, 1997).

It is an important factor to consider since research in cognitive psychology has shown that the more cognitive effort is invested in learning a word, the easier it becomes to recall that word at a later time (Baumann, Kame'enui, & Ash, 2003; Borer, 2007; Grace, 1998; Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997). Unfortunately, most research studies on VLS have mainly focused on a single or a small number of learning strategies—keyword mnemonics, context inferencing and memorization—and therefore, they reveal relatively little about the many learning techniques that most L2 students actually use outside the classroom. (Waldvogel, 2011, p.30)

Relatively few studies (Catalán, 2003; Fan, 2003; Gu, 2002; Schmitt, 1997; Stoffer, 1995) have looked at an all-inclusive and more exhaustive group of 31 strategies used as a whole by L2 learners and the effects of these strategies on vocabulary acquisition. As Gu and Johnson (1996), Lawson and Hogben (1996) and Sanaoui (1995) all point out, most L2 learners use a variety of different strategies, and the combinations of strategies used may be far more important and predictive of vocabulary acquisition than the effect of one single learning strategy.

Cohen (1990) developed a taxonomy for VLS divided into three broad categories: strategies for remembering words, semantic strategies, and vocabulary learning and practicing strategies.

Category 1: Strategies for Remembering Words: Using Rote-repetition by repeating the word and its meaning until it seems to have stuck; Using Mnemonic Associations:

1. By linking the word to the sound of a word in the native language to the sound of a word in the language being learned, or to the sound of a word in another language
2. By attending to the meaning of a part or several parts of the word;
3. By noting the structure of part or all of the word;
4. By placing the word in the topic group to which it belongs;
5. By visualizing the word in isolation or in a written context;
6. By linking the word to the situation in which it appeared;
7. By creating a mental image of the word;
8. By associating some physical sensation to the word;
9. By associating the word to a keyword;
10. By using of mnemonic device in order to create a cognitive link between an unfamiliar foreign language word or its translation by means of a cognitive mediator.

Category 2: Semantic Strategies: Thinking of synonyms so as to build a network of interlinking concepts; Clustering words by topic group or

type of word; Linking the word to the sentence in which it was found or to another sentence

Category 3: Vocabulary Learning and Practicing Strategies: Word and Structure Analysis (analyze the word according to its roots, affixes, and inflections as a way to understand its meaning); The Learning of Cognates (words in two languages which are from the same source); Using a Dictionary; The Use of Flash Cards; Grouping; Cumulative Vocabulary Study.

Rubin and Thompson (1994) proposed three broad VLS categories: the direct approach, the use mnemonics, and the indirect approach.

Category 1: Direct Approach: Put the words and their definitions on individual cards; Say the words aloud or write them over and over again as they study; Compose sentences with the words they are studying; Tape record the words and their definition, if they prefer to learn through the ear; Color-code words by parts of speech, if they prefer to learn through the eye

Category 2: Use Mnemonics: Use rhyming; Use alliteration; Associate words with the physical world; Associate words with their functions; Use natural word associations, such as opposites; Learn classes of words; Learn related words; Group words by grammatical class; Associate words with context.

Category 3: Indirect Approach: Read a series of texts on a related topic; Guess the meaning of words from context; Break up the word into components.

Nation (2001) proposed a taxonomy of the different kinds of VLS which attempts to separate aspects of vocabulary knowledge from sources of vocabulary knowledge and learning processes. Nation's taxonomy is broken down into three broad categories: planning, sources, and processes. Planning strategies involve deciding where to focus the learner's attention, how to focus attention, and how often to give attention to the word. This category includes four types of VLS: choosing words, choosing the aspect of word knowledge, choosing strategies, and planning repetition. Source strategies refer to the sources of information about the new word: Analyzing word parts, using context, consulting a dictionary, and using parallels in L1 and L2. Process strategies refer to strategies learners use to remember vocabulary and making it available for use: Noticing, retrieving, and generating (or use).

Vocabulary learning is an incremental process, both for sheer numbers

of words and for specific lexical items (Schmitt, 2010, p. 19). Research indicates the aspects of word knowledge seem to go from zero to partial to more precise development (Nation & Webb, 2011). Vocabulary learning strategies are useful in learning/ reviewing new word or phrases (Schmitt, 2000). Otherwise students simply forget what they are learning and have learned. Try using word cards and word parts, guessing from context, and dictionary use (Nation & Meara, 2010).

It can be seen clearly that all the research papers focused on vocabulary learning, in general. Learning cultural words is not mentioned in details. In fact, cultural words are among general range of vocabulary.

Speaking about teaching vocabulary, Clouston L. M. (2012, p.2-3) revealed that:

- 1) It's key to understand something about the vocabulary of the language being learned.
- 2) Be sure to get to know your students, their learning goals, and vocabulary knowledge.
- 3) It's important to have guidelines for how to teach vocabulary – in classes, tutoring, etc.
- 4) Use corpora, where possible, to inform your teaching and students' vocabulary learning.

In teaching vocabulary, Nation (2008) suggests using four strands for teaching: 1) meaning focused input for listening and reading practice, particularly with graded readers, 2) meaning focused output for speaking and writing, 3) deliberate vocabulary teaching, using rich vocabulary instruction, raising students' word consciousness, and teaching vocabulary learning strategies, and 4) developing fluency with vocabulary across language skills (practice, making connections with already known vocabulary). Nation and Meara (2010) provide a summary of these strands. In this view, Nation (2008) argues that the learner's main jobs are to use the language, focus on deliberate learning, and take responsibility for their vocabulary learning.

In word knowledge, Zimmerman (2009) suggests “word consciousness” is key, including the “often entertaining reminder that language is human, not always consistent, and often confusing” (p.3). Features to consider include register, precision, word choices in speech and writing, collocation, and word formation, and guidelines for vocabulary teaching in various classes are to: 1) Be selective about the words targeted in

lessons, by explaining, recycling, and practicing words appropriate to students, based on frequency, salience, learners' goals, and the learning burden of words (p. 6-8), 2) Be particular about the information presented, by pre-teaching words briefly based on the information relevant to particular activities (and notice student errors, p. 9), 3) Provide sufficient repetition (10+ encounters is good, p. 9), spacing these and using various types of class tasks for introduction/repetition (p.10), 4) Offer effective vocabulary practice by structuring lessons carefully (use familiar vocabulary, repeat themes, sequence practice), using "interesting and relevant contexts", and making it meaningful, interactive, and focused through practicing functions, using teachable moments, and facilitating "student-centered group work" (p.11-12), and 5) Monitor student understanding and learning through regular feedback. This approach assumes/builds on an incremental view of vocabulary learning.

- Students should be taught to learn and use words as much as possible in context, so always give example sentences. Teachers should actively teach the meaning of specific words, using various materials, strategies, and techniques that are appropriate to their students and context

- Using themes in teaching/using reading can help L2/FL learners develop their general academic and specialized vocabulary knowledge in content areas (Freeman & Freeman, 2003).

One research found on cultural vocabulary in English textbooks done by Alonso C. A. and Ponte C. D. (2015) carefully had an analysis of cultural vocabulary in English textbooks. The research made it clear that the number of cultural vocabulary in English textbooks are not balanced, most of the words are on such topics as geographical places and celebrities.

Generally, most of the research was done on vocabulary teaching and learning. Not many works mentioned teaching and learning cultural words including which from EFL textbooks, in particular. Our research paper deals with teaching and learning cultural words from EFL textbooks.

METHODOLOGY

Research settings and participants

The research was carried out with the participation of 11 EFL lecturers at Faculty of English, HNUE and 21 students from different faculties who took English 3, level A2 in 1st semester of school year 2019-2020.

Lecturers' age ranged from 24 to 50, who were considered experienced EFL lecturers at HNUE. Students were 19-20 years old; they were in their 2nd year at university. English 3 was their final General English course after they had finished English 1 and English 2.

Research instruments

Certain cultural words from EFL textbooks that students at HNUE were selected as subjects of the research. These words originate from different parts of each session including reading, vocabulary, listening, speaking, grammar. The vocabulary belongs to a variety of cultural topics that were mentioned in each session of the textbook called New English File (upper-intermediate). These cultural words from EFL textbooks were put in a variety of exercises in the books for students to accomplish in order that students memorized them for a long time.

Moreover, Google Form was utilized for findings analysis from the research. Initially, questions for questionnaires and interviews were posted online, then students and lecturers responded directly from links sent to their emails. Researchers did not worry about manually handling the responses and calculating numbers and percentage.

Data collection and analysis

Two major methods were utilized for data collection throughout the research, that is, online questionnaires for students and in-depth interviews for EFL lecturers at HNUE. It is a case study.

Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were carried out at the end of 1st semester of school year 2019-2020 after students finished their course of English 3 and were waiting for the final exam. After that, findings were analyzed online with pie charts and bar charts; additionally, detailed responses to questions were discussed for final conclusions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Here are key findings for questionnaires and in-depth interviews.

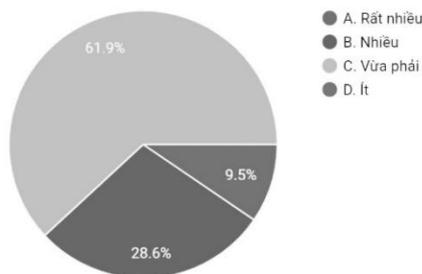
Questionnaires for students

For question 1 (*How many new cultural words can you find in your current English textbooks? A. Quite a lot B. A lot C. Average D. Few*), 61.9% participants asserted that the number of new cultural words in their current EFL textbooks are of average; whereas, only 9.5% said it was a large figure. That means, most students did not find it too hard to

accumulate new English cultural words in EFL textbooks; however, the rest (more than 38%) were discovered to encounter troubles in comprehending reading texts and practicing other skills.

1. How many new cultural words can you find in your current English textbooks?

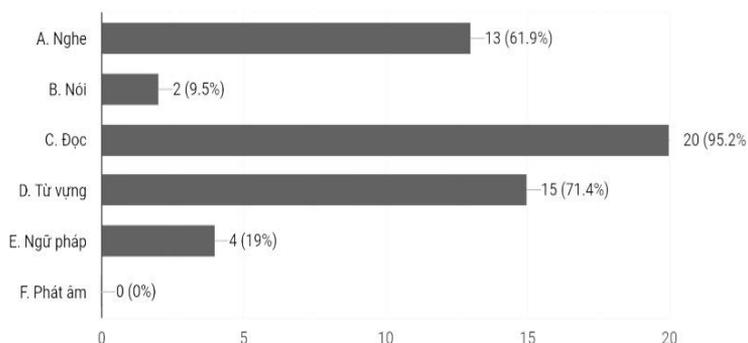
21 responses



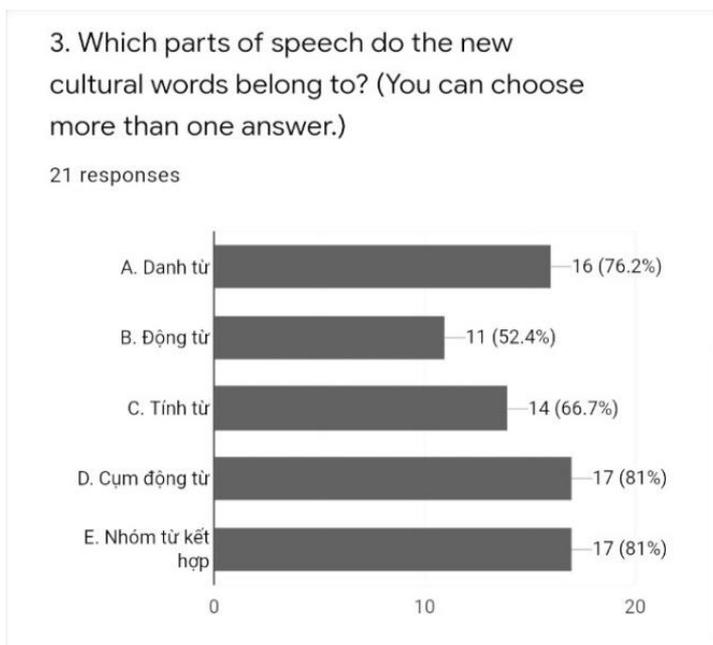
Question 2 (*In which part of the session can you find new cultural vocabulary? (You can choose more than one answer.)* A. Listening B. Speaking C. Reading D. Vocabulary E. Grammar F. Pronunciation) focused on parts in each session to be found with new English cultural words. While nearly all the students claimed that reading texts are at number one in terms of new cultural words, pronunciation part was confirmed with 0% of new cultural words from all these participants. It seems to be a common sense that reading section comprises new English cultural words for every level of English.

2. In which part of the session can you find new cultural vocabulary? (You can choose more than one answer.)

21 responses



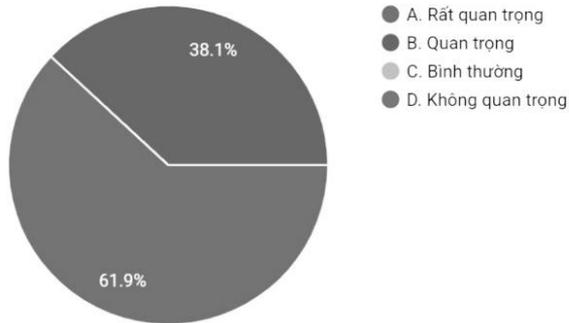
In terms of parts of speech for these English cultural words (3. *Which parts of speech do the new cultural words belong to? (You can choose more than one answer.)* A. Noun B. Verb C. Adjective D. Phrasal verbs E. Collocation), 17 over 21 students responded that they belonged to phrasal verbs and collocations. These types of words can be seen to be the hardest rocks to overcome compared to nouns (16 out of 21), adjectives (14 out of 21) and verbs (11 over 21).



Concerning importance of learning new cultural words (4. *In your opinion, how important is it to learn new cultural words? A. Very important B. Important C. So so D. Not important*), it is good news that all the students considered it important and very important to pick up these words while learning a foreign language. Specifically, 61.9% reported that they found this important in comparison with 38.1% who thought it was very important.

4. In your opinion, how important is it to learn new cultural words?

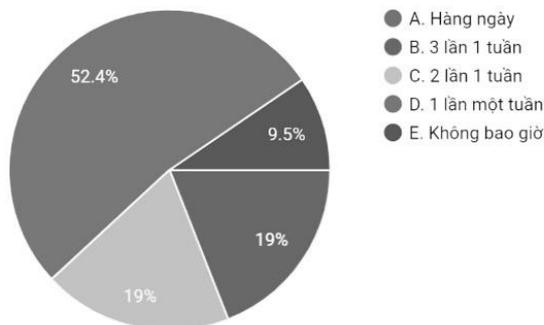
21 responses



Speaking about frequency of learning new English cultural words (5. *How often do you learn new cultural words? A. Every day B. 3 times a week C. 2 times a week D. once a week E. Never*), it can be seen obviously that 52.4% explained they acquired them once a week. This can be because they attended English class once a week; at that time they learn new cultural words in class or possibly they reviewed the previous lesson at home the night before the class. It is optimistic that 19% of the students reported they picked up new cultural words twice a week; as well, 19% asserted that they acquired new cultural words three times a week. Nevertheless, it is not good that there witnessed 9.5% of these participants who never learnt any new cultural words.

5. How often do you learn new cultural words?

21 responses



Question 6 is crucial to respond in the survey (*What techniques do you usually apply to learn new cultural words from your EFL textbooks? (You can choose more than one answer.)*)

A. Note down new cultural words in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks: part of speech, meaning, examples, pronunciation.

B. In class, read the new cultural words many times to memorize.

C. At home, when reviewing or before the English lesson in the next day, look at the new cultural words again with examples, pronunciation, then practice writing the words many times for long-term memory.

D. At home, practice writing examples for the new cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks.

E. At home, look at exercises lecturer corrected which contained new cultural words noted down in notebooks to learn to use these words more smoothly.

F. Besides the cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks, learn other cultural words on similar topics or collocations to expand vocabulary range (in vocabulary books or on the Internet).

G. Practice using new cultural words by talking to classmates in English in class/ at English club/ with foreigners in the street.

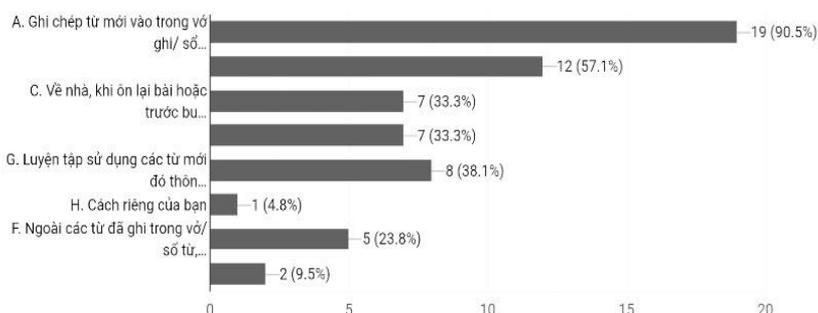
H. Your own techniques)

It is about techniques students applied to learn new cultural words from ELT textbooks. Of all the six techniques, 90.5% found the very first one most effective to apply (*A. Note down new cultural words in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks: part of speech, meaning, examples, pronunciation*). This tends to be the most common technique that students in Vietnam utilize to learn new cultural words. Words are noted down in notebooks and carried to everywhere so that learners are able to open and learn any time they find convenient. Another technique which was also favored by 57.1% was technique B (*B. In class, read the new cultural words many times to memorize*). This second technique can be implemented in class during the lesson or at break time, which is comparatively simple and does not take much time at home where students spend their time doing other things. Other techniques were also applied by students including: *C. At home, when reviewing or before the English lesson in the next day, look at the new cultural words again with examples, pronunciation, then practice writing the words many times for long-term memory (33.3%); D. At home, practice writing examples for*

the new cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks (9.5%); E. At home, look at exercises lecturer corrected which contained new cultural words noted down in notebooks to learn to use these words more smoothly (33.3%); F. Besides the cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks, learn other cultural words on similar topics or collocations to expand vocabulary range (in vocabulary books or on the Internet) (23.8%); G. Practice using new cultural words by talking to classmates in English in class/ at English club/ with foreigners in the street (38.1%).

6. What techniques do you usually apply to learn new cultural words from your ELT textbooks? (You can choose more than one answer.)

21 responses



Referring to question 7 (*In your opinion, of all the above techniques to learn new cultural words from ELT textbooks, which one is the most effective? Why?*), 17 responses were found. Each student owned a different answer. The very most typical responses are currently clarified. Some chose techniques A, B, D, F, G. They explained their choice with specific reasons including: *they learnt new cultural words in class as at home they did not have time for this subject, they had to focus on their majors; or they noted down new cultural words because this enabled them to open their notebooks any time to see and learn, which made them to memorize the words for a long time; or giving examples for the new cultural words encouraged students to use the words correctly; or learning to pronounce words benefited them in enhancing listening and speaking skills.* Several students said they had their own techniques to learn new cultural words.

For question 8 (*In your opinion, when you frequently learn and practice using new cultural words from ELT textbooks, how useful is it to improve your command of English? (You can choose more than one option.)*)

A. My vocabulary range is more various.

B. I find it easier to practice 4 skills of English and finish English exercises as I have larger vocabulary range.

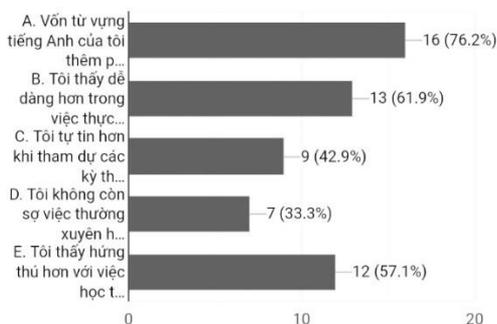
C. I am more self-confident to take part in English exams at university and other English competitions and exams (singing English songs competition, English Olympic, Mid-term English test, End-of-term English test, English exam for B1 CEFR certificate, English exams for Toeic/ Ielts/ Toefl certificates).

D. I am no longer afraid of frequently learning English cultural words from EFL textbooks, I am really active to find out appropriate and effective techniques to learn new cultural words for myself.

E. I am more interested in learning English and start to learn English cultural words in real situations, such as: watching films with English subtitles, listening and singing English songs, reading stories/ materials in English on the Internet, reading English words/ phrases on shop signs, talking to foreigners.), all 21 participants responded with different answers. 76.2% chose A (*My vocabulary range is more various*); whereas, 61.9% selected B (*I find it easier to practice 4 skills of English and finish English exercises as I have larger vocabulary range*). Option C (*I am more self-confident to take part in English exams at university and other English competitions and exams (singing English songs competition, English Olympic, Mid-term English test, End-of-term English test, English exam for B1 CEFR certificate, English exams for TOEIC/ IELTS/ TOEFL certificates)*) received 9 choices (42.9%). 33.3% chose option D (*I am no longer afraid of frequently learning English cultural words from EFL textbooks, I am really active to find out appropriate and effective techniques to learn new cultural words for myself*). The final option, option E (*I am more interested in learning English and start to learn English cultural words in real situations, such as: watching films with English subtitles, listening and singing English songs, reading stories/ materials in English on the Internet, reading English words/ phrases on shop signs, talking to foreigners*) was chosen by 12 participants (57.1%). From the data collected for question 8, majority of the students cared about their vocabulary range first, then followed by 4 skills of English.

8. In your opinion, when you frequently learn and practice using new cultural words from ELT textbooks, how useful is it to improve your command of English? (You can choose more than one answer.)

21 responses

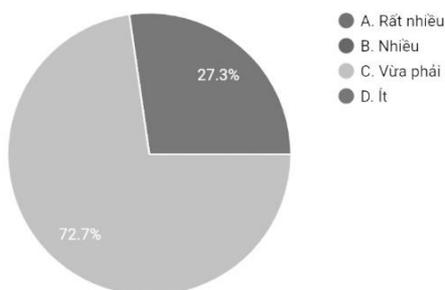


Questionnaire and In-depth Interviews for EFL lecturers

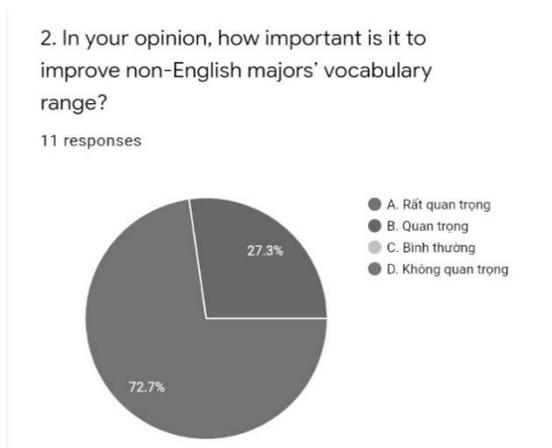
Mentioning students' vocabulary range (1. In your opinion, how large is non-English majors' vocabulary range at Hanoi National University of Education? A. Quite a lot B. A lot C. Average D. Little), 72.7% lecturers claimed that it was of average; even 27.3% said it was little. This fact can be because English was not regarded as their major, thus, they only need to achieve average score for it; they spent most of their other time on their majors which were seen to be most pivotal for their final assessment at university.

1. In your opinion, how large is non-English majors' vocabulary range at Hanoi National University of Education?

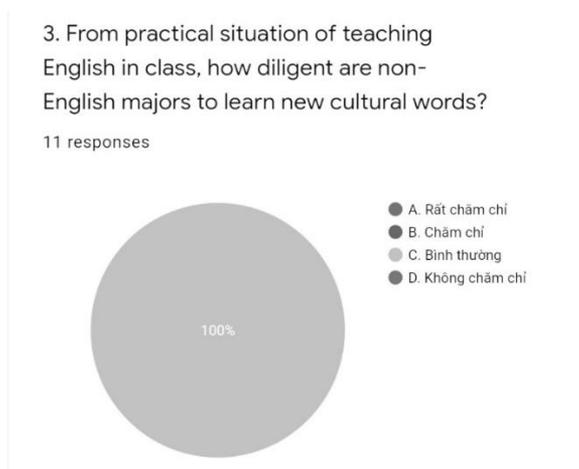
11 responses



All the lecturers confirmed that improving students' vocabulary is important (2. *In your opinion, how important is it to improve non-English majors' vocabulary range? A. Very important B. Important C. So so D. Not important*). In details, 72.7% said it was very important; the rest (27.3%) agreed that it was important. Thus, lecturers were aware of the significance of assisting students to enhance their vocabulary range including cultural words.



However, another fact could be witnessed from question 3 (*From practical situation of teaching English in class, how diligent are non-English majors to learn new cultural words? A. Very hard-working B. Hard-working C. So so D. Not hard-working*). 100% of the lecturers agreed that all the students were not very diligent to learn new English cultural words. Possibly they encountered troubles acquiring these words, which required lecturers' assistance.



In terms of effectiveness of the techniques that students applied to learn new cultural words, question 5 (*In your opinion, how effective are techniques non-English majors use to learn new cultural words from EFL textbooks? Please explain.*) received 9 responses from lecturers. Hereinafter the authors would like to cite several distinctive ideas.

“The students who did exercises in workbook and learnt new cultural words were more likely to get involved in more quickly. I observed that these students played vocabulary games enthusiastically and quickly found the correct answers.”

“Their techniques were comparatively effective. Students learnt new cultural words in context, then did exercises with the words included and their vocabulary was extended.”

“The techniques were not very effective as students just learnt the new cultural words by heart; they did not use them in real situations.”

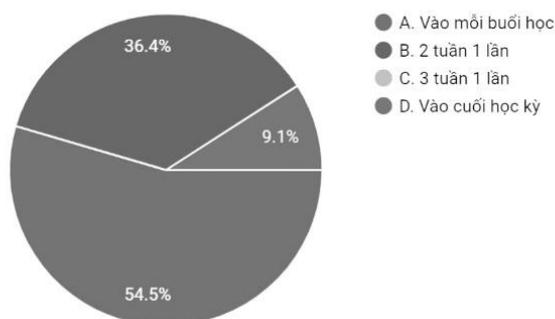
“I don’t know what techniques students applied, so I couldn’t assess the effectiveness.”

Based on factual situations in class, lecturers gave different responses. Some of them reported that the techniques applied by students were not truly effective; on the contrary, others ensured that students could finish vocabulary exercises including those related to new cultural words from EFL textbooks, which meant that the techniques did work well.

Turning to frequency that lecturers revised new cultural words in EFL textbooks (6. *How often do you revise and provide non-English majors with new cultural words from EFL textbooks? A. In every English lesson B. Every 2 weeks C. Every 3 weeks D. At the end of semester*), it was shown from findings for question 6 that, 54.5% of them did this in every lecture. This fact is good for students although it requires lecturers’ effort to manage in class. 36.4 % of them asserted that that job was carried out every two weeks; only 9.1% explained that revision for cultural words was done at the end of semester. This is a must-do section in class in case students do not pick up cultural words by themselves; at that time, lecturers should do their best to review and enlarge their vocabulary range.

6. How often do you revise and provide non-English majors with new cultural words from ELT textbooks?

11 responses



A pivotal question to mention is question 7 (*Please share the techniques you have applied to assist non-English majors reinforce and learn more cultural words from EFL textbooks. Thank you for your sharing.*) 10 responses could be seen. The authors would like to cite here several answers.

Several lecturers improved students' new cultural words through apps, games, vocabulary exercises, video clips or English songs.

"I assigned students exercises with new cultural words included to practice." "I usually revise students' new cultural words through such activities as Board race, password game, etc, and other activities like video clips and English songs." "I made use of apps and games." "I normally tested students' vocabulary they had learnt in textbooks through exercises or games." "I usually let students play games or watch video clips with the new cultural words appearing on them so that students practice the words in context. Such activity as making sentences with 3 words learnt is also of great benefits." "I designed some more exercises for students to practice utilizing the new cultural words they had learnt such as gap filling or matching words/ phrases with meanings."

The others had their own ways to assist students enrich their range of cultural words in English.

"I prepare in advance small pieces of paper with new cultural words written in them; divide students into groups. Each student takes one

piece and explains the word in English and the others in the group make a guess what the word is. Each student prepares 5 pieces of paper with 5 words noted down, put all the pieces in a box for frequent use.” “I told students the methods to effectively learn new cultural words, then assign them exercises with new cultural words in the textbook to finish right in class; I explained difficult words for them. I also encouraged students to look up new cultural words on their smartphones by themselves, note down meanings, pronunciation and practice reading the words many times to memorize these words.” “I guided students to read more reading passages of the topics similar to which in textbooks to memorize and enlarge their cultural words.”

From perspective of time to reinforce and introduce new cultural words from EFL textbooks in class (8. *Please share, when do you reinforce and introduce cultural words from EFL textbooks in class? (You can choose more than one answer.)*)

A. Lead-in B. Pre-reading, Pre-listening, Pre-speaking, Pre-writing

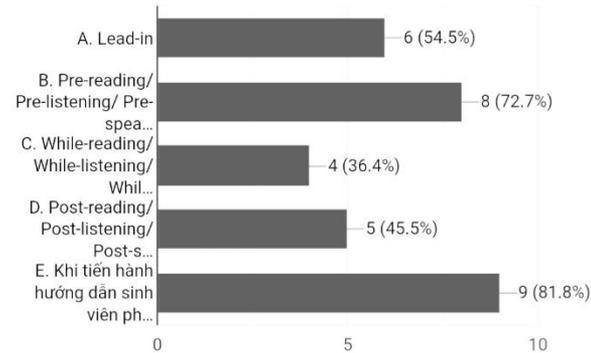
C. While-reading, While-listening, While-speaking, While-writing

D. Post-reading, Post-listening, Post-speaking, Post-writing

E. When instructing students to learn Vocabulary section in textbooks), 81.8% of the lecturers chose option E (When instructing students to learn Vocabulary section in textbooks); whereas, 72.7% chose option B (Pre-reading, Pre-listening, Pre-speaking, Pre-writing). The time to carry out activities of revising cultural words plays a vital role in their success in class.

8. Please share, when do you reinforce and introduce cultural words from ELT textbooks in class? (You can choose more than one answer.)

11 responses



Question 9 (*Besides cultural words from EFL textbooks, how often do you provide students with more cultural words related to the topics in EFL textbooks? Each time, how many new cultural words do you introduce and what parts of speech are the new cultural words?*) received 10 responses from the lecturers. Here are their answers.

"Sometimes I enlarge students' range of cultural words. Normally, I introduced them 10 words each time, nouns, collocations and adjectives." "About 5 words each time, normally nouns, verbs, adjectives." "Each time I introduced about 20 new cultural words, normally nouns or verbs." "Normally, based on the topics in EFL textbooks, I carried out activities in Lead-in Section in every lecture. It depended on the difficulties of the topics for students' levels that I gave students appropriate number of new cultural words, about 10 words, frequently nouns." "I often played videos for students to watch. Before watching, I introduced students about 4-5 cultural key words."

"I gave students different meanings of the same word, different parts of speech originating from the cultural words in the textbooks." "For each new cultural word, I provided students with example, expressions, synonyms or antonyms."

"It depends whether it is A1 or A2 classes that I introduced more or fewer new cultural words. In fact, there appeared a number of new cultural words in Vocabulary Bank Section in EFL textbooks."

Normally, I assigned students exercises with new cultural words included and encouraged them to finish, then correct them and explained if the students didn't understand. Besides, I still encouraged students to read more authentic materials to broaden their range of cultural words."

"I don't usually introduce students new cultural words as they had to finish a lot of exercises and tests." "I didn't introduce students new cultural words in class."

This piece of writing answered the research questions thoroughly and specifically.

For question i) (*How hard is it for students at HNUE to memorize cultural words from EFL textbooks?*), it was clarified that, although students were aware of the importance of learning new cultural words, they did not frequently learn them from EFL textbooks. Just over 50% of participants said that they learn new cultural words once a week (they had English lesson once a week). It was also assessed by EFL lecturers that students' vocabulary range was of average only. It means that the students were not truthfully diligent to pick up new cultural words from EFL textbooks.

For question ii) (*What techniques are used to teach and learn cultural words from EFL textbooks?*): Questionnaire for students showed that they used different techniques to learn cultural words from ELT textbooks, including:

A. Note down new cultural words in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks: part of speech, meaning, examples, pronunciation; B. In class, read the new cultural words many times to memorize; C. At home, when reviewing or before the English lesson in the next day, look at the new cultural words again with examples, pronunciation, then practice writing the words many times for long-term memory; D. At home, practice writing examples for the new cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks; E. At home, look at exercises lecturer corrected which contained new cultural words noted down in notebooks to learn to use these words more smoothly; F. Besides the cultural words noted down in notebooks/ vocabulary handbooks, learn other cultural words on similar topics or collocations to expand vocabulary range (in vocabulary books or on the Internet); G. Practice using new cultural words by talking to classmates in English in class/ at English club/ with foreigners in the street.

Among all the mentioned techniques, majority of students (90.5%) applied the very first techniques to learn new cultural words form EFL

textbooks. It was followed by technique B, with 57.1%.

In terms of techniques lecturers applied for teaching cultural words from EFL textbooks, 6 out of 11 lecturers reported that they reviewed cultural words from EFL textbooks for students in every English lesson; 4 over 11 said they did that job every 2 weeks; only 1 lecturer explained she did that at the end of semester. They shared a variety of techniques they utilized in class, including: assigning students exercises in EFL textbooks to do, instructing students how to learn cultural words effectively, explaining difficult words, encouraging them to look up new cultural words in smartphone and note down in notebooks, designing vocabulary games (for example, Board Race, Password game) for students to play in class, playing video clips, songs in English, designing more exercises outside which in EFL textbooks for further practice, encouraging students to find more reading texts of similar topics on the Internet to read for broadening their cultural vocabulary range, asking students to make up sentences using the cultural words they learn in class, checking students' cultural words in every English lesson.

For question iii) (*How effective are techniques lecturers use to teach and learners utilize to learn cultural words from EFL textbooks?*): Findings from questionnaires for students revealed that each student had different techniques to learn new cultural words from EFL textbooks. They even applied a variety of techniques for different situations of learning. Some found that effective to note down new cultural words in notebooks and looked at them many times; some others thought it would be effective to watch films, video clips, songs in English; even several students appreciated the technique of making up sentences with cultural words or reading the words again and again or talking with classmates in English. Most importantly, the techniques were appropriate and effective for themselves, which could be shown obviously in English tests or exams.

Based on lecturers' ideas, those students who frequently acquired new cultural words both in class and at home tended to be active to join in activities in class, understand the lessons and finish exercises from EFL textbooks quickly and merrily. These students also got good results in mid-term tests and end-of-term exams. The rest of students who were not hard-working enough to learn new cultural words frequently owned limited vocabulary range and found it hard to get involved in activities in class and were unlikely to make progress every week.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

From research findings, it was shown clearly that students were aware of the significance of acquiring cultural words from EFL textbooks. Some of them did have appropriate and effective techniques to learn these cultural words. As well, EFL lecturers at HNUE made effort to assist students to possess large cultural vocabulary range from EFL textbooks with numerous techniques applied in class.

However, there appeared some students who were not diligent and active enough to learn more and more cultural words from EFL textbooks irrespective frequent assistance from EFL lecturers. These students need to be encouraged and tested in every lesson so that they focus on learning English cultural words and skills to accomplish English tests and exams well.

For limited time and scope of study, the research was carried out as a case study for 11 EFL lecturers and 21 A2-level non-English majors at HNUE. For further research, the authors expect to expand the research to a larger number of EFL lecturers and students at HNUE and other educational institutions.

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HELPING VIETNAMESE STUDENTS WITH NO INTEREST IN WESTERN CULTURES IMPROVE ENGLISH SPEAKING SKILL: PRACTICAL TECHNIQUES

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ABSTRACT

It is undeniable that language learning has to be accompanied by cultural acknowledgement. However, not all language learners, especially Vietnamese students, are fond of Western culture, not mentioning some even dislike the culture of native English speakers. This leads to numerous obstacles for English teachers to overcome to help their students acquire the language, including how to apply authentic materials in teaching speaking skill for Vietnamese students while they have no interest in an unfamiliar culture. Confronted with a post-elementary speaking class including some students with no interest in Western culture, I decided to adopt and modify authentic materials based on their cultural interests and their major at university, and apply proper communicative activities to help them feel comfortable with their original fondness. After 3 months, positive outcome was witnessed, as the students could make small talks to express their own perspectives in English, which had been impossible for them to complete before. Some even reached intermediate level of English speaking although their attitude towards British and American culture has not changed much. This has paved a path for future study whether language teachers should utilise coursebooks, or they should compile the authentic materials based on students' penchant and majors.

Keywords: *cultural interest, language acquisition, authentic materials, speaking skill*

INTRODUCTION

In this teaching practice paper, I would like to report the techniques which I applied in order to improve students' level of speaking skill and gain their awareness of Western cultures through getting access to authentic materials, together with the positive results collected after applying new teaching techniques. Specific techniques applied to a small speaking class have proved the practicability and efficiency of authentic materials in helping students improve the speaking skill despite their cultural indifference, as long as teachers adopt and apply the proper materials.

This teaching practice paper also has led to future directions of whether language teachers should utilise coursebooks, or they should compile the authentic materials based on students' penchant and majors. It is necessary to conduct an intensive research to find the answer for this issue in near future.

REASONS FOR INNOVATION

Speaking skill is undoubtedly crucial to language learners, and teaching speaking skill requires a lot of teachers' effort and experience. Although Richards (2001) created the "supermethod" for teaching language, some educators claim that no methods are supposed to be the "best" to teach language, and no techniques work the same in all speaking classes. Instead, language teachers should be equipped with a combination of methods and a set of techniques in order to get the most of them. Applying authentic materials in teaching speaking skill also needs specific techniques so that teachers and students can make the most use of them. Authentic materials not only provide good vocabulary and functional structures for appropriate communication in specific contexts, but also introduce Western cultures to learners in a natural way.

Only linguistic competence is not sufficient for language learners to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999). It will be extremely difficult for them when it comes to sociolinguistic knowledge. In fact, as language learners, they are required to comprehend idiomatic expressions, cultural references and figures of speech, which all play a crucial role in language competence. It is undeniable that language and culture are inseparable, and that language learning has to be accompanied by cultural acknowledgement. "Language does not exist apart from culture, that is, from the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives" (Sapir, 1921, p. 207). However, not all language learners, especially Vietnamese students, are fond of

Western cultures, not mentioning that some even dislike the culture of native English speakers. The one and only reason why a large number of Vietnamese students try to learn the language is school obligation and future career's requirement, which is not an intrinsic motivation for them to make progress in language learning.

This leads to numerous obstacles for English teachers to overcome in order to help their students acquire the language. One of the most difficult issues would be how to apply authentic materials in teaching speaking skill for Vietnamese students while they have no interest in the culture unfamiliar to them. They would find authentic materials too strange and difficult to access, while these are the good source of structures, lexical items and close-to-life communicative contexts.

TEACHING CONTEXT

My last semester started with a speaking class of 21 freshmen whose major was English at university. After a quick check at the beginning of the first lesson, their English was considered to be at post-elementary level of English speaking skill at the beginning of the course, but there were about 3 students reaching pre-intermediate level. This is a common situation in Vietnamese universities where students of mixed levels attend the same class. From my acknowledgement, the discrepancy of English level of the students in this class was acceptable, and no students were extremely outstanding, which could have been dominant in a speaking class.

Communication Strategies 2 of David Paul (2009), National Geographic Learning, was chosen to be the main textbook for this 10-week speaking course. The textbook contains authentic materials with loads of structures, vocabulary and communicative tasks in order to prepare learners to properly deal with communication in real contexts. As a whole, the textbook's content is diverse with clear aims and well-organized structures. Both teachers and learners can easily keep track of the learning progress and check their improvement.

After the first lesson, which covered the topic of Attitudes, describing how Western people expressed their attitudes in different situations and the way they showed their personal opinions, the students in my class started showing their ignorance of the situations given in the textbook. Although they had enough vocabulary to deal with the required task, they did not feel comfortable nor were interested in the lesson as I expected. Additionally, they had no idea how to deal with the proposed problems, leading to their confidence loss and avoidance of

taking part in the activities. That was the moment I realized authentic materials would cause a lot of trouble for this class if I kept using the coursebook provided.

The topics covered in the textbook were familiar to students, yet the way the topics were developed, the problems mentioned, the people involved, and the events presented were totally unrelated to roughly two-thirds of the class. For 18-year-old Vietnamese students with 3 years completely focusing on English grammar and vocabulary at high school, the lack of background knowledge of English-speaking culture contributed to their difficulty in approaching authentic materials, which was also an obstacle that I, as a teacher, would expect to overcome to help my students achieve the aim of the course.

The framework of the course was compulsory; therefore, I decided to keep following the required framework but adopt and modify the authentic materials based on my students' interests and concerns. I keep my faith that authentic materials are the key for learners' improvement in speaking skills; thus, I make my effort to apply authentic materials at all cost though they entail lots of careful modification.

INNOVATION DESCRIPTION

A short quick interview was conducted right in the class at the beginning of the second class to investigate the students' interests and concerns before making any changes to the authentic materials. This was the major outcome of the interview:

- All of the students liked listening to music and watching movies and dramas in their free time.
- All of the students spent at least 2 hours watching Youtube video clips, and at least 3 hours surfing social networks, chatting with friends and family.
- Two-thirds of the students liked Korean and Chinese dramas, and spent about 2 hours per day watching them with Vietnamese subtitles.
- All of the students often listened to Korean music, and about half of the students followed their favorite singers on social networks, which were written in Korean and Chinese.
- Roughly 10 students stated that they preferred Korean and Chinese cultures (customs, cuisine, costumes, languages) to Western cultures, while about 6 students stated that they

preferred English-speaking culture. The rest of the class expressed no preference.

- None of the students read newspapers written in English.

Having analyzed the students' interests, I started sorting the authentic materials according to the topics given for each class every week. A wide range of materials at intermediate level of English for students were considered to be utilised, such as newspapers, books, magazines, websites, video clips, etc. However, there were 3 fundamental methods which I applied in order to be able to make use of authentic materials in this class.

Adopting authentic materials about Oriental culture written by native English speakers.

If students find the content related to their daily life, they tend to feel more comfortable to share their opinions due to the fact that they are confident with what they have heard of. Additionally, useful content which they are able to apply into their study and work would completely attract their attention even though it was presented in the language they do not have any interest in. However, the materials must be written by English native speakers to make sure the language provided is original, or authentic.

One of the topics covered in the course was Health, discussing balanced diets, diseases, and doing exercise. I chose an article in National Geographic website written by Dell'Amore (2019) about Vietnamese eating rats for students to read and discuss whether rats were nutritious food or not. Most of the students in class had witnessed other Vietnamese people eating rats before, and some of them had even tried eating rats. As expected, students had diverse opinions to enthusiastically share with their friends, using vocabulary provided in the article and the structures for encouraging communication introduced in the textbook, such as "Could you explain that a bit more?" "What do you mean by that?", and "Can you clarify your point?".

Instead of describing a balanced diet in Western cultures, which was totally strange to the students, I encouraged them to talk about Vietnamese diets, particularly eating unusual things, to decide what was edible and nutritious, or what they could add to their daily meal to improve health. Nonetheless, it was the most important that the students had a chance to approach authentic materials with original points of view from native speakers about Vietnamese cuisine.

Choosing authentic materials whose authors originated from Asia

Asian people growing up in English-speaking countries around the world could be a good source of authentic materials for teachers to make use of. In this case, the authenticity of the language is still guaranteed. Moreover, for my students who prefer Oriental culture, it is more relaxing and relatable for them to speak English to Asian people such as the Chinese, Japanese or Korean.

Happiness was the last topic covered in the course. The main question raised in the unit was “What should we do to be happy in life?”. One idea was to do what we liked, and to feel happy. I looked through some video clips and chose one about a famous National Geographic photographer, Michael Yamashita, a Japanese-American, talking about his career and how much he loved photography. The video clip was published on April 10, 2018 on the YouTube channel of National Geographic Magazine. His main focus was Asia, and he has taken loads of impressive photos of Asian countries like China, Japan and Vietnam. He showed that he felt extremely happy with his life, being a photographer, which led to a debate about whether doing what we liked could bring happiness. Students used the structures showing agreement and disagreement for the debate, and gave examples similar to photographer Michael Yamashita to support their opinions based on their background knowledge and life experience.

The video clip aroused my students’ interest in debating about the topic. The language used in the clip was English, but the person had an Asian look, and the setting was China, which created a familiar environment for the students to approach. Besides, photography was also a popular hobby among students, and some even took it as a serious interest to take up as a professional in future. All elements caught students’ attention and helped them listen to English in a relaxing and exciting way. Therefore, sharing ideas and debating became more natural and encouraging, which was the exact atmosphere I would like to create in a speaking class.

Adopting authentic materials showing similarities between Oriental culture and Western cultures

It is undeniable that language and culture have a strong connection, and that language learners definitely need to understand the culture in order to master the language. Therefore, students have to get access to Western cultures while improving English speaking skill. Choosing authentic materials providing similarities between Oriental culture and

Western cultures would be an efficient way. The resemblance between the culture which the students are already familiar with and a foreign one could make the learning progress less stressful and boring.

Violence was a difficult topic for my students to dig into, thus it was necessary that the teacher opted for a new way to engage the students into the lesson. I suggested the discussion about different violent festivals around the world, including Vietnam and England. A newspaper article (The Telegraph, 2016) about a festival named Cotswold Olimpicks in England was introduced to the students for them to grab the main idea, together with a video clip demonstrating how people competed violently during the event (Newsflare, 2019). There was also a well-known similar festival in Vietnam in which people wrestled to win the first prize. The students were then asked to compare the two events, and to point out why people in different regions with different cultures preferred celebrating fierce competition as a long-time tradition.

Taking part in the discussion assisted students to practice comparison structures, vocabulary about culture and competition, and presenting opinions coherently. In addition, students had a chance to know more about an ancient festival in England, and some typical characteristics of British people by comparing it with Vietnamese culture. Although the comparison was simple and limited in a particular aspect, the students were able to take the first step into understanding the new culture, which was essential for their further language learning in future.

RESULT

Students' improvement in knowledge and skill

At the beginning of the class, this is the students' levels of English speaking skill.

Table 1

Level	Number of students
Post-elementary	18
Pre-intermediate	3
TOTAL	21

After 10 weeks, students were tested in the final exam where the examiners checked their knowledge of vocabulary and functional

structures for communicating with others in a particular situation (Appendix). Students were required to use appropriate lexical items and structures for effective communication. They were tested in pairs and given a situation for them to take roles and perform a conversation using the prompts provided.

Points were counted on the scale of 10, and were at equivalent levels of English speaking skill.

Table 2

	Equivalent level	Number of students
Below 5 points	Post-elementary and below	1
5 – 7.5 points	Pre-intermediate	18
8 points and above	Intermediate	2
TOTAL		21

95.2% (20 out of 21) of the students made progress and met the requirement of the course, moving forward to the next level. Students' performance in speaking skill was more diverse in lexical items and functional structure. Their pronunciation was comprehensible with varied intonation, and fluency was considerably improved.

Students' changes in learning attitude

Observation of students taking part in speaking activities in class revealed the changes in students' learning attitude after 10 weeks.

All students in the class substantially gained their confidence in speaking English. The possible problem was not a lack of vocabulary or structures but a lack of ideas, and they felt left out due to strange topics which they knew nothing about. When they acknowledged that they were directly involved in the lesson and possessed original valuable points of view to share, they actively enjoyed what they learned and desired to discuss and debate with their classmates.

Students were no longer against cultural features mentioned in the lessons. Getting access to suitable authentic materials gained students' understanding of Western cultures both consciously and unconsciously. Thanks to doing tasks based on carefully adopted authentic materials, students experienced typical characteristics of English-speaking culture more easily. Cultural similarities were excitingly acknowledged, and discrepancies were respected and appreciated by most students in class.

However, there were still about 3 students who kept their own feeling and opinion about understanding Western cultures as a part of language learning. They refused to get acquainted to English-speaking culture due to their own dislike, and would prefer to merely grasp language knowledge separated from its culture. They believed that English would be only a tool to assist them with their major career in future, and understanding its culture was not as essential as they expected.

REFLECTION

Advantages

Firstly, students' results in the final exam proved that their speaking skill was much improved due to their gain of vocabulary, functional structures and cultural characteristics. Secondly, not only did my students learn more about English-speaking culture but they also accepted the differences among cultures with full respect. Thirdly, along with the knowledge of language and culture which the students accumulated, their increasing eagerness for new information and debate in class also contributed to the success of making use of authentic materials related to their interests and concerns. Compared to the first lesson in which most of the students kept silent, the comfortable and exciting atmosphere of the class during the following weeks was a huge progress.

Drawbacks

Firstly, the course only lasted 10 weeks, which was quite short to recognize students' great progress in speaking skill. Secondly, the population to which the method was applied was small, only 21 students in a class. Although using carefully adopted authentic materials based on students' interests was efficient, the outcome was not clearly significant. Thirdly, when the initial textbook was not in use, the teacher had to spend a lot of time searching for suitable authentic materials while considering the topics and the students' English level, their likes and dislikes, and their final exam's requirements. The source from which the materials were taken also needed to be checked carefully. In fact, from my experience, it was impossible to find out the authentic materials which could meet all of the requirement. Moreover, it was very time-consuming to design speaking tasks regarding the chosen materials in order to give students more chances to express themselves with comfort and excitement. Even though the textbook was neglected, the required language knowledge and the topics needed to be covered so that students could pass the final exam at the end of the course.

PEDAGOGICAL AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This situation would pose a question whether teachers should use a core textbook without any personal changes for a particular course, or teachers, basing on the given framework of knowledge and topics, have their right to adopt any materials which they suppose to be the most useful and effective for their class. What is more, it is time language textbook innovation took place. New techniques to skillfully weave cultural features into language lessons should be introduced and applied to language textbooks, so that students are able to get access to the English-speaking culture in a more natural way even though they hold their interest in the others. Also, it is possible that textbooks which target students from a specific culture add their cultural features into the content. By this way, language learners would find it relatable and familiar to learn, compare and appreciate different cultures while simultaneously acquiring the language.

CONCLUSION

Authentic materials have always played an essential role in language learning and teaching. If teachers can make use of appropriate authentic materials, the outcome will be significant in various aspects. Besides, textbooks for language teaching needs more consideration about content, especially when textbooks are used by students living in a community isolated from English-speaking culture. Therefore, more intensive research into the use of combined textbooks and authentic materials in teaching all language skills are expected to be conducted in near future.

THE AUTHOR

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APPENDIX

FINAL SPEAKING EXAM

Making a conversation, following the instructions from the role play cards.

(randomly, students will be appointed to work in pairs and choose their role cards from the examiner. Each role card will assign the role and detailed requirements for each student to make a conversation with the other partner. Each pair will have 3 minutes to prepare and 3 more minutes to perform the conversation to the examiner.)

SITUATION 1:

Student A: You are chatting with your classmate. You want to register for a painting class. Ask for student B's advice and decide whether you should register or not.

Student B: You are chatting with your classmate. Student A wants to register for a painting class, and asks for your advice. Give him/her some good advice and persuade him/her to attend the class.

SITUATION 2:

Student A: You are chatting with your classmate. You want to apply for a part-time job at a restaurant. Ask for student B's advice and decide whether you should apply or not.

Student B: You are chatting with your classmate. He/She wants to apply for a part-time job at a restaurant. Advise him/her not to apply and give some reasons.

SITUATION 3:

Student A: You are a customer at a clothes store. You would like to buy a shirt, but cannot make up your mind. Ask for student B's advice.

Student B: You are a salesperson at a clothes store. Student A is a customer who asks for your opinion. Suggest some shirts and persuade him/her to buy the most expensive one.

MARKING RUBRICS OF THE FINAL SPEAKING EXAM

Student's name	TOTAL MARK (10 marks)	Accuracy (5 marks)			Fluency (5 marks)	
		Functions (2 marks)	Grammar (1 mark)	Language + ideas (2 marks)	Clear pronunciation (2.5 marks)	Speaking naturally (not too much hesitation) (2.5 marks)
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						

INCORPORATING LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS OF EFL SPEAKING CLASSROOM IN THE 4.0 TECHNOLOGY ERA

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ABSTRACT

The acquisition of a foreign language and its culture has evidently played an indispensable role in teaching and learning because each language is strongly attached to specific characteristics of that national culture. However, using technology to incorporate students' target language and culture in the EFL class would probably be more challenging for non-native teachers because this requires them to have more extensive knowledge of language, culture and technology in teaching. This study is conducted in an attempt to investigate the extent of using technology in incorporating language and cultural activities for Vietnamese students of EFL speaking classroom. The paper firstly points out some basic conceptions of teaching language and culture via technology support. Then, the study demonstrates some useful applications of integrating technologies into cultural activities and language learning. Some substantial challenges of the integration that Vietnamese language teachers cope with will be mentioned. After that, a questionnaire is used to explore language teachers' attitudes towards combining language and culture in teaching due to technology support. Furthermore, the research proposes some recommendations for further research.

Keywords: *technology, language, culture, 4.0 Technology Era, apply, motivation*

INTRODUCTION

Today, technologies such as computers, mobile phones or other modern devices are used not only for entertainment but also for learning and teaching. The use of high-tech equipment in teaching is a worldwide trend, especially in developing countries. In Vietnam, thanks to the development of science and technology (such as smart electronic boards, textbooks, E-learning lesson design software ...), many teaching

facilities have a lot of positive effects that help teachers guide students to acquire good knowledge of English. These modern devices not only bring convenience for teachers and excitement for students but also reduce lecturing and have more time for students to discuss and communicate in English speaking classes. Therefore, it is necessary to have modern devices in teaching process because they are not only considered single tools but modern ones to integrate language and culture in teaching and learning process, an integral part of English learning.

Some studies have been done on the advantages of using technologies in English language teaching and learning.

Angelianawati (2018) explored the roles of English teachers in the 4.0 Technology Era in language teaching. He mentioned that in this era, teachers have several roles regarding their responsibilities to build meaningful interactions within language learning which is adaptable to the era. Warschauer (2000a) described two different views about how to integrate technologies into the class. First, in the cognitive approach, learners get opportunities to increase their exposure to language meaningfully and make their own knowledge. Second, in the social approach, learners must be given opportunities for authentic social interactions to practice real life skills. Lin and Yang (2011) performed a study to investigate whether the Wiki technology would improve learners' writing skills. Learners were invited to join a Wiki page where they would write passages and then read and answer the passages of their fellow classmates. According to Rodinadze and Zarbazoia (2012), technology helps learners and teachers in studying course materials owing to its fast access. Moreover, Kumar et al., (2008) concentrated on measuring the teachers' readiness or examining the factors that affect teachers' use of technology and its implications for teachers' professional development strategies. The findings of the interview showed that the English language teachers are not ready yet to use the technology in teaching the English language for some reasons: traditional and cultural ways of teaching, the understanding and attitudes towards technology, and obstacles hinder teachers from using technology.

Previous works on language teaching have explored the effectiveness of using technology in language teaching. However, a few works examine the extent of integrating technologies into language and cultural activities for speaking classes which students learn English as foreign language in the 4.0 Technology Era. This study is conducted in an attempt to investigate teachers' attitudes towards integrating

technologies into teaching and the extent of using technology while teaching and learning English and its culture in this era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptions of teaching language and culture via technology support in English speaking classroom

As the strong relationship between culture and language has been confirmed, it can be inferred that culture plays an important role and should be included in language education. In other words, language teaching is culture teaching. Mentioning the necessity of teaching language, together with culture, language teachers need to teach culture in the classroom for the following reasons: Firstly, it makes people aware of the cultural factors inside the language use. Secondly, it helps students understand and use language appropriately in accordance with the knowledge of the culture in which it is embedded. Besides, this helps students avoid misunderstanding or culture shock due to their lack of cultural knowledge.

Clearly, culture is often considered as a significant component of communicative competence that English foreign language learners need to acquire because of the close relationship between knowledge of a foreign language and knowledge of the culture from which that language originated (Tang, 1999). Since culture plays such an important role in language teaching, incorporating culture in language teaching seems almost inevitable. It is true that teaching cultural differences along with the structural and typological differences of the language is vital because it helps learners prevent misinterpretation caused by the confusion of cultural referents. As linguistic competence alone is not enough for learners of a language to be competent in that language (Krasner, 1999), language learners need to be aware of the culturally appropriate ways to address people, express gratitude, make requests and agree or disagree with someone. Therefore, when teaching culture, teachers need to arouse students' curiosity of finding out the cultural meaning in the language they use. Besides, in the process of teaching language, teachers are required to present the customs and beliefs or ways of life and social organization of a particular country. In addition, teaching culture should make learners aware of speech acts. More importantly, educators need to do some activities in class to stimulate students because according to Peck (1998), "an effective and stimulating activity is to send students on 'cultural errands' and have them write down the names of imported goods".

According to Hennessy, Ruthven, and Brindley (2005) and Pourhosein Gilakjani (2017), technology integration is defined in terms of how teachers use technology to perform familiar activities more effectively and how this usage can re-shape these activities. Dockstader (2008) defined technology integration as the use of technology to improve the educational environment. It supports classroom teaching through creating opportunities for learners to complete assignments on the computer rather than the normal pencil and paper. Technology plays an indispensable part in encouraging activities for learners and has an important influence on teachers' methodology. In promoting Education 4.0 in the classroom, teachers and students need to consider characteristics of Education 4.0 concept. According to Sadiyoko (2017), there are nine characteristics of Education 4.0 as follows:

- It can be done anywhere and anytime.
- It is based on students' needs.
- It is flexible delivery.
- It reflects peers and mentors.
- It is about sharing information to answer "why" and "where" questions.
- It is about practical application.
- It is about modular and project.
- It reveals students' ownership in which the students participate a lot.
- It contends evaluation process.

By considering the aspects above, the teachers and students are ready to promote Education 4.0 in the classroom. Besides, we realize that with the motto of taking technology as the core and application in strategic curriculum, students will be confident and mastered in English. The application of digital technology to education in general and English training in particular not only is a trend but also has been taking place strongly in many parts of the world. Thus, it can be said that maximizing technology potential in teaching is one of the top priorities in English language research and teaching today. This will help English learners to acquire the best way and develop necessary skills to solve problems flexibly and to communicate confidently. It also has to be noted that technology brings foreign language and foreign culture learners lots of

benefits. As Liaw and Johnson, 2001, Dlaska, 2000, Lin 1999, Tseng, 1999 pointed out, “The visual aspect of culture teaching was strengthened because the development of video technology in the eighties and computer and internet in the nineties influence FL learning and interaction in a great sense. Moreover, communication via internet and information technology can support language and culture learning effectively”.

Useful applications of integrating technologies into cultural activities and language learning

It is not easy for non-native English speakers to learn English as a second and foreign language. One easier method of English language teaching and learning is using technology integration to support the acquisition of language (Aleml 2016; Šafranĵ 2013; Martins 2015). There are numerous resources for using technologies in English classrooms. Teachers can use the 4.0 technology to teach students how to access advanced curriculum, touch TVs, miniature studios or E-learning self-study system. Speaking as fluently as native speakers do is the target of many English learners. Therefore, teachers can combine these kinds of technology assisted language teaching to help students achieve the best results. Thanks to these helpful applications, students are able to watch their favorite videos, tap phrases they want to practice, compare their voices to native speakers’ pronunciation and acquire good knowledge of English culture as well.

Discussion forum: Through discussion forum, students can connect with friends, other students, teachers and even native speakers to enhance intercultural awareness, motivation and raise the level of interaction. Moreover, students get exposed to a great amount of target language and this help them develop their speaking skills as well. One of the goals for learners to learn a foreign language is to communicate with the target language users, either native target language speakers or those who use it as a second or foreign language (Clyne, 1994; Pennycook, 1994). Nguyen, T. H. (2002) pointed out that Vietnamese students usually keep quiet in class and wait until called upon by the teacher, instead of volunteering to answer questions. He also claims that “since keeping quiet in class is to show respect to the teacher as well as to create a productive learning environment, being talkative, interrupting, bragging, or challenging the teacher are not typical of Vietnamese culture”. However, this learning style easily limits their creativity and critical thinking. This is one of the reasons that demotivates their interest in finding out cultures behind their language. Therefore, this online service will give students a new way to share knowledge,

opinions with each other. More specifically, students, either prominent or quiet students, can post, edit and reply comments fairly quickly.

Web-based project: students will be exposed to more project-based learning. Due to these real projects, students are required to apply their knowledge and skills to explore traditional customs and cultures of foreigners. By involving in the projects, learners have a great chance to listen to native speakers in the very natural way, to experience real situations which are relevant to culture features or historical facts and hardly found in course books.

Miniature studios: Clearly, fostering language and culture learning not only inside the English classroom, but also in other environments, together with technology assisted teaching can bring a more relaxed learning context for both teachers and learners. This modern technology can help students confidently implement their own creative thinking projects. Students can learn in a lively, inspiring environment to master not only English language but also problem solving skills, creative thinking ability, more awareness about the world around them.

Social networking sites (Facebook): Social networking sites allow language teachers to extend learning beyond the classrooms, trigger reflective thinking, construct knowledge, and promote English language learning, while simultaneously strengthen relationships with students (Idris & Ghani, 2012; Mahadi & Ubaidullah, 2010). Nowadays, Facebook has become a social network that is widely used for a variety of purposes by many people from different cultural and social background. Especially, Thompson (2013) argues that nowadays students spend much of their time on social networks to communicate with other people, get in touch with new friends, exchange information ... For this reason, teacher should take advantage of these differences and opportunities to shape more effective academic purposes and improve students' interaction in English language. Similarly, Pérez, Araiza and Doerfer (2013) have indicated that a social networking site such as Facebook could be an effective channel of communication between teachers and students and this can contribute to positive learning outcomes. More importantly, Facebook is considered as an effective tool for timid students who find it difficult to express their problems to the teacher. This explains the fact that Facebook can help teachers and students communicate confidently and create an effective learning language and cultural environment.

Films: Films can not only function as entertainment but also help out language acquisition. As David (2016) pointed out that language plays a crucial role in connecting and rationalizing various other forms of visual

and sound information that make up film experience. Additionally, its language approximates language use in real life, reflects life, customs, cultures of human in native countries. Using movies has brought authenticity, variety, reality and also flexibility into English foreign language classroom, which can improve the efficiency of language and culture learning process. With different topics and wide ranges of levels as well as durations, students can practice and improve pronunciation and speaking skills ubiquitously. Moreover, nowadays, foreign language learning is suggested to go beyond the level of acquiring grammatical rules because foreign language learners need know how to use the target language in the situated context (Neuner, 1997). It is impossible to teach a language without its culture for “culture is the necessary context for language use” (Stern, 1992, p.205). Therefore, some cultural contexts behind the foreign language communication situation examples demonstrated in films can help students recognize the cultural contents of the target cultures to avoid misunderstanding (Willems, 1996, Tanaka, 1997). Thanks to foreign culture learning in films, foreign language users can successfully communicate in socio-cultural contexts.

METHODOLOGY AND FINDINGS

Aim

The main objective of the research is to investigate the attitudes of Vietnamese language teachers towards integrating technologies in English language and culture teaching and the extent of using technology in teaching.

Participants

There were two groups who took in charge of participants in the study.

The first group: The research was conducted on a group of 100 teachers aged 30-50 from the Department of Foreign Languages in HoChiMinh University of Foreign Languages and Information Technology, Ton Duc Thang University and Faculty of Linguistics and International Cultures in University of Economics and Finance. There were 65 females and 35 males who have at least five-year experience in language teaching. A survey, performed by one-page questionnaire in English, is focused on two purposes: teachers’ opinions in combining technology with teaching language and culture, and their background knowledge of using technologies during the process of integration.

The second group: The study was also carried out on 55 teacher trainees, aged 20–22, who have been attending teacher training program (junior

students of English Language Department, HoChiMinh City University of Pedagogy). There were 35 females and 20 males. The main purpose is to observe how much teachers employed various technologies in language and culture learning and teaching process.

Method, Instrumentation and Analysis

The questionnaire for the first group included nine questions, including some Likert scale items with the answers were graded from 1 “Strongly disagree” to 5 “Strongly agree”. These nine questions were concerning their background, their cultural identities, their own views on teaching the intended culture behind the target language and their motivation of using technologies in language teaching.

The observation for learners or pre-service teachers were administered during the four-week period and the researcher sat at the back of the rooms, tried to observe their English teaching practice and made an effort to record their teaching skills. Through this real observation, the researcher focused on the ways pre-service teachers taught in practice to see how they apply technology to teaching culture and target language. This stage helps the writer draw out some real experiences of classroom simulation in Vietnam.

FINDINGS

Results from questionnaires

Table 1

The first question: What is the most significant requirement that a language teacher needs in the 4.0 Technology Era?

Answer	Rate
Integrating technologies in language and culture teaching	2.1%
Making communication in foreign languages more frequently	2.5%
Supporting students to develop critical thinking and creative skills	1.8%
Capturing and updating new knowledge of technology, language and culture regularly	2.4%
All of them	91.2%

According to the first question, most of the teachers (more than 90%),

on the whole, believed that having knowledge of integrating technologies, making communication in foreign languages more frequently, helping students proactively explore knowledge, analytical ability and logical thinking to come up with suitable solutions, updating new knowledge of language and culture regularly are equally important. To be able to integrate and succeed in the "4.0 era", apart from the professional level, every student needs other essential skills, not only English, but also critical, creative and communicative thinking. In the context of the 4.0 Technology Era which is taking place more and more deeply and has an impact on the field of education and training in general, and English teaching in particular, applying the achievements of this era to teaching and learning English will create a fundamental change and help teachers and learners be more proactive in accessing digital technology platforms and integrate all intelligent technologies to apply in teaching and learning English. This teaching method will easily bring students a chance to expose culture in foreign language context. To perform this duty, language teachers need to constantly innovate teaching methods as well as up-to-date cultural knowledge to develop their language teaching skills. More importantly, language teachers need to create an environment of willingness to communicate in second language to engage students' interests because in order to overcome the obstacle between languages and cultures, "interlocutors need a powerful communicative target, which is defined as willingness to communicate" (MacIntyre, Z. Dörnyei, R. Clément, and K. A. Noels, 1998).

Table 2

The second question: Which one do you prefer, modern method teaching (using technology) versus traditional one (using blackboard)?

Answer	Rate
Modern method is more beneficial than traditional method	75.5%
Modern method is NOT more beneficial than traditional method	12.1%
Modern method and traditional method are equally beneficial	12.4%

The largest number (75.5%) revealed that a teaching language and culture through technology can facilitate and help learners be more proactive and easy to control their study time. In fact, in the 4.0 Technology Era, we cannot completely deny the positive benefits of social networking platforms. In particular, global connectivity is the

most superior point. By teaching language and culture via technology supported, teachers can help students communicate with native speakers more easily. Moreover, thanks to the diverse sources of information found on Internet, teachers can help learners practice and exchange information with native speakers whom they have less opportunities in English classroom. Additionally, technologies can provide substantial benefits in teaching and learning foreign languages when it is integrated effectively. Teachers can use it to enrich the content of lesson plans by adding photos, videos, Powerpoint or organizing classroom activities. This also makes the delivery of the content more interactive than using blackboard. With the aid of technologies, teachers can provide students authentic audio and video of the target culture and up to date materials in order to engage students in communicating with their partners and many different course materials.

Table 3

The third question: What are your opinions on the use of technology in teaching activities in the language classroom?	
Answer	Rate
Technology integrated in teaching and learning activities helps learners develop language speaking skills.	30%
Technology integrated in teaching and learning activities help learners actively access knowledge about culture, country and people of foreign languages.	16.1%
Technology integrated in teaching and learning activities are organized flexibly and combined in many different forms.	30%
Technology integrated in teaching activities focus on developing students' logical expressions and critical thinking skills.	8.3%

With the third question, over 60% of teachers admitted that using technology in teaching and learning activities is organized flexibly and combined in many different forms and help learners develop language speaking skills; 16.1% teachers said teaching and learning activities help learners actively access knowledge about culture, country and people of foreign languages; by while, only 8.3% teachers found that teaching activities focus on developing students' logical expressions and critical thinking skills. This result is quite reasonable because using

technology in intercultural teaching will bring important changes in language learning. To teach more effectively, the diverse extra-curricular activities are also encouraged as they lead to the proficiency in not only English communication skill but also intercultural foreign language understanding to one's own and other cultures.

Table 4

The fourth question: What kinds of technology are students interested in using to learn English?

Answer	Rate
Discussion forum	19.2%
Web-based project	18.5%
Miniature studio	20.1%
Social networking sites	21.7%
Films	20.5%

When asked about technology used in language learning, 21.7% stated that it is social networking sites and 20.5% affirmed films; 19.2% chose discussion forum and 18.5% considered web-based project; More than 20% thought miniature studio was the most interesting. This number shows that students with different levels are concerned with real stage performance. From this result, it is obvious that technology can change learners' attitude towards language learning. In other saying, the use of technology in school makes learning enjoyable and helps them learn more. It also makes learning interesting, enjoyable, and interactive. Moreover, technology can increase learners' motivation, social interactions, learning and engagement.

Table 5

The fifth question: What unexpected situations do you cope with during the period of teaching English for Vietnamese students?

Answer	Rate
a wide divergence of language and cultures	31.5 %
difficulty in keeping up with modern technology	37.5 %
lack of schools' infrastructure investment	30.1 %
lack of understanding of students' cultural, educational and linguistic background	0.9 %

With the answers to the question number five, we are very satisfied with the students not for their results but for their honesty. The outcome shows that 31.5% of the Vietnamese teachers coped with a wide divergence of language and cultures while 37.5% of them found it difficult to keep up with modern technology in teaching. These unexpected situations prevent them from making the lessons more thoroughly. Vietnamese language teachers should supplement the teaching materials with technology to provide students with information about social linguistic elements. Additionally, more than 30% of them complained that although the school is a national standard, however, the school does not currently have a private room to serve English teaching and learning such as CDs, other audio-visual equipment, Internet connection ... not enough or old, broken and not good quality.

Table 6

The sixth question: How often do you use technology in language teaching?

Answer	Rate
Always	12.1%
Usually	17.4%
Often	16.8%
Sometimes	11.5%
Never	42.2%

It was clear from their responses that most of the participants were not familiar with modern technologies. So, they are not ready yet to use and implement technology in teaching. Meanwhile, 12.1% of teachers considered using new modern method in teaching language and culture is indispensable and necessary in the 4.0 Technology Era. The responses of teachers indicated that teachers still not ready yet to use the technology in this era in teaching English language in the classroom. Besides, with the limitation of time in the classroom, language teachers rarely spend time explaining cultures. In fact, exploiting the target language culture to teach is not carefully paid attention to in English classroom instead of basing on target language teaching materials they have. This makes students confused about using languages in a style appropriate to language learning.

Table7**The seventh question: The level of IT application in language and cultural teaching activities according to 5 levels below**

Answer	a	b	c	d	e
Prepare electronic lectures and lesson plans	0	0	0	5%	95%
Search information and materials	0	0	0	1.8%	98.2%
Making films, documentaries and cartoons in service of teaching	40%	38.8%	1.2 %	0	0
Teaching using projector, electronic lectures or simulation software	0	0	0	91.2%	8.8%
Teaching in audiovisual room (multimedia)	68.5%	10%	3.2%	9.1%	9.2%
Teaching online	100%	0	0	0	0
Give instructions, study guides on forums, or share resources and lectures on the website, Facebook, email, YouTube	7.1%	11.2%	7.8%	43.1%	30.8%

From the table, the results showed that teachers mostly used technology to “prepare lesson plans” (95% “daily”), and “search information and materials” (98.2% “daily”). The least frequently used by teachers is “teaching online” (100% “never”). This can be explained that teachers mostly spent their time teaching students in the classroom for the rules of the curriculum. Rarely did teachers make “films, documentaries, cartoons for teaching” (40% “never” or 38.8% “once/twice a semester”) or use “audiovisual room” (only 9.2% “daily”). However, for more extra practice or discussion, 30% teachers use forums, website, Facebook, or email to give students daily activities for them to practice.

Results from observation

As mentioned in the method, by basing on data collected from observing and shooting in English classes, we have several ideas about teaching methods in terms of language and culture. Most of students are equipped with many kinds of modern cell phones. So, it is not very difficult for them to access to a lot of information that their teachers are not able to provide. They can search new words, share opinions and give comments on cultural topics, given by the teachers. The learning activities were organized with many different forms: discuss on forums or social networking sites, perform some real projects, acting as artists, watching movies. The results of this study indicated that technology tools enhanced learners’ communicating skills because they are user-friendly, and learners can learn at a faster and more effective way. The other finding of this study was that learners learn more effectively when they use technology tools instead of traditional teaching method because the Internet provided a favorable learning environment for learners’ learning, facilitated a new platform for learners who can have a convenient access to learning lessons. During the class, the teachers can hold positive attitudes towards the use of new methods in teaching language and culture in encouraging students of all levels to take part in learning. Based on the results of this study, it was concluded that learners were more likely to engage in classroom when technology is used as an educational tool inside the class. Also, this can help instructors deliver course materials through a designated Web site, from which students access materials and interact with both peers and teachers remotely. Then teachers can easily observe, explain, adjust language use and cultural behaviors which they don’t have enough time to do in classroom. The findings also showed that several teachers lacked the skills to use technology, so they spent much more time to create teaching materials. It was hard for them to transfer their teaching method because they are used to teaching by the traditional methods for

a long time. This was the key elements that hinder them from using the technology in teaching English language. However, they expected to be trained through tutorials, forums, training programs, training workshops and seminars to make a more active learning environment.

DISCUSSION

Substantial challenges of integrating technologies into English speaking classrooms

In the 4.0 Technology Era, students are living in the digital world; surrounded by industrial and technological advances. These conditions require the teacher to arrange lessons using initiatives provided by the technology itself, that is, conducting blended learning and online learning. With the emergence of new learning models and the development of science and technology, traditional educational methods will certainly face many challenges.

Firstly, some Vietnamese teachers find it difficult to keep up with these technologies because they are not accustomed to using modern technology in their daily teaching. During the teaching process, it requires teachers to find methods of applying technology as a useful learning instrument for their learners although they are not expert in this field. This can be explained that one of the most effective ways of using technologies in language teaching depends not only on hardware or software but also on creative teaching activities that are designed by teachers. This can help both teachers and learners bring out the best methods in teaching and learning. According to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (2000), the application of computer technology enables teachers and learners to make local and global societies that connect them with the people and expand opportunities for their learning. They continued that the positive effect of computer technology does not come automatically; it depends on how teachers use it in their language classrooms. For this reason, it is very important for teachers to have a full knowledge of these technologies in teaching language skills (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2017; Solanki & Shyamlee1, 2012).

Additionally, technology becomes an integral part of the learning experience and a significant issue for teachers, from the beginning of preparing learning experiences through to teaching and learning process (Eady & Lockyer, 2013). However, in some remote areas in Vietnam, teachers and students have to suffer from a complete lack of schools' infrastructure investment that facilitate the use of technology in teaching and learning such as mobiles, computers, internet

connections devices, augmented reality devices and good internet server. This will limit the effects of applying technologies in language learning and cultural teaching.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

By engaging in communicating via technology, weaker students sometimes cannot recognize their speaking problems directly and concretely. Moreover, students could give inappropriate comments on the forum. This requires teachers to establish appropriate guidelines for using discussion forums and inform students of any expectations and mistakes correction as well.

Because of the importance of teaching culture in language classroom, teachers should be equipped with culture background knowledge of many different aspects in life such as geography, history, literature, cultures, etc. Additionally, it is necessary for a teacher to learn more about the meanings and origins of idioms or proverbs because culture is reflected behind these words. This can help their non-English major students have profound insight when being compared and contrasted culture knowledge between the native language and the foreign language by their teachers.

In the era of globalization, we are required not only to respect the home culture and the home language but also to broaden the mind and exchange different cultures through the target language. So, the main aim of teaching language is helping learners understand target language and native culture thoroughly. For these important reasons, school should equip infrastructure investment like interactive whiteboard at the classroom; E-learning online learning system, computers, internet connection devices, LCD screens and promote teachers to integrate culture in language teaching.

This study however only concentrates on exploring teachers' attitudes towards equipment that support students to learn language speaking and acquire its culture effectively. Future research may examine the awareness of some advantages and disadvantages of such technology to other skills like reading, writing and listening.

CONCLUSION

Technology has a big influence on assisting students' English language acquisition. Also, it can not only promote powerful teaching and learning target language and its culture but also allow students to communicate with people across long distances. Based on the survey's results,

Vietnamese English teachers are afraid of using technology in language and cultural teaching process. No matter how hard technology is, teachers should be rigorously trained with high spirit to inspire students with their enthusiasm in learning language and culture.

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TEACHING AND LEARNING LANGUAGE SKILLS

NON-ENGLISH MAJORS' ENGLISH SPEAKING DIFFICULTIES: A CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Speaking English well is one of the ultimate goals for EFL learners; however, many EFL learners in Vietnamese context still face a number of difficulties when speaking English. Therefore, this study, a case study, aims at exploring English speaking difficulties in terms of linguistics related difficulties, psychology related difficulties and learning environment related difficulties encountered by non-English majors. It involved 110 non-English majors at Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College in answering a questionnaire and participating in semi-structured interviews. The results revealed that the most serious group of English speaking difficulties from which research participants suffered was linguistics related difficulties, followed by psychology related difficulties, but they did not encounter any learning environment related difficulties when speaking English. The results further indicated that female students endured from the linguistics related difficulties and psychology related difficulties significantly more than their male counterparts, but both female and male students did not face learning environment related difficulties at a similar extent. Such preliminary findings are hoped to contribute to a better understanding of non-English majors' speaking difficulties in an EFL context and other similar ones.

Keywords: *environment related difficulty, linguistics related difficulty, non-English major, psychology-related difficulty, speaking.*

INTRODUCTION

Speaking is one of the main factors in language which is considered as the most demanding skill for ESL/EFL. Language has to be spoken; thus, learners should master speaking skills to master language. However, many researchers (e.g., Arbain, 2014; Brown, 1994; Duong, 2014; Hinkel, 2005; Tran & Dang, 2019) have found out EFL learners still face a number of difficulties in learning speaking skills. Hinkel (2005) states that learners have difficulties in speaking because of new vocabulary and new parts of speech they do not know, or strange spelling that they do not know how to pronounce. In a similar vein, Arbain (2014) declares that all learners can express their ideas, opinions, and feelings with each other in English. However, most learners' speaking skills are still limited because they spend their time studying grammar and vocabulary instead of putting what they have learned into practice through speaking. Furthermore, it is observed in many EFL contexts that learners still cannot speak English properly although they have been learning English for many years or more. Learners are scared and afraid of speaking English, and as a consequence, learners do not have ability to put words together in a meaningful way to reflect their thoughts. They are not confident enough to communicate in English.

In Vietnamese context, especially in case of Ho Chi Minh City Industry and Trade College (HITC), where students in all majors are required to learn Basic English, students seem to have a big gap in learning speaking skills. It has been observed that a great number of students had difficulties in speaking such as lack of ideas and confidence about their knowledge of grammar, structures, pronunciation, vocabulary, or they encountered with psychological matters, which hindered them from speaking English well. Therefore, this study focused on speaking skills in terms of investigating the difficulties that sophomore non-English major students at Business Faculty were facing when learning speaking. The research questions are as follows:

1. *What English speaking difficulties do non-English majors at HITC encounter?*
2. *Do non-English majors' English speaking difficulties differ in terms of gender? If yes, how?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers (e.g., Hayriye, 2006; Khan, 2014; Spolsky & Hult, 2008; Xinghua, 2007) have been interested in speaking difficulties. Hayriye (2006) claims that speaking is a process of choosing the most

appropriate vocabulary and sentences in accordance with the social and situational contexts and the listeners. Mastering speaking skills requires learners to have not only the knowledge of the target language but also the way to put theoretical knowledge into real life communicative settings. Speaking problems hinder learners from freely expressing their opinions by using English language.

Concerning speaking difficulties, there are many factors that prevent learners from developing their speaking ability. Those problems can be divided into subtypes: linguistic problems, psychological problems and other matters related to teaching aspects.

In respect of linguistics related difficulties, Spolsky and Hult (2008) point out that general linguistics focuses on form, structures (grammar), vocabulary and pronunciation. Learners seem to have trouble with linguistic problems; for example, they lack words to deliver speeches, they do not know how to pronounce new words or pronounce wrongly, which makes the listeners unable to understand the meaning, or they even do not have enough grammatical knowledge to form a full sentence or do not know how to put single words into a correct order.

As for psychology related difficulties, psychological factors also become tough obstacles that prevent students from performing well in speaking. According to Xinghua (2007), psychological factors refer to emotional and spiritual matters such as shyness, anxiety, fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation. In the same vein, Khan (2014) agrees that psychological factors are also a big problem that learners always encounter in speaking.

In terms of learning environment related difficulties, there are many environmental factors causing students a large number of problems. Firstly, Baker and Westrup (2000) point out that obstacles in learning will occur whether students intentionally or unintentionally apply all the language rules and culture rules from their first language to the target language. According to Littlewood (1984), some English teachers tend to use mother tongue during their class time. When teachers prefer using L1 instead of L2, they are stealing precious opportunities for learners to speak the target language because most students have little chance to talk in English outside the classroom. Most of the subjects taught at school are in L1, and English is taught in some particular subjects; therefore, the environment for English exposure is not wide enough for students to practice effectively. In another aspect, Burchfield and Sappington (1999) state that low participation means the talking time of each student is short. Some learners are so active that they tend

to be dominant in class, whereas the others prefer keeping silent or just raising their voices when they are invited by teachers. The most common issue in a speaking class is that during class time, the dominant participants keep talking all the time and give no chance for the rest to join in discussion. It means the minor group is over talkative; thus, the contribution of each learner is not equal. As the result, the speaking skills of each learner will be affected by their participation in class. In addition, if learners are forced to express their opinions and ideas about the topic, most of them might not have the ideas about the topics. The main problem behind this performance is that teachers seem to require students to talk about uncommon or unfamiliar topics, so they have nothing to share even in their first language or the target language (Rivers, 1968). Finally, teaching methods and assessment of the test can be considered as two factors causing students problems with speaking skills. Teachers are busy teaching reading and writing skills which are focused in the textbooks most of the class time. In addition, speaking skills are not included in the exams; consequently, they tend to skip speaking exercises to save time for the other skills. Therefore, learners are not being taught speaking skills carefully; as a result, the levels of learners' speaking competence are lower than what they are expected.

A number of prior studies on ESL/EFL learners' speaking difficulties have been found in the body of literature. Significantly, Dil (2009) carried out a study to investigate the barriers on learning speaking skills of EFL students in Turkish. The results of the study showed that anxiety and unwillingness to speak were the two main reasons that EFL students in Turkish were struggling with. Luo (2014) also conducted a similar study in the U.S to explore the factors which caused anxiety to college participants who learnt Chinese as a second language. The study revealed that the number of students who suffered from levels of anxiety when speaking Chinese were relatively high. In the same vein, Subaşı (2010) carried out a study to discover the main source of 55 first year students Turkish EFL students' anxiety in oral practice. The findings of the study revealed that there was a strong relationship between learners' fear of criticism and their level of anxiety. This study also found that the better students were, the more frequently they speak in the classroom. Regarding the context of Vietnam, Ngo (2011) carried out research on the difficulties that the students in their first academic year of the Information Technology department at Thai Nguyen University were dealing with. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the research to collect necessary data. The aim of the study was to emphasize the speaking issues on three main aspects: psychological factors, linguistic elements and the effect of social culture

on speaking skills. The findings of the study revealed that the students at Thai Nguyen University also faced problems regarding three mentioned issues when learning English speaking skills. In 2017, Dao conducted a similar study about the factors that had negative effect on non-English major students regarding speaking skills at Ha Noi University of Technology. The aim of the study was to investigate five elements which contributed to students' difficulties in learning speaking skills concerning teachers, students, teaching and learning environment, and contents of the lessons. There were 108 non-English major students with different English levels taking part in the study. After using observation and a questionnaire to collect the data, the researcher explored 10 key factors that had negative influences on students' speaking skills including the use of first language in the classroom, teachers' lack of using English as an instructional tool, students' low English proficiency, students' fear of making mistakes, students' shyness, students' lack of motivation, lack of speaking tasks in textbooks, the uninspiring environment, and the large number of students in class. Recently, Le (2019) conducted a study to investigate the problems which Ba Ria Vung Tau University students faced when learning English speaking skills. The participants of the study included 50 English majors at their second academic year and both quantitative and qualitative research methods were applied to collect data from observation, questionnaires and interviews. The results of the study pointed out that the students encountered some matters regarding: (1) psychological issues; for example, students seemed to be worried and anxious to raise their voices in speaking classes, (2) low language proficiency, particularly on linguistic background knowledge, (3) learning styles (4) teaching methodologies which needed to be updated and improved, (5) learning environment. It is noticed that all the mentioned previous studies have focused on speaking related problems among learners in different contexts; however, the context of HITC has its own characteristics. Therefore, this study aims at exploring non-English majors' speaking difficulties at HITC.

METHODOLOGY

Research setting and sample

This mixed methods study was conducted at the Economy Faculty of HITC. According to the official curriculum of HITC for the Diploma Training for non-English majors, all non-English majors are required to finish the English skills program before learning English for their specific purposes. The program designed for non-English majors has five levels. At the beginning of the academic year, the freshmen have to

take the placement test. If they can pass the test, they will start learning English 1; otherwise, they have to study Basic English classes, which mainly focus on grammar without studying speaking English. When they study English 1, English 2 and English 3, they study all four skills such as listening, reading, writing and speaking. Each English level is studied in 45 periods. Students learn 3 periods of English per week in 15 weeks. The materials for the English skills program are Four Corners from 2A to 3A. Speaking skills are taught along with grammar and other skills by Vietnamese teachers. In class, students practice speaking English with their partners who they can choose themselves. After each lesson, students are given a model conversation and a list of questions, which they can learn by heart. After a pair of students present their conversations, they will be asked some questions related to the topic.

Table 1. Participants' general information

No. Information		N=110		
		F	%	
1	Gender	Male	49	44.5
		Female	61	55.5
2	Age	Under 19	8	7.3
		From 19 to 23	98	89.1
		Over 23	4	3.6
2	Hometown	Ho Chi Minh City	16	14.5
		Others	94	85.5
3	How long have you been learning English?	1-5 years	12	10.9
		6-10 years	79	71.8
		over 10 years	19	17.3
4	How much time do you spend on learning English speaking skills per day?	15 minutes	20	18.2
		45 minutes	74	67.3
		60 minutes	15	13.6
		Others	1	9

Note: F: frequency; %: Percent

This study involved 110 non-English majors who were conveniently sampled. As we can see from Table 1, the number of male students in

this study is 49 students, accounting for 44.5%, whereas the number of female students holds 55.5% with 61 participants. The dominant age range of the participants from 19 to 23 years old makes up nearly 90% (89.1%) while the number of the participants whose age range under 19 years old is as twice as that of those over 23 years old, accounting for 7.3% and 3.6%. More than three fourths of the participants come from other provinces along Vietnam which gain 89.1% with 98 participants while the number of participants whose hometowns are in Ho Chi Minh City occupies a small percentage (14.5% with only 16 students). The participants have been learning English for different periods of time. Only 12 students (10.9%) have about 1 or 5 year experience in learning English. 79 participants have learnt English for about 6 to 10 years, occupying 71.8%, whereas only 19 students with 17.3% have spent over 10 years studying English. Regarding practicing speaking skills, the number of participants who spent 15 minutes, 45 minutes and 60 minutes on learning speaking skills is 20, 74 and 15 students, which makes up 18.2%, 67.3% and 13.6% respectively. Only 1 participant spent other time on his learning English.

Research instruments

The qualitative and quantitative data were collected by using a closed-ended questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The former was adapted from two studies: Yaseen (2018) and Khamprated (2012). The questionnaire has 17 items divided into three groups (linguistics related difficulties: 6 items; Psychology related difficulties: 3 items; learning environment related difficulties: 8 items). The five-point Linker scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) was used to these items. The Cronbach's Alpha of *linguistics related difficulties*, *psychology related difficulties*, and *learning environment related difficulties* is .70, .79 and .72. This means that the reliability of the questionnaire is acceptable. With respect to Semi-structured interview, it aims at gaining important information of students' speaking difficulties. It has four main questions. The questionnaire and interview were in students' mother tongue so that they did not have any language difficulties in responding to the questionnaire and interview.

Procedures for data collection and analysis

Regarding data collection, the questionnaire was delivered to 110 students in person after the questionnaire had been piloted. It took them 15-20 minutes to finish the questionnaire. After one week, each of 20 students was purposively invited for informal semi-structured interviews. Each interview took place around 30-35 minutes. All

interviews were recorded for later transcription.

When it comes to data analysis, the quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS in terms of descriptive statistics. The interval mean scores were interpreted as: 1-1.80: strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60: disagree; 2.61-3.40: neutral; 3.41- 4.20: agree; and 4.21 – 5.00: strongly agree. Meanwhile, qualitative data were analyzed by content analysis within the following steps. First, the transcripts were read many times and categorized into different groups. After that, the data were coded. Next, the data having similar ideas were put into larger categories. Finally, the categories and the theme were analyzed to discover the links among them. All interviewees were coded as ST1, ST2 to ST20. In order to assure the validity of data analysis, inter-rating was employed. Two researchers in the same field were invited for re-analysis of three randomly chosen pieces of data. The consistency of data analysis should be reached at least 95% among inter-raters.

RESULTS

English speaking difficulties

Table 2 shows the data about the speaking difficulties that non-English majored students encountered. It can be seen that the mean is 3.12 and the standard deviation is .45, which means those students were not sure whether they faced difficulties in speaking English or not. Nonetheless, a close look at groups of speaking difficulties, it is seen that *Linguistics related difficulties* has the highest mean score ($M = 3.91$; $SD = .61$), followed *psychological related difficulties* ($M = 3.29$; $SD = .91$) and *Learning environment related difficulties* ($M = 2.47$; $SD = .58$). This can be interpreted that the participants only encountered *Linguistics related difficulties*, but they were uncertain about *psychological related difficulties*. In addition, they seemed not to face Learning environment related difficulties.

Table 2. The Overall Statistics Results of English Speaking Difficulties

Themes	English Speaking Difficulties	M	SD
1	Linguistics related difficulties	3.91	.61
2	Psychology related difficulties	3.29	.91
3	Learning environment related difficulties	2.47	.58
Total		3.12	.45

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Linguistics related difficulties

Table 3 illustrates the number of the *linguistics related difficulties* that students had when they spoke English. It is apparent that students often encountered difficulties in speaking English because they did not have enough vocabulary to express their ideas (item 1: M=4.03, SD=.84). In addition, the students often experienced speaking difficulties as they were unable to form correct sentences (item 3: M=4.02; SD=0.98) or select suitable vocabulary to express their ideas (item 2: M=4.01; SD=.91). Pronunciation of words (item 5: M=3.63; SD=1.12) seems to be the least popular issue among the students. The other elements regarding linguistic problems that the students often faced when speaking English include using correct intonation and stress (item 6: M=3.80; SD=.98) as well as lacking knowledge of many grammatical structures (item 4: M=3.98; SD=.88).

Table 3. Non-English majors' speaking difficulties in terms of Linguistics related difficulties

No.	I have speaking difficulties because	N=110	
		M	SD
1	I do not have enough vocabulary.	4.03	.84
2	I cannot choose appropriate words to express my ideas.	4.01	.91
3	I do not know how to form correct sentences.	4.02	.98
4	I do not know many grammatical structures.	3.98	.88
5	I do not know how to pronounce words correctly.	3.63	1.12
6	I cannot use correct intonation and stress.	3.80	.98

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

The results from the interview also showed the similarity with the data from the questionnaire. For example, the students ST2, ST6, ST9, ST16 and ST20 reported that they had many difficulties in speaking because they did not know many English words and it was difficult for them to remember new vocabulary. In particular, the student ST2 stated "I cannot remember the vocabulary I have learnt in the previous day. In addition, I do not remember the pronunciations of the new words, so I forget the new words as well." The student ST16 had the same opinion

“I have not mastered vocabulary well, and I do not have a good memory either”. The student ST9 had another problem besides vocabulary “I do not know a large amount of vocabulary, and neither can I express my ideas smoothly”. In additionally, the student ST6 added one more issue “I cannot use appropriate words in my conversation, nor can I put words in the correct order to form sentences”. Finally, the student ST20 stated “In some situations, I do not know enough vocabulary to express my ideas or which grammatical structures to put the words in a correct order to form meaningful sentences.”

Psychological related issues

Table 4 demonstrates the data about the psychological problems that the non-English majors faced when they spoke English. An inspection of the data in the table clearly shows that the students sometimes experienced difficulties in speaking English because of their feelings of shyness when they were asked to speak English in class (item 9: M=3.38; SD=1.10), which is the highest number in the table. The least popular problem that the students had when communicating in English seems to be the feelings of being laughed at by their classmates when they spoke English in class (item 8: M=3.19; SD=1.10). The other problem that hindered the students from speaking English in class was likely to be their fear that they might have been criticized by their friends (item 7: M=3.31; SD=1.07) when they made conversations in English in class.

Table 4. Non-English majors’ speaking difficulties in terms of psychology related difficulties

		N=110	
No.		M	SD
7	I fear criticism from others while speaking.	3.31	1.07
8	I am afraid of being laughed at.	3.19	1.10
9	I am too shy to speak English in class.	3.38	1.10

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

The data from the interview also supported the information from the questionnaire. Some of the students ST1, ST6, S13, ST14, and ST17 said that they felt afraid when they had to speak English in class and that they were not used to standing in front of the class to speak English. For example, the student ST1 claimed “I feel shy. I am afraid that I will pronounce the words incorrectly. I am afraid when I have to stand in

front of the crowd”. The students ST14 and S17 also experienced the same fear “[they are] quite afraid of the crowd,” “[they are] scared and [they] feel frightened when [they] have to stand in front of the crowd”. The student S13 added another reason for this fear “I feel anxious because I am not used to speaking English and I am afraid too.”

Learning environment related difficulties

Table 5 gives the data on the speaking difficulties regarding learning environment that the students encountered when doing speaking activities in class. What stands out in the table is the fact that the students had problems with speaking English in class because their speaking mistakes were sometimes corrected immediately in class (item 14: M=3.31; SD=1.20), which is the highest number in the table. Another significant element that caused students problems with speaking English in class tends to be the fact that the students found it difficult to concentrate in class (item 17: M=3.19; SD=1.10), which might have been caused by the noise in the class (item 16: M=2.55; SD=.96). However, being confused about the ideas of the speaking activities (item 12: M=2.02; SD=.82) and the comparison of speaking ability in class (item 15: M=2.02; SD=1.12) appear to have the least impact when the students communicated in English in class.

Table 5 Non-English majors’ speaking difficulties in terms of learning environment related difficulties

		N=110	
No.		M	SD
10	I am not given enough time to prepare.	2.41	1.02
11	I am not encouraged to think of the ideas in English.	2.23	.97
12	I am confused about the ideas of the speaking activities.	2.02	.82
13	I am not praised when speaking English.	2.05	1.01
14	My speaking mistakes are corrected immediately	3.31	1.20
15	Speaking ability is always compared among students	2.02	1.14
16	The class is too noisy.	2.55	.96
17	I find it difficult to concentrate.	3.19	1.10

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Difference in non-English majors' speaking difficulties in terms of gender

The results in Table 6 show that there was a significant difference ($t = -.2158$; $p = .033$) in non-English majors' the overall English speaking difficulties in terms of gender. This can refer that females had more English speaking difficulties than their fellow males. Regarding three groups of English speaking difficulties, significant differences in *Linguistics related difficulties* ($t = -2.753$; $p = .007$) and *Psychology related difficulties* ($t = -2.183$; $p = .031$) were found, but students encountered many *Learning environment related difficulties* ($t = -.434$; $p = .665$) in a similar extent regardless of their gender. Such results can be understood that male students struggled with *Linguistics related difficulties* and *Psychology related difficulties* less seriously than their female counterparts. Meanwhile, both male and female students did not suffer from *Learning environment related difficulties* in a similar way in terms of statistics.

Table 6. Difference in non-English majors' attitudes towards FBA in terms of gender

	t	Sig.	Male (n=47) M(SD)	Female (n=63) M(SD)
English speaking difficulties	-2.158	.033*	3.10(.42)	3.38(.43)
Linguistics related difficulties	-2.753	.007**	3.73(.61)	4.05(.57)
Psychology related difficulties	-2.183	.031*	3.30(.72)	3.61(.75)
Learning environment related difficulties	-.434	.665	2.69(.48)	2.73(.52)

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

* The mean difference is significant at the .05level (2-tailed)

** The mean difference is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

DISCUSSION

The study has found out the participants had some speaking difficulties which were resulted from the linguistic issues. First of all, the students did not have enough vocabulary to express their ideas. Besides, they also

could not choose appropriate words to illustrate their opinions. This made students incapable of delivering their thoughts through speaking naturally. These results can be explained by the fact that most the students in the research come from other provinces where speaking skills are not emphasized in the teaching curriculum at high school. All the students learnt at high school is just grammatical features which are focused in the lessons to help them pass the exams. The findings of the study are similar to the ideas of Khan (2014), Wilkins (1972; as cited in Thornbury, 2002), Richards (2002) who claim that the problems of vocabulary and expressions occur to a great number of EFL learners when they speak. It is also concluded that learners seem to get confused when choosing appropriate vocabulary to express their thoughts by the target language.

Grammatical features seemed to be the next difficulty. For example, students did not know grammatical points and they did not know how to put words into correct order in order to form complete sentences. The findings in the questionnaire seem to correspond to the data collected from the interview. When the students were asked about the difficulties they encountered when they speaking English, most of the students said that they did not know which grammar structures they needed to apply to put words in a correct order to form meaningful sentences. This can be explained that most of the students were at low level of English when they were admitted to the college; therefore, their knowledge of English grammar was limited. These problems also support the ideas of Murcia (2001) who state that although the spoken grammar can be different from the normal grammar, most learners who do not carefully study grammar may over-generalize the rules they know for all cases.

Thirdly, the pronunciation caused students many difficulties. Most of the students had trouble because they did not know how to pronounce words as well as how to use correct stress and intonation in particular situations. In the interview, the students also revealed that one of the reasons for their speaking difficulties was their lack of knowledge of pronunciation. They admitted that they did not want to speak English because they did not know how to pronounce words correctly. With regard to the fact they were not taught speaking skills properly at high school, they obviously encountered many difficulties in pronouncing words correctly. In addition, the findings of this study are compared to those of the previous studies. According to Lukitasari (2008), linguistic problems like pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary hindered students from speaking English well in class. Among three linguistic problems, lack of vocabulary was the most common issues that the

participants were facing.

Fourthly, the findings of this research shows that the students' difficulties in speaking English were sometimes caused by the following psychological factors including the anxiety of receiving criticism or negative feedback from others while speaking, the feeling of being laughed at when making mistakes, or the shyness to speak in class. These results can be explained by the fact that most of the students in the study were not competitive in English and they were usually passive in class; as a result, they were afraid that they might not be able to speak English correctly, which might make their classmates laugh at them and make them lose face in class. In the interview, some of the students also said that they did not dare to speak English in class and that they were not used to standing in front of the crowd to speak English. It seems that psychological factors are also the main matters which hinder students' speaking performance. Middleton (2009), and Luo (2014) agree that EFL learners are afraid that they will look like a fool if they say something wrong in a crowded group and they are worried about their images in other people' mind, so they lack confidence and are not willing to participate in speaking activities in order to avoid losing face or being laughed at. Besides, Gebhard (2000) and Baldwin (2011) also state that speaking in front of the class is a big obsession of most English learners and because of the shyness, learners are too worried and nervous to remember what they are going to explain. In addition, Ur (2000) argues that fear of criticism and risks of making mistakes or feeling shy hinder leaners from using the target language in class. Furthermore, Park and Lee (2005) also agree that psychological matters play an important role in affecting students' speaking performance in their studies. Therefore, there is no difference between the findings of the current study to other studies with similar topics.

Fifthly, many students admitted that the learning environment was not the main obstacle which prevented them from joining and improving their speaking activities. Nearly most of the participants disagreed that learning environment was not created in good condition for them to study. They opposed to the opinion that they were confused about the ideas of the speaking activities and they also admitted that they were not under pressure when speaking. The participants had neutral attitudes about the ideas that mistakes were not corrected immediately very often and they found it hard to concentrate. In addition, their speaking abilities were not always compared among students. Students had no comments about the teaching methods from the teachers who had motivated and encouraged them a lot. These findings do not

absolutely support the previous research regarding the lack of motivation in learning of Songsiri (2007) who states that if teachers have good instructions and teaching methods, their students will be encouraged and have enough motivation to communicate in English. These evidences proved that although the teachers had tried their best to create good learning environment for them to study, the students still had difficulties in taking part in speaking activities. These findings do not absolutely support the previous studies concerning the teaching methods of Cameron (2001), and Dao (2017) who claim that teaching strategies would cause students' low performance in speaking.

However, the findings revealed that the students disagreed with the ideas that they were not given enough time to prepare as well as they were not encouraged to think of the ideas in English. These findings show the contrast ideas with the opinion of Lukitasari (2003) who claims that the main problem behind students' low performance is that teachers seem to require students to talk about uncommon or unfamiliar topics, so they have nothing to share even in their first language or the target language. Additionally, the participants sometimes had difficulties because the class was too noisy. The finding also contrast with the ideas of Ferris and Tagg (1996) who claim that the number of participants was enormous, the teaching periods were not effective, and the syllabus did not comply with students' communicative objectives, which led to students' oral difficulties. The findings prove that it was the internal problems of the learners that affect their performance rather than the number of attendants in class. Besides, it also opposes to the ideas of some previous research in the same fields such as Vo, Pham and Ho (2018) and Dao (2017) who agree that learning environment is one of the main elements affecting students' development. Last but not least, the interference in mother tongue suggested by Baker and Westrup (2000) was not similar to the results of this study. Those prove that the difficulties which they encountered did not come from aforementioned issues.

Last but not least, participants were found to face English speaking difficulties in significantly different way in terms of gender, but in details only two groups of linguistics related difficulties and psychology related ones showed significant differences between male and female students. One of the plausible explanations for this may be that both male and female students had low level of English language proficiency, and most of participants came from other provinces other than Ho Chi Minh City. This study is partially aligned with that of Tran and Dang (2019) which confirmed that students could face linguistics related difficulties in their

speaking significantly differently in terms of length of learning English.

CONCLUSION

This study has revealed that non-English majored students faced significant English speaking difficulties when studying at college. Regarding the three main difficulties, the linguistic difficulties were the most common difficulties that the students were afraid of, including knowledge about new vocabulary as well as their pronunciation, grammatical structures and how to put words appropriately to form sentences while speaking. In addition, psychological difficulties seemed to be reluctant factors which may or may not affect students' speaking abilities. However, learning environment related difficulties did not hinder students from speaking. What is more, male students suffered from linguistics related difficulties and psychology related difficulties significantly less than their fellow females, but they both did not encounter learning environment related difficulties in a similar extent.

Some implications from this study are drawn. Regarding EFL teachers in charge of teaching speaking skills, it is advisable that teachers should make use of different kinds of teaching materials to help students broaden their knowledge about linguistics. In addition, they can explain and verify the difficult linguistic points in a simple way to assist students in gaining a fundamental background of English. Furthermore, it is vital for teachers to investigate the learning styles of the students as well as their interests in order to select appropriate speaking topics for the speaking activities in class. Additionally, after each lesson, teachers should provide students with constructive feedback on their speaking performance to help the students recognize their speaking mistakes and improve their speaking performance in the future. It is crucial for teachers to introduce some useful learning strategies such as socio-affective strategies, cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies to their students and explain to how they can apply these strategies to enhance their learning. Furthermore, teachers should encourage students to engage in speaking activities in class. Teachers should motivate students to speak not only inside but also outside classroom because the limited speaking periods at school are not enough for students' development. Therefore, raising students' awareness of self-study is also significantly important in teaching. As for students, they should be encouraged to enlarge their own vocabulary in various fields. Students should self-study at home to equip the "input" of the speaking process. Besides knowing a wide range of vocabulary, students should learn how to pronounce those new words correctly as well. Additionally, students should learn grammatical structures which are used frequently

in speaking as preparation for another input. By exactly knowing the essential vocabulary, their pronunciation as well as the way to put words in correct grammatical rules will help students overcome their difficulties in linguistics and also assist students to develop their speaking skills. Furthermore, students should create their own plans for practicing speaking skills, what they have to speak, how much time they should spend on speaking lessons. They should also come up with a plan to evaluate their improvement after learning speaking lessons at school. Plus, students should be more confident and motivated in participating in speaking lessons. Regarding psychological matters, students should be stimulated to get involved in the lessons without worrying about the mistakes. Students should actively cooperate with their friends when they study speaking as well as consult their teacher for valuable advice. They can practice speaking with their friends at home, share their experience in learning English with each other and do some fun activities to learn English together. Moreover, when they encounter difficulties during their process of studying English, they can contact their teacher and ask her for useful advice and suggestions.

However, this study still bears some limitations. The small sample size is likely to be one of the limitations of this research because it might have an impact on the validity of the findings of the research. For example, there might be more speaking learning strategies and more difficulties in learning speaking that have not been mentioned in this research. In addition, there are many other correlations between learning strategies and speaking difficulties that have not been discovered due to the limited scope of this study. Furthermore, the limited time of the study might have hindered the researcher from gaining deep insights into the field of studies. Finally, only two research instruments were applied to collect data in this research, which limited the number of collected data as well as the quality of the data.

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PROSODY-BASED TECHNIQUES FOR ENHANCING EFL LEARNERS' LISTENING SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

Prosody, which often refers to the stress, rhythm, and intonation of utterances, is central to aural comprehension as it increases the intelligibility of spoken language. Listeners often rely on prosodic cues for acquiring information such as emotions, word/sentence boundaries, speaker characteristics and language features (Mary, 2019,p.2). However, little attention has been paid to prosody in the domain of teaching of listening. For this reason, the purpose of this paper is first to present a comprehensive review of research into the relationship between prosody and listening skills, and then to provide a full description of some prosody-based techniques for improving the listening skills of learners of English as a foreign language (EFL).

Keywords: *prosody, listening skill, filtered audio, repetition, body movement*

INTRODUCTION

Prosody, which often refers to stress, rhythm and intonation of the utterances, or the suprasegmental features of spoken language, is crucial for second language (L2) production as well as L2 reading and listening comprehension (Jackson & O'Brien, 2012). The comprehensibility, accentedness, and fluency of learners' speech were discovered to improve significantly after they were taught with a prosody-oriented approach in a study conducted by Derwing et al. (1998). Likewise, Alazard (2013) argues that if learners have not acquired the prosodic system orally, they may encounter many problems in understanding written documents. She explains that

fluency is associated with the automatization of the decoding process related to mastering the prosodic structures of a foreign language.

In the realm of listening, the importance of prosody stems from the primacy of spoken language, structured by prosodic forms (Traxler & Gernsbacher, 2006). A focus on prosodic elements in the sound stream can facilitate listening because the individual sounds of spoken input are often distorted and difficult to recognize in actual speech (Gilbert, 2008). As stated by Frazier et al. (2006), the brain processes prosody based on the auditory sequence that listeners can keep in their memory as a guidance. This effect on memory is seen most prominently as processing becomes more difficult and requires more cognitive load (Paris et al., 2000; Rosner et al., 2004). In addition, Hönig (2017) claims that correct prosodic perception or production is likely to have a positive bearing on the segmental level, which means that listeners might handle many phonological interferences. Empirical data also support that there is a strong correlation between prosodic features and listening comprehension (Han, 1996; Kaya, 2015; Kettongma & Wasuntarasobhit, 2015; Kissling, 2018; Xiaoyu, 2009). These studies suggest that learners' listening performances can improve with the enhancement of awareness of prosodic cues. For this reason, the main goal of the current paper is to propose some prosody-based techniques for EFL learners to familiarize themselves with, and more or less, to internalize the prosodic structures to achieve effective listening comprehension.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of prosody for listening skills

According to Frühholz and Belin (2019), prosody is a key feature of human spoken language. Prosodic characteristics including stress, rhythm and intonation, are central for understanding spoken language because infants have been sensitized to those of their native language before learning to talk (Traxler & Gernsbacher, 2006). Infants apply it automatically and unconsciously to their own speech and language comprehension. Hence, they tend to hear any new language within their own native language prosodic framework (Traxler & Gernsbacher, 2006). For this reason, it is essential for language learners to be aware of and to practice English prosodic patterns in order to achieve effective listening comprehension. In general, each component of prosody has a separate part to play during the process of making meaning, yet their functions are sometimes overlapping.

Stress is defined as the relative emphasis that may be placed on certain syllables in a word, or certain words in a phrase or sentence (Mary, 2019). Word stress is considered as the basic constituent for understanding; however, not all words are stressed when they are combined in utterances because of the variabilities of real-time spoken language. For this reason, the listeners' attention should be first directed to stress at the phrase or at the sentence level, which also refers to rhythm comprising timing, accent, and reduced syllables (Chun, 2002). Flores (1997) argues that rhythm should be prioritized in learning English because it is quite challenging for EFL learners to acquire. What an EFL learner mainly lacks is the rhythm of English as they tend to speak or listen to a new language with their native rhythm mechanisms (Gassin, 1990). Moreover, Condon and Ogston (1966) claim that the body of the speakers harmonizes with their speech and the body of the listeners coordinates with the speakers. These phenomena are called synchrony and interactional synchrony, respectively.

From a listener's perspective, Gassin (1990) points out that without mastering the rhythmic patterns, L2 learners are likely to be excluded from the interactional synchrony with L2 speakers, which may result in psychological consequences as well as miscomprehension. These rhythmic patterns are a part of intonation, described as a framework created by the interplay of accented syllables and rhythm of speech (Wells, 2006). According to Wells (2006), with its diverse functions, English is one of the languages which utilizes more elaborate use of intonation to express meanings compared to other languages. For instance, intonation is utilized to express attitudes and emotions, to show the focus of the utterance, to mark the sequence of clauses and sentence, etc. In the same vein, Chun (2002) suggests that intonation is multi-functional and provides additional cues to express full meanings. Most importantly, she addresses the need to look at the functions of intonation from the perspective of the hearers not the speakers. In fact, there may be no clear-cut categories between the two perspectives because in the end, the ultimate goal is to help L2 listeners be aware of the rhythmic and intonation patterns required to facilitate their aural comprehension.

An extensive literature has shown that there is a strong connection between prosodic features and listening comprehension (Han, 1996; Kaya, 2015; Kettongma & Wasuntarasobhit, 2015; Kissling, 2018; Xiaoyu, 2009). One of the earliest studies was conducted by Han (1996) who investigated the effects of pronunciation-oriented listening practice on Korean university students' pronunciation and listening

comprehension. The participants in the study were engaged in pronunciation-based listening activities with a primary focus on suprasegmental aspects and provided with theories on phonetics and phonological rules to raise their awareness of the sound system. These participants took a listening test and a speaking test, based on some aspects of pronunciation such as contractions, intonation, focus, stress, and segmental sounds. The results reveal that suprasegmental features are crucial for comprehending conversational speech. Most importantly, these prosodic elements are discovered to have a closer relationship with listening than segmental aspects. The findings of Han's investigation (1996) asserted that greater emphasis should be placed on prosody than individual sounds to effectively improve EFL learners' listening comprehension.

By the same token, Xiaoyu (2009) examined the relationship between Chinese EFL learners' proficiency in suprasegmental features and their listening comprehension by analyzing their recordings with the criteria including stress, rhythm and intonation. A positive relationship was found between their listening comprehension and the overall features as well as their listening comprehension and a single suprasegmental aspect. Xiaoyu's conclusion (2009) is that the teaching of prosody should be promoted to help students overcome some obstacles in their listening comprehension. In line with this trend, Kaya (2015) presented empirical support for this positive connection by analyzing listening test scores and speeches of 20 Japanese learners of English. The study shows a correlation between listening test score and use of sentence stress. This relationship is further tested by Kettongma and Wasuntarasobhit (2015) who used the explicit instructions of prosodic features combined with cognitive listening strategies as a treatment on 34 low-intermediate EFL learners. They were provided with lessons of suprasegmental aspects such as word stress and sounds linking. Data analysis from pre- and post-tests show that their listening performances have improved, especially tasks focusing on details.

Likewise, a recent study by Kissling (2018) has investigated the effect of pronunciation instruction on bottom-up processing to support L2 listening. 116 novice learners of EFL Spanish taking part in the study were divided into 4 experimental groups with instructions focusing on segmental features or suprasegmental ones followed by production-focused or perception-focused practice and one control group receiving no pronunciation instruction. The production-focused practice involved following instructor's modeling, repeating, and receiving feedback, whereas in perception-focused practice, the participants listened, filled

the blanks highlighting the target features and got feedback on their accuracy. Suprasegmental instructions in the study covered three aspects: linking, diphthongs, and synalepha. Interestingly, the findings revealed that pronunciation instruction on suprasegmental features together with perception-focused practice can facilitate learners in segmenting the speech stream in their dictation tasks. In other words, directing learners' attention to prosodic elements can promote their listening skills. Taken together, each researcher has focused on different aspects of prosody in a certain context, yet they all reached the same conclusion that prosody is strongly related to listening ability. Given this close connection, prosody-based listening activities should be developed in order to enhance learners' listening comprehension in EFL contexts, which is also the purpose of the current paper.

Prosody-based techniques

Listening to filtered recordings

Filtered recordings, or degraded sentences are speech signals lacking lexical and syntactic information but retaining prosodic information, created by filtering normal speech (Bever, 1975; Perkins et al., 1996). These recordings are the product of low-pass filtering, a process of removing high frequency audio information which is vital for speech comprehension while leaving the speech melody intact (Snel & Cullen, 2013; Steinhauer & Friederici, 2001). This technique is considered as an ideal stimulus manipulation for prosodic perception because the prosodic features are clearly conveyed and less listening effort is required to detect these patterns (Sonntag & Portele, 1997). The first attempt to listen to these unintelligible sentences may result in a feeling akin to listening to "alien speech"; however, this kind of speech can help learners forget the meaning of the messages and concentrate on melody of the language (Scott et al., 2000). Compared to other techniques such as nonsense syllables or hummed speech, filtered recordings are more authentic in terms of preserving prosodic patterns, less labor-intensive with the aid of technological tools (e.g. Praat, Audacity, Adobe Audition etc.), and especially favor learners' autonomy (Flores, 1997; Rançon, 2018).

Furthermore, evidence from brain lateralization relating to language learning also supports that listening to filtered recordings may enable learners to internalize the prosodic structures more effectively. As stated by McGilchrist (2019), any new verbal input must be processed by the right hemisphere first before shifting to be the focus of the left hemisphere. Therefore, the learners' unfamiliarity with degraded

speech may help them bypass the normal processing mechanism and stimulate the right region of the brain. This is in line with empirical research which shows that there is stronger activation in the right hemisphere for low-pass-filtered speech than for natural speech despite a co-activation of and a dynamic interaction between the two brain regions during the spoken language comprehension process (Bever, 1975; Hesling et al., 2005; Ischebeck et al., 2008; Meyer et al., 2004; Perkins et al., 1996). It should be borne in mind that learners must listen successively to filtered recordings and normal recordings with a certain exposure to maximize the effectiveness of the process. This, in turn, leads to the second technique: repetition.

Repetition

The concept of repetition is not new in language learning; however, in this case, learners must have the experience of a great deal of repetition of listening to both filtered and normal recordings and imitating them because this kind of repeated action can enable learners to develop a sense of prosodic patterns and enhance learning of these structures (Jung et al., 2017). As explained by Nishikawa (2014), repetition can be considered as a practical method to help learners to make improvements in their production due to their perception of internal transformation. Indeed, repetition allows learners to access easily and attend more to the information by creating a cognitive effect (Bygate, 2007). This is one of the ways for the human mind to assimilate information gradually to achieve fluency (Lambert et al., 2016). In addition, according to Silva and Santos (2006), repetition is likely to facilitate a type of spontaneous pre-patterning, which sharpens the automaticity in interaction. Moreover, Ghazi-Saidi and Ansaldo (2017) added neurofunctional evidence related to the effects of repetition, revealing that repetition is a neuroplasticity agent in L2 learning. Therefore, a certain amount of repetition is necessary to minimize the cognitive load.

Body movements

In order to maximize the effectiveness of the first two techniques, McNeill (2005) suggests that learners have to synchronize them with body movements or gestures which refer to the spontaneous accompaniments of speech such as moving fingers, hands, arms and etc. Asp (2006) explains that at a young age, a child feels the speech rhythms through vestibular perception or body perception so that the brain can perceive speech rhythms. After the speech rhythms are internalized in memory, the child can recall different patterns only by listening. Good

rhythm perception enables listeners to anticipate what speakers will say and hear rapidly with ease and pleasure. Moreover, the body is the transmitter and receiver of the communication (Calvez, 2009). Condon and Ogston (1966) claim that speech and body motions are rhythmically coordinated. From their experiment, it is concluded that in communication, not only self-synchrony occurs but also interactional synchrony, as discussed in the previous section. This interactional synchrony is the imitation of rhythm and humans are innately presupposed to pick up rhythms that are in harmony with those of others (Kinsbourne, 2007).

What is more, previous findings relating to gestures suggest that producing gestures helps internalize L2 prosodic structure through embodied processes (Gullberg, 2008; McCafferty, 2004; Negueruela et al., 2004). This kind of production may make a contribution to communication and memory for new information in the same individual, whether it is spontaneous or nonspontaneous (Morett, 2018). Similarly, Chan (2018) emphasizes that the employment of gestures is helpful for language learners who need to develop sensitivity to auditory input. By producing gestures while repeating, learners can gain awareness of prosodic patterns in spoken English and internalize them into body memory. Therefore, it is vital for learners of a foreign language, not only as a speaker, to know how to integrate their whole body into the speech rhythm of the new language form but also as a listener, to know how to synchronize with the interlocutors for effective communication.

Shadowing

Practice listening at sentence level may utilize the three mentioned techniques; however, at discourse level, shadowing is more favorable for practice with short conversations. Lambert (1992) defines shadowing as a paced, auditory tracking task that requires the vocalization of aurally presented stimuli without any delay. Put simply, shadowing is repeating what one hears simultaneously as accurately as possible (Hamada, 2016). Originally, shadowing was exploited in cognitive psychology for studying selective attention and in training simultaneous interpreters in L1. Recently, shadowing has been used as a pedagogic tool in foreign language teaching and learning (Bovee & Stewart, 2008; Hamada, 2016). According to Hamada (2016), shadowing and repetition are about reproducing what a person hears but differ in time lag. The time lag in shadowing between what one hears and reproduces what one hears chunk by chunk is less than that in repetition (Hamada, 2016).

Shadowing is beneficial for learners in facilitating their listening skills for a number of reasons claimed by Hamada (2016). First, practicing shadowing can familiarize learners with prosodic patterns of the target system. Shadowing is the act of rehearsing information explicitly but implicitly in sub-vocal rehearsal. Therefore, it can help learners unconsciously internalize the sound system of the target language. Second, learners often confront attention failures when encountering unfamiliar sequences. With shadowing training, they can build resilience to overcome these failures in attention. Third, learners often have trouble following the flow of speech while listening. They often know a word in isolation but find it difficult to catch it from auditory signal due to lack of automatic processing. Performing shadowing tasks may develop their online processing or automaticity (Nakayama & Armstrong, 2015), which enables them to focus on making meaning of the aural input for more effective comprehension. Moreover, empirical evidence has suggested that shadowing can promote listening ability (Hamada, 2012, 2017, 2018; Hiroko, 2004; Hwang, 2016; Tomokazu & Toshiaki, 2012), improve fluency (Hsieh et al., 2013; Martinsen et al., 2017; Yavari et al., 2019), and raise motivation for listening as well as reduce listening anxiety (Hamada, 2015; Shiota, 2012; Sumiyoshi & Svetanant, 2017; Teeter, 2017). Given its great benefits for developing listening skills, shadowing should be recommended to learners for listening practice.

Procedures for implementing these techniques

For phrases and sentences, some steps are suggested as follows:

First, learners listen to filtered recordings for 15 times and feel the melody with their body movements. This step can help to lighten the processing load because it makes the prosodic features more salient and removes the necessity of processing words and grammar.

Second, learners listen to unfiltered recordings for 10 times while noticing intonation phrases and trying to repeat or hum along. This familiarizes them with the variabilities of individual words in the continuous speech stream.

Third, learners listen to filtered recordings again for 10 times while repeating or humming combined with body movements. As mentioned above, repetition and humming can help to assimilate rhythmic frameworks to achieve fluency while body movements in synchrony with speech facilitate the establishment of new rhythmic patterns. The number of repetitions should be taken into consideration depending on

the length of the recordings as well as the level of learners.

For conversations, shadowing is a way of fostering learners' automatic processing. Basically, there is pre-shadowing which is implemented before learning the content and post-shadowing implemented after learning the content (Hamada, 2014). In relation to listening ability, pre-shadowing is recommended as it can help to direct learners' attention to the prosodic patterns and focus on what they are hearing and vocalizing.

CONCLUSION

In brief, the current paper has systematically reviewed previous research into the close relationship between prosody and L2 listening ability, aiming to provide some prosody-based techniques to improve EFL learners' listening skills. These techniques including listening to low pass filtered recordings, repetition in synchrony with body movements, and shadowing have been proposed with empirical evidence supported by recent findings in neuroscience related to language learning. These techniques can be implemented in the classroom, but it is recommended that teachers use them to design an online learning system for learners to practice by themselves.

With a certain amount of practice of these combined techniques, learners are expected to internalize the English prosodic patterns and develop a habit of listening to English with its own prosodic patterns instead of with the patterns of their native language.

There are two pedagogical implications underlying these prosody-based techniques. First, the focus is on the overall characteristics of prosodic patterns, favoring a global approach to listening skills instead of any prescribed specific difficulties encountered by learners. This reflects the current tendency towards learning and teaching in a digitalized world, which is not "just in case" but should be "just in time" (Lian, 2017). This, in turn, leads to the second implication which promotes learner-centeredness and learners' autonomy. Instead of making use of these techniques in the classroom, teachers can offer learners a personalized learning environment to practice their listening by creating a language learning system embedded within these proposed techniques. However, it should be borne in mind that in order to make the most of these techniques to achieve the best outcomes, practice alone is not enough but strong commitment should be taken into consideration.

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THE EFFECT OF METACOGNITIVE NOTE-TAKING SKILLS ON CRITICAL THINKING

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ABSTRACT

Critical thinking (CT) is acknowledged as an indispensable skill in the modern education. Critical learners can take control of their communication skills, strategy use and collaboration. Despite experiencing some reforms of curricula, innovative teaching methods and English course length at Binh Dinh College, students have still been mainly engaged in remembering lesson contents for their exams in a passive manner, not for their study in a long run. This study examined students' awareness of CT and their perceptions on the integration of Metacognitive Note-taking Skills (MNT) into *Communication English* class. MNT was the combination of mindmapping strategies and guiding questions of metacognitive strategies. Twenty-six students from Tourism Management Faculty took a pre-test and a post-test measuring their awareness of CT before and after ten-week intervention of MNT. The findings reported remarkable changes in their awareness level of CT. Also, the study indicated the participants' positive perceptions on the use MTN in speaking practice. The study might expectantly encourage instructors to care for fostering learners' critical thinking, motivation and other essential lifelong learning skills.

Keywords: *critical thinking, metacognitive note-taking, metacognitive strategies, speaking*

INTRODUCTION

Critical thinking (CT) has been conceptualized as a significant element and a lifelong ideal of education in the 21st century (Rezaei, Derakhshan, & Bagherkazemi, 2011). Although CT is a "mystified concept", numerous instructions of CT involve fundamental objectives which enable students to improve their "reason assessment components" and "critical attitude" (Rezaei et al., 2011, pp. 769-770). CT has strong connections with essential elements of independent learning: metacognition, motivation and originality (Lai, 2011). CT is an 'umbrella' containing a variety of higher order thinking skills such as productive thinking, reflective thinking, decision-making, problem-solving (Sünbül, 2016). A

critical thinker must actively process information, raise own questions, identify and deal with problems based on multiple information evidence (Dewey, 1916).

In the last few decades, the Vietnamese government has encouraged the development of CT strategies to encounter challenging opportunities in global educational discourses and practices (Ho, Nguyen, Nguyen, Ngo, & Nguyen, 2018). CT requires students to deal with an issue from different perspectives and minimize over-emphases on textbooks (Ho et al., 2018). Students can go beyond knowledge provided and express their distinctive stances while solving problems or making decisions (Lai, 2011). CT enables students to set purposes, critically analyze their experiences, and willingly improve their expertise (P. H. Phan, 2010).

The study's participants started with low English proficiency; they must encounter a large volume of English knowledge for their future occupations related to Tourism and Travelling in a three-year course. Their main assessments for their English course were based on oral tests and exams. Speaking skill is indeed challenging to them due to difficulties in governing memories and cognition, lack of opportunities to communicate directly and lack of motivation. These shortcomings may originate from Confucianism Culture and tradition of teacher-centered education, the lack of strategy use and the weakness of collaboration among the students (Trinh, 2015). Despite experiencing some reforms of curricula, innovative teaching methods and English course length at Binh Dinh College, students have passively remembered lesson contents for their conversations in tests or exams. Students appeared to be passive and embarrassed about expressing their own ideas to solve a specific situation. Therefore, CT can be a promising factor to encourage students to foster their commitment, motivational beliefs and self-regulation learning. Furthermore, there has, in particular, been little research on the applications of metacognitive note-taking (MNT) in speaking teaching and learning. This paper hypothesizes that the instruction of MNT during speaking lessons enables students to raise their awareness of CT, which, in turn, hopefully foster their speaking skills, motivation and other language skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relationship between metacognition and critical thinking

Metacognition is defined as the ability of knowing cognition (Bruning, Schraw, & Norby, 2011). A human brain is described to cognitively handle information by encoding, decoding, memorizing, elaborating,

and rehearsing (German Wikibooks, 2016). When a cognitive failure appears during information process, metacognition plays a supporting role for achieving cognitive objectives (German Wikibooks, 2016). Metacognition involves executive processes, namely planning, monitoring cognitive processes and self-evaluating learning goals (Boyle, Rosen, & Forchelli, 2014). Students with metacognitive awareness actively activate schema, direct concentration, use suitable strategies, categorize knowledge in the long-term memory, recognise weaknesses and strengths of their practice and self-evaluate their work. While cognition is to understand something and to fulfil a task, metacognition refers to how to perform a task by employing a wide range of strategies (Zhao, Wardeska, McGuire, & Cook, 2014).

Despite a variety of the CT definitions, there is a consensus of an ideal critical thinker, being inquisitive in nature, open-minded, flexible, fair-minded, goal-directed, self-reflective and self-regulatory (Lai, 2011). Lai (2011) corroborates that the taxonomy for cognition processing skills of Benjamin Bloom and his associates proposed in 1956 is regarded as an educational model of CT. Bloom's taxonomy is hierarchical with six components: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The top three highest levels in the Bloom's taxonomy (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) are frequently considered to represent CT. Another popular model of CT with six core cognition skills and dispositions is suggested by Facione (2011). The former refers to mental activities_ interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation and self-regulation (Appendix A). Dispositions mean to be "critical spirits" in a positive sense (Facione, 2011, p. 10), including inquisitive, judicious, truth seeking, confident in reasoning, open-minded, analytical and systematic.

Theoretically, Cakici (2018) shows that CT and metacognition contain similar features. They both involve self-regulation and enhancement of cognitive skills. They refer to the awareness of employing various strategies while dealing with problems and self-evaluating their learning outcome. They can result in setting up predictions or inferences in an inductive or deductive way. Besides, Halpern (1998) indicates that metacognition is a crucial part for developing CT because it provides directions and assessments of learning for CT. Students' engagement in CT is supported by efficient metacognitive strategies such as regulating thinking process, sketching objectives, checking accuracy, and managing time and efforts (Cakici, 2018).

Previous findings show a strong relationship between metacognition and CT, providing a useful literature for this paper. Magno (2010) finds that there is a positive correlation between 8 specific factors related to metacognition (Declarative Knowledge, Procedural Knowledge, Conditional Knowledge, Planning, Information Management, Monitoring, Debugging Strategy and Evaluation) and 5 factors of CT (Inference, Recognizing Assumptions, Deduction, Interpretation, and Evaluation). Similarly, the study participated by 218 pre-service EFL teachers indicates that more metacognitive awareness results in the development of CT. The desirable relationship between metacognitive strategies and CT is strengthened in the study by Arslan (2015) with 390 university participants from different programs. The findings by Sadeghi, Hassani, and Rahmatkhah (2014) contribute to the role of metacognitive strategies as a direct path to the improvement of CT in language learning fields.

Metacognitive Strategy Training in Speaking

Oxford (1990) notes that language learning can be facilitated by raising students' awareness of applications of the wide range of strategies during their language learning and use. It is argued that metacognitive strategies enable students to maximize their speaking skills. Goh (2014) proposes that explicit instruction of metacognitive strategies directs students to observe their learning processes and analyze language discourses for completing oral learning tasks. The active engagement refers to their maintenance of goal orientations and their study control during the stages of speaking lessons (Tulusita, 2016). Speaking assignments are effectively done with students' high consciousness in self-planning, monitoring and self-evaluation (Tulusita, 2016). In the study by Idris (2019), the "pedagogical cycle" applied in teaching students with low speaking ability includes predicting, inferring, identifying key words, sharing and discussing on the topic. These practices help them acquire vocabulary and knowledge from listening or reading texts and then turn their input into output in their conversations. More importantly, these participants learn how to process and evaluate their performance and their use of strategies for activities.

Metacognitive note-taking strategies

There are various types of note-taking skills to aid learners to write down key information from different communication sources (Mosleh & Baba, 2013). The popular note-taking skills include The Cornell Method, The Outlining Method, Mind mapping and The Charting Method (P. K. M.

Phan, 2019). In this study, the researcher provided the participants an instruction of note-taking accompanying the questions or hints of metacognitive strategies for different stages of a speaking lesson (Figure 1). This MNT instruction was adapted from the paper by P. K. M. Phan (2019). Despite few specific studies on the effectiveness of MNT, MNT still could consist of effective features of popular note-taking forms, that is, to benefit learners' concentration, organization and retention (Haghverdi, Biria, & Karimi, 2010). Note-taking helps students process the materials at a more meaningful or deeper level, thereby leading new knowledge to greater learning (Carrier & Titus, 1979). Note-taking stimulates students to plan, relate to prior schema, summarize, categorize, highlight, rephrase and judge concepts or feelings (Merchie & Van 2016).

With combined instruction of mindmapping strategies and metacognitive strategies, students may raise their metacognition and high-level thinking. Cyr and All (2009) illustrate that a significant increase is seen in results of the California Critical Thinking Skills post-test in relation with interpretation, inference, analysis, evaluation, inductive reasoning, deductive reasoning when students are instructed with note-taking skills. The group of elementary students after ten-week instruction of mindmapping strategies and metacognitive text-learning strategies gets greater results in the "Text-Learning Strategy Inventory" test than the control one (Merchie & Van 2016). In the study of P. K. M. Phan (2019), metacognitive note-taking skills help participants keep track of their thinking during their stages of reading lessons.

Figure 1

The guide of metacognitive note-taking

Date:	Course:
Pre-speaking- Planning	
What do I already know about this topic?	
How does it relate to something I already know about?	
What questions do I already have about this topic?	
<i>(*use different types of note-taking to present ideas)</i>	
While-speaking- Monitoring	
Monitoring Learning	Notes

-Create a left hand column for noting insights, confusions and questions that arise.

- Record insights and “ah-huh!” moments. If you suddenly realize that you understand something, or you make a connection between the current material and something you already know (such as previous course material), make sure to write those thoughts down. You may also include feelings and other comments.

- Write questions. Questions are the best evidence you have that you are actually thinking about the material.

- Note your responses to the questions you have.

-What strategies you have used.

- Pay attention to what is happening inside your head (metacognition).

- Note items to follow up on.

*(*can use a variety of note-taking)*

Post-speaking – Reflecting and Evaluating Learning

At the bottom of your notes for each class, draw a line below your notes to write a summary. Below are some guiding questions to assist with writing.

1. What were the most important ideas of today’s class session?
2. What did I hear today that is in conflict with my prior understanding?
3. How did the ideas of today’s class session relate to previous class sessions?
4. What do I need to actively go and do now to get my questions answered and my confusions clarified?
5. What did I find most interesting about class today?

*(*can use a variety of note-taking)*

Research questions

Research question 1: *Are there any divergences in students' awareness levels of critical thinking between the pretest and the posttest?*

Research question 2: *What are participants' perceptions on the employment of metacognitive note-taking skills during English speaking practice?*

THE STUDY

Settings and participants

The English course for students of Tourism Management Faculty at Binh Dinh College lasts four semesters, and major assessments are oral tests and exams. Twenty-six students from 46 students of QK14 and QN14 volunteered to take part in this study in the 20-22 age range. 83% of the participants were females. They were all studying English 2 (Communication English 2) with the use Breakthrough Plus 1 by Miles Craven as a main textbook. Most of students were observed to make effort to learn samples of conversations by rote for their oral tests and exams in the previous semester. It appeared to be difficult for them to apply vocabulary and knowledge into a new context.

Data collection instruments

The first questionnaire package was applied for a pretest and a posttest to measure the awareness of subscales of critical thinking after the ten-week training of MNT in English speaking lessons, with 90-minute lecture taking place per week. The test package including 27 items was adapted from firing-up questions for the mental activities of critical thinking skills proposed by Facione (2011) (Appendix B). The mental activities involve six core CT subscales: interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation and explanation and self-regulation. A 5-point Likert scale was in the range from 5 (always), 4 (usually), 3 (often), 2 (sometimes) to 1 (never).

The next questionnaire with 20 items was designed by the researcher to assess the students' perceptions on the effectiveness of the employment of MNT on achievements and motivation (Appendix C). The 5-point Likert scale from 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (uncertain), 2 (disagree), 1 (strongly disagree) was applied. These packets were translated into Vietnamese.

10-week intervention

Week	Teaching Procedure	Note
1 st - 2 nd Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce popular forms of note-taking - Direct uses of effective take-note (using key words/ colors/ symbols/ icons) - Encourage students to use mindmapping . 	
3 rd - 5 th Week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Instruct students to determine purposes of activities throughout the three stages of teaching speaking (pre-speaking, while-speaking and post speaking (Rivera, 2014) -Provide the guide of using MNT model adapted from P. K. M. Phan (2019). -Explain the values of MNT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Pre-speaking: including listening, reading and researching; viewing videos; reflecting personal experiences; and constructing graphic organizers -While-speaking: students are engaged in different informal and formal speaking situations with peers and other audiences. They are provided with speaking formats. -Post-speaking: let students reflect their performances in written forms; find their weaknesses and strengths; evaluate their strategy use. -A MNT model is an integration of fire-up metacognitive questions into note-taking within a speaking lesson.
6 th -10 th Week	Engage students in freely employing MNT throughout speaking practice	-Practise and share in groups

Data analysis

The students filled in the CT tests before and after the training of MNT. Additionally, they completed a Perception Questionnaire given at the same time as the posttest. The pretest findings were not announced to the respondents. The quantitative results were put into SPSS Statistics Package. The Descriptive Statistic and the Paired-Samples T-test were utilized in this paper.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1

Differences in participants' critical thinking awareness

Strategy items	Pre-test mean	Post-test mean	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
INTER1	3.26	3.69	0.50	.001
INTER2	2.15	3.29	0.55	.000
INTER3	3.00	3.53	0.51	.000
INTER4	1.77	3.42	0.63	.000
INTER5	1.80	3.39	0.64	.000
AN1	2.08	3.23	0.78	.000
AN2	2.04	3.23	0.75	.000
AN3	2.31	3.04	0.72	.000
AN4	2.08	3.23	0.78	.000

INFER1	2.27	2.69	0.98	.006
INFER2	2.15	3.35	0.57	.000
INFER3	1.92	2.38	0.65	.001
INFER4	2.50	2.57	0.27	.161
INFER5	1.88	2.38	0.64	.001
EVAL1	2.35	2.73	0.64	.005
EVAL2	2.03	2.77	1.00	.001
EVAL3	1.84	2.92	0.84	.000
EVAL4	1.85	2.88	0.87	.000
EX1	1.81	2.89	0.74	.000
EX2	2.58	2.77	0.40	.022
EX3	2.11	3.19	0.74	.000
EX4	2.15	2.56	0.67	.005

SELF1	1.85	2.32	0.98	.022
SELF2	1.69	2.95	0.78	.000
SELF3	2.30	2.59	0.50	.010
SELF4	1.81	2.46	0.69	.000
SELF5	2.27	3.00	0.72	.000
INTERPRETATION TOTAL	2.40	3.48	0.58	.014
ANALYSIS TOTAL	2.12	3.18	0.22	.002
INFERENCE TOTAL	2.05	2.64	0.46	.049
EVALUATION TOTAL	2.02	2.85	0.31	.013
EXPLANATION TOTAL	2.12	3.19	0.74	.000
SELF- REGULATION TOTAL	1.97	2.69	0.38	.015
TOTAL	2.12	2.94	0.44	.000

Table 1 demonstrates there were significant divergences in the participants' awareness of use of core skills of CT in terms of

interpretation, analysis, inference, evaluation, explanation and self-regulation ($p \leq 0.05$) before and after the intervention of MNT. Among 27 items of CT test, participants' high awareness of identifying meaning of words/phrase/sentence (INTER1) and content of the speaker (INTER3) was seen with mean of just over 3.50 in the post-test. The figures for two items (3.69 and 3.53 respectively) were higher than any other ones in the posttest. The findings confirm the conventional learning practice of EFL students focusing on lower thinking levels of Bloom's taxonomy (knowledge and comprehension) (Adams, 2015).

Besides, after the training there were considerable mean increases by 1.10 in categories such as INTER2 (identifying what will take place around the topic), INTER4 (categorizing vocabulary) and INTER5 (interpreting their experience and feelings). AN1, AN2, AN4, INFER2, EVAL4, EX1, EX3 and SELF2 also saw big gaps between the two tests. 9 out of 27 items fell in low scores (post-mean ≤ 2.75), despite their significant differences between two tests, that is, INFER1, INFER3, INFER4, INFER5, EVAL1, EX4, SELF1, SELF3 and SELF4. These results show a highly positive effect of MNT on all items, except INFER4; approximately 44% of items were in the mean of just under 3.00, which reveals that students were less likely to familiarize themselves with certain critical thinking subskills. Regarding the total results, three subscales of critical thinking, namely interpretation, analysis and explanation tended to be highly employed during their practice. It suggested that the students needed more time to develop the subscales of inference, evaluation and self-regulation because EFL students seemed difficult to change their study habits (Thuy, 2018). The findings contribute to strengthen the relationship between metacognitive strategies and critical thinking skills (Arslan, 2015; Sadeghi et al., 2014). Participants' awareness seemed to be greatly stimulated in some certain subskills of higher thinking levels.

Table 2

Respondents' perceptions on the effects of metacognitive note-taking skills

Items	The number of students				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Uncertain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I1	5	9	9	3	0
I2	8	10	7	1	0

I3	5	10	7	4	0
I4	8	10	7	1	0
I5	6	11	7	2	0
I6	8	11	7	0	0
I7	6	12	7	1	0
I8	6	10	8	2	0
I9	5	15	6	0	0
I10	5	10	8	3	0
I11	9	11	6	0	0
I12	7	13	5	1	0
I13	8	11	6	1	0
I14	8	12	5	1	0
I15	8	12	5	1	0
I16	7	12	6	1	0
I17	7	13	6	0	0
I18	10	10	6	0	0
I19	7	14	5	0	0
I20	7	12	6	1	0

The table 2, in general, illustrates that all of the questionnaire items were highly agreed by over 50% of the participants. Particularly, the majority of the respondents showed high agreement on the items in regard to three core skills of metacognitive skills: planning, monitoring and reflecting their practice. Just over 69% of participants were engaged in well-preparing before their presentation (I2) and building their speech organization in a clearer and more comprehensive way (I11). 20 out of 26 students reported that they monitored their skills during their learning (I15) and elaborated their performance with the aid of MNT (I17). More impressively, 73% highly agreed on their improvement in their reflecting ability (I16). Their positive reports were found in the ability of identifying their weaknesses and strengths (I14) and

recognizing their improvement (I12).

I6 and I13 demonstrate the large percentage of participants agreeing with the effect of MNT upon vocabulary and retention. These results were in line with ones in the study of Heidari and Karimi (2015). Other benefits from MNT including widening students' knowledge (I7) and increasing their attention (I9) were confirmed by the majority of participant. The findings strengthened the results in P. K. M. Phan (2019). Although the study did not investigate the results of speaking test, its findings played as a promising predictor for the oral developments. Taking I1, I3, I8 and I10, the total number of students putting their choice in the range of 'uncertain' and 'disagree' fluctuated around 10-12. The findings probably promote further research to explore how to employ MNT more effectively.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The study not only shows positive benefits from the integration of MNT into speaking learning but also implicitly refers to students' negligible awareness of metacognitive strategies and critical thinking abilities through the pretest. Given 12 items with mean scores in the post-test being over 3.0 compared to only two items in the pretest, the intervention was a promising indicator for developing lifelong learning skills such as metacognition and critical thinking. The study's findings can encourage teachers to apply the instructions of MNT in promoting students' uses of critical thinking properly and efficiently. The instruction of MNT can innovatively be integrated into speaking lessons as well as across different skills or courses. With the intentional instructions of MNT from teachers, students are able to be more aware of prominent strategies which foster their motivation and learning autonomy.

The perceptions of the participants on MNT should be conducted with a mixed method to increase the study's validity. Further studies on how to use MNT to promote students' creativity and confidence in the use of MNT should be needed, and more studies can be done to explore the perceptions of instructors of English and EFL learners at different education levels.

Nevertheless, there exist some limitations in this paper. Firstly, the small sample of participants from one specific faculty at Binh Dinh College can affect the applicability to all population. Secondly, the researcher was the subject teacher of the participants might subjectively impact their perceptions on the effectiveness of MNT use. Next, the limited time

length for practices may result in surfaced conclusions. Lastly, the single research method (quantitative) can limit the deep understanding of the explorations and the results' credibility.

CONCLUSION

Based on the evidence in this study, MNT may be a viable aid for teaching and learning in a long run. Through questionnaires participants reported positive changes in CT levels, motivation and their speaking practice. The students became more aware of practising six core cognition processing skills of CT. They are more likely to express their opinions and motivation during speaking learning. It is believed that the integration of MNT can be a pleasant learning option that enhances students' independent and sustainable learning.

It is hoped that the study contributes to widen effective teaching and learning sources and promote further research to reaffirm its value with a wide sample number of participants, a variety of research methods and the time length of intervention. Furthermore, more studies relating to MNT can be conducted in different courses and with various English proficiency.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A. Definition of six core cognition processing skills of critical thinking

Subscales	definitions
Interpretation	Interpretation refers to abilities of comprehending and expressing the meaning , experiences, judgments or beliefs. Interpretation involves subskills such as clarifying meaning, organizing ideas and paraphrasing someone’s beliefs.
Analysis	Analysis is to realize inferential relationships among concepts, descriptions or statements or to find the author’s beliefs. Specific examples of analysis are recognizing similarities and differences, finding reasons the authors support their statements or identifying relationships between sentences and paragraphs.
Evaluation	Evaluation means to evaluate the credibility of one’s representations, descriptions or statements; and to assess inferential relationships among various forms of representations or opinions.
Inference	inference is to form hypotheses, guessing or to make conclusions by identifying reasonable elements such as descriptions, judgments, data, questions or beliefs.
Explanation	Explanation means to describe, justify and propose a belief, a statement or an opinion in a clear, coherent and cogent way. It refers to the ability of showing reasoning skills regarding conceptual, contextual, methodological and criteriological considerations.
Self-regulation	self-regulation means to self-regulate or monitor one’s cognitive process, two subskills of self-regulation are “self-examination and self-correction” by using various strategies like checking understanding, reminding oneself, revising answers, adjusting reading or reconsidering statements.

Appendix B

The following questions ask about your awareness of critical thinking. Please choose the number that best describes you for every statement.

Order	Core CT Strategies	Always (5)	Usually (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
1	INTER1: Identify what does this (word/phrase/sentence) mean					
2	INTER2: identify what's happening around the topic					
3	INTER3: Interpret what does the speaker say					
4	INTER4: Identify what is the best way to categorize vocabulary					
5	INTER5: Make sense out of my experience, feelings and statements					
6	AN1: Tell reasons for making that claim or statement					
7	AN2: Tell why I think that					
8	AN3: Think about the pros and cons around a view					
9	AN4: Tell my basis for saying a claim/idea/statement					
10	INFER1: Given what I know so far, what conclusion can I draw					
11	INFER2: Tell what this evidence imply					

Order	Core CT Strategies	Always (5)	Usually (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
12	INFER3: Think consequences of saying that					
13	INFER4: Think about some alternatives I haven't yet explored					
14	INFER5: Consider each option and see where it takes me					
15	EVAL1: Think how credible that claim is					
16	EVAL2: Try to find out our facts right					
17	EVAL3: Tell how confident I can be in my conclusion, given what I now know					
18	EVAL4: Think how strong those arguments are					
19	EX1: What were the specific findings/results of your searching/investigating					
20	EX2: How I come to that interpretation (meaning)					
21	EX3: Explain why this particular idea /decision was made					
22	EX4: Why I think that was the right answer					
23	SELF1: Think my position on this issue is still too vague, I need to be more					

Order	Core CT Strategies	Always (5)	Usually (4)	Often (3)	Sometimes (2)	Never (1)
	precise					
24	SELF2: How good my strategies are					
25	SELF3: Think about whether an evidence is good or not					
26	SELF4: Identify what I am missing before I come to a conclusion					
27	SELF5: I am finding some of my definitions a little confusing, I revisit what I mean by certain things before making any final decision.					

Appendix C

The following items show your perceptions on the effect of metacognitive note-taking skills. Please choose the number that best describes you for every statement.

Order	Items	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
1	Jazz class atmosphere up					
2.	Engage students to well-prepare before presentation					
3.	Help students more active and confident to express their perspectives					
4	Engage students in relating their					

Order	Items	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
	knowledge to new information					
5	Make students more pleasant to share ideas					
6	Be used as a tool to support their retention					
7	Make students freely widen their knowledge					
8	Be used to make their speaking more attractive and creative					
9	Increase their attention to the given issue					
10	Encourage students to apply new knowledge in meaningful communication context					
11	Help students build their organization of their speech in a clear and comprehensive way					
12	Let students recognize their improvement during speaking lessons					
13	Improve their vocabulary					
14	Identify their weaknesses and					

Order	Items	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
	strengths in speaking practice					
15	Guide students to monitor their skills					
16	Stimulate students to reflect their practice					
17	Engage students to elaborate their performance					
18	Help students learn ideas from each other					
19	Encourage students to work with their peers					
20	Be applicable to different skills and courses					

ENHANCING PRONUNCIATION FOR NON-ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS BY EMPLOYING HYBRID LEARNING FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

Hybrid learning has been well-recognized in language learning and teaching as it brings abundant opportunities for language practice, especially in higher education. At tertiary level, learners still face challenges and anxiety regarding pronunciation. Therefore, the research aimed to explore learner's perceptions after experiencing hybrid learning in learning and practicing pronunciation. Open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were employed in this research to discover the attitude of 58 students, regarding to their behavioral engagement and emotional engagement. Besides, benefits and challenges emerged in the process of blending learning were also examined. According to the result, a large number of learners expressed a very positive attitude towards blended learning, confirming the gain in their motivation and engagement. Some benefits and challenges of hybrid learning was also discussed through the eyes of learners.

Keywords: *hybrid learning, pronunciation, higher education, ESL, eLearning*

INTRODUCTION

The development of technology has changed the way of learning and teaching dramatically. Hybrid learning which is also called blended learning has been proven to be a promising and economical means to enhance language learning and provide more language exposure. (Sagarra & Zapata, 2008, Conrad & Donaldson, 2012). In higher education, hybrid learning has developed rapidly, and it is predicted to be the "new traditional model" (Ross & Gage, 2006, p. 167).

To make best use of hybrid learning at tertiary level, it is vital to discover how students perceive such courses and examine the reasons why some of them show little engagement in it. The researchers aimed to carry out a research on non-English major EFL students' perceptions of hybrid learning in pronunciation training at a university in Vietnam. Besides, some benefits and challenges of this educational trend in pronunciation learning were also revealed through the students' voice.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hybrid learning

Hybrid learning, also called blended learning, generally involves diverse combinations of classroom instructions and virtual activities to create a better learning experience (Brew, 2008; Rice, 2012). Regarding the specific model for "hybrid learning", there were three different types: a mixture of face-to-face and e-learning, a mixture of technologies and a mixture of methodologies (Oliver & Trigwell, 2005).

In educational contexts, many studies highlighted the importance of shifting pedagogy from traditional face-to-face to blended learning. The integration of online learning has been proved to enhance quality interactions, student engagement as well as effective and efficient learning (Aycicek & Yelken, 2018; Alshiwah, 2009; Donnelly, 2010).

Pronunciation and intelligible pronunciation

According to Pourhosein Gilakjani (2012), pronunciation is defined as the way speakers produce the sounds which are used to make specific meaning. Elements involving pronunciation are consonants and vowels of a language (segments), features of speech like stress, timing, rhythm, intonation, phrasing (suprasegmental features), and how the voice is expressed (voice quality). All these components work together to create a united utterance; therefore, any problems in a single part can have an impact on the other ones, then affect the intelligibility of a person's pronunciation.

Intelligibility is an ideal goal for many EFL learners in which the learners wish to be understood in conversation with both native and non-native speakers (Pourhosein Gilakjani & Banou Sabouri, 2016). According to James (2010), speakers are considered to have intelligible pronunciation when listeners can understand what they say, and the speakers' English is good enough to listen to. The researcher also claimed that speaking English like native speakers may be a beneficial goal for EFL learners but should not be the goal of teachers who want to

enhance their learners' pronunciation and confidence in speaking. As a result, teachers should instruct and encourage them to articulate English clearly and comprehensibly.

Difficulties in teaching and learning pronunciation in higher education

In his research on teaching pronunciation, Tahereen (2015) showed the fact that teaching and learning pronunciation are usually neglected at every level of education system in Bangladesh; therefore, the teaching scenario exists with a lot of difficulties at tertiary level. In Vietnam, at primary school (grade 1-5), secondary school (grade 6-9) and high school (grade 10-12), speaking and listening have never been the focus to be taught and tested for the fact that grammar translation is the main methodology in English teaching and learning. As a result, there is no emphasis on pronunciation explicitly or implicitly at these levels. Consequently, English teachers at universities have to struggle to deal with those who have very little experience in practicing speaking and listening inside and outside the classroom at K-12 levels.

The lack of students' concerns and awareness for pronunciation is another challenge found. Generally, students just have the superficial knowledge about the sounds, but they do not have any kind of knowledge of stress, intonation, rhythm, pitch etc. which are equally important for achieving intelligible pronunciation (Pourhosein Gilakjani, 2012; Yates & Zielinski, 2009).

Additionally, English teachers at universities also encounter the trouble caused by the influence of local accent on English pronunciation (Tahereen, 2015). Students in a class at higher education level usually come from different regions with different accents. Some accents are found to be so inflexible and challenging for teachers to employ English pronunciation teaching.

Benefits of hybrid learning in pronunciation instruction

In the research on using blended learning to improve English pronunciation, Ramírez Rodríguez (2014) concluded that the improvement of participants' pronunciation and the learning of pronunciation features were accomplished thanks to implementation of a blended learning method. This learning approach enables learners to go back and review the learning content, set their own pace for learning, take advantage of the face to face sessions for situated and meaningful learning, and become self-directed (Bicen et al., 2014; Singh, 2003). Besides, Dell'Aria and Incalcaterra McLoughlin (2013) also found

positive results when they employed blended learning to develop phonological awareness. The results indicated that blended learning helps learners to improve their L2 productions and get closer to the target utterance.

Challenges of hybrid learning in pronunciation instruction

Some challenges of using hybrid learning in teaching pronunciation include little interaction carried out in the online sessions, poor quality of recordings handed in by participants, and difficulty in finding clear and unambiguous phonetic material (Dell’Aria & McLoughlin, 2013; Ramírez Rodríguez, 2014).

Although some studies have been carried out to investigate the effectiveness of blended learning in teaching pronunciation, very little information which describes deeply learner’s voice of this approach is found. Moreover, there seems to be a literature gap for the application of hybrid learning in pronunciation teaching in the context of Vietnam, especially in regard to teaching pronunciation for non-English major students at tertiary level. My research hopes to contribute to the literature by inspecting non-English major students’ perceptions of the approach on different aspects such as behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, benefits and challenges in the context of higher education in Vietnam.

Research Questions

The main purpose of this research was to deeply understand how learners view blended learning in practicing pronunciation and identify common barriers preventing ESL students from engaging in blended course.

More precisely, this study aimed to answer two research questions:

- 1. How do learners perceive hybrid learning in pronunciation training?*
- 2. What are the benefits and challenges of the implementation of hybrid learning in pronunciation learning?*

METHODOLOGY

Settings and Participants

The participants in this study were a total of non-English major 58 freshmen studying in the same General English class at Van Lang University in Vietnam. The students are about 18-20 years old, coming

from different majors and having the same level of English proficiency thanks to the English placement test at the beginning of the course. They are studying General English at post-elementary level in the first semester of their first year. Attendees were all experiencing hybrid learning in pronunciation over a period of one semester.

There were also 5 volunteering students from 58 participants invited to attend the interview for in-depth view of students' perspectives.

Data collection

Research instruments

The current research was a small scale qualitative with just totally 58 participants offering insights into students' behavioral engagement and emotional engagement. According to Shernoff (2013), student behavioral engagement is related to student participation and interest in academic tasks and class-related activities while student emotional engagement involves students' feelings of belonging or value to their teacher or their classroom (e.g., interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, anxiety). As a result, the questions in the open-ended questionnaire and the in-depth interviews were designed to examine learners' voice on what they thought and felt about hybrid learning in pronunciation during the course, what they appreciated and gained from hybrid learning in pronunciation as well as the difficulties they had been through.

Research design and procedure

The curriculum was designed within 12 weeks, both online and face-to-face learning. Every week, the teacher uploaded materials, videos, and handouts in Moodle. After that, the teacher instructed sounds and practice in class. After practicing, students had to practice and recorded the exercise in the handout then posted to the Forum in Moodle.

After posting their recording, the students had to listen to the models, listen to their friends and give feedbacks to their friends' recordings. The researcher and teacher took turn to join the discussion on the forum and gave corrections for some students' recordings. The week after, the teacher summarized the feedbacks and continued the next lesson. There were review weeks on week 6 and week 12.

At the end of the semester, all participants were provided a link of Google Form to answer all the open-ended questions. They were informed that their participation was voluntary and totally unrelated to

their grades. The survey was anonymous without the participants' names. After that, 5 volunteering students took part in the interview with the teacher. Both open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were undergone in Vietnamese to avoid misunderstanding.

Data analysis

The collected qualitative data from both open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were reviewed, summarized, analyzed, compared and put into common themes.

58 students' responses to the open-ended questionnaire were coded as "R" with a following number, for example, "R-1" means the response of the first student. Meanwhile, 5 interviewees were code as "I" with a following number, for example, "I-1" means the first interviewee.

FINDINGS

Behavioral engagement

1 Efforts and seriousness

One of the most significant results in this research was the efforts and seriousness indicated by a large number of respondents. *"At first, I didn't think I could complete the tasks given by the teacher. But then, I tried a lot to overcome myself and finish all tasks to meet deadlines."* (R-32) *"I practiced recording my pronunciation many times every day and even kept track of all my recordings to see the advancement."* (R-55)

2 Sense of initiative and autonomy

Student's sense of initiative was another valuable result noted. Some students revealed their readiness for pronunciation training without teacher's enforcement. *"I want the teacher to give us more practice exercises on pronunciation."* (R-4, R-6, R-18, R-40), *"I became more aware of autonomy in learning when doing online tasks."* (R-54), *"When practicing difficult sounds and minimal pairs, I had to read out loud many times. Sometimes, I recorded my voice again and again even though this made my jaw muscles tight and painful."* (R-58) Most of the students expressed their wish to continue the pronunciation training. *"I think this training is very helpful and should be maintained."* (R-1, R-6, R-35)

3 Collaboration

Almost all the participants claimed that group work during the training strengthened the bonds among members and their teamwork skills. They *"really enjoyed working in a group and helping each other get better*

in English pronunciation.” (R-16, R-25) However, a few were not very satisfied with the collaboration because “some members were so shy that they rarely gave feedback and usually made the whole group waste of time” (R-5, I-3)

Emotional Engagement

1 Sense of pleasure and excitement

The largest number of participants showed their comfort and excitement about blended learning in pronunciation. To be specific, opinions with *“fun”, “pleasure”, “comfortable”, “enjoying”, and “satisfied”* were mentioned with a high frequency in the survey. Some learners, nevertheless, admitted that *“learning in the classroom is more exciting and effective than online learning” (R-11, R-12, R-21, R-47, I-2, I-4)*

2 Sense of confidence

Many responded that they were more self-assured after the course. This result had an important meaning in the study. *“I was very nervous in the first time. Now, I become much more confident in English speaking and listening. I also have more motivation to learn English.” (R-18)* Some students have changed themselves to *“become bold and more active”* when interacting with their classmates. (R-32, I-5)

3 Sense of achievement

In relation to the sense of achievement, a majority of respondents expressed their positive feelings. For example, *“my English acquisition seems to be better” (R-2, I-5) “I had the feeling of victory when I could pronounce difficult sounds correctly” (R-25)*

4 Sense of shyness and anxiety

Although many learners revealed their positive emotions during the course, a few struggled with their reticence and insecurity. *“I am afraid to pronounce incorrectly. Those classmates are new to me. I don’t want to be laughed at.” (R-1) “It’s hard for me to get along with my group, especially when we have to work face-to-face in the classroom.” (R-3, R-9, R-10)* Generally, student’s fear of losing face because of working with “strangers” was dominant.

Benefits of hybrid learning to pronunciation training

1 Effectiveness

As mentioned in the literature review, blended learning enables

learners to go back and review the learning content, take advantage of the face to face sessions for situated and meaningful learning (Singh, 2003; Bicen et al., 2014). Thanks to this learning approach, a large number of respondents were pleased with what they gained after the course. *“Online learning at home was very useful. I could self-evaluate my level day by day through the recordings saved on Moodle. Besides, at class, I received detailed feedback from my teachers and classmates.”* (R-32) *“Learning in class and on Moodle helped my pronunciations much better”* (R-39, I-4), *“I learned a lot of new pronunciation knowledge in class and had more time to practice at home with online tasks”* (R-49)

2 New learning experiences

All participants are freshman, so they find employing blended learning to pronunciation training different from what they have experienced in the past. Newness was also one of the most important factors leading to the excitement of the learners: *“completely new and different from high-school environment”* (R-20, R-22), *“never been experienced such interesting pronunciation training”* (R-6, I-3)

3 Sense of self-control and flexibility

In line with the beneficial results claimed by Smyth et al. (2012), blended learning offers a greater flexibility and control to learners. Many respondents reviewed *“the freedom to plan and adjust learning according to my timetable”* (R-10, R-12, R-58, I-1, I-2, I-3, I-4, I-5), *“the comfort to study at home or anywhere according to my learning style”* (R-31)

4 Useful way for shy students

The combination between traditional learning and online learning was reported as a good way for the students who were unwilling to work in groups in class. Online learning *“made me less hesitant than practicing with my classmates in class”* (R-32) and *“was helpful for shy students”* (R-54)

Enhancement of vocabulary and language acquisition

The results also confirmed blended learning leads to an increase in vocabulary and language acquisition (Zhang et al., 2011; Alastuey & Perez, 2013). This approach *“helped me a lot to improve all four skills in English”* (R-31), *“increased my speaking and listening skills”* (R-33), *“helped me to learn many new words”* (R-40)

Challenges of hybrid learning to pronunciation training

1 Time constraint

In terms of barriers, some students responded the lack of time for e-learning which has been stated by Schell and Phillips (2012). Time constraint came from *“insufficient time to complete the online tasks”* (R-22) and *“a lot of homework of other subjects making me not have much time for online learning.”* (R-57)

2 Technical issue

As mentioned by Schell and Phillips (2012), challenges also came from the difficulties in e-learning and tools. Some participants confided their troubles when doing online tasks, such as *“struggling to upload the recordings on Moodle because of the capacity issue”* (R-11, I-2), *“taking time to get familiar with how to record my voice and post the recording to the Forum on Moodle”* (R-52, I-5)

DISCUSSION

In this study, the researcher examined students' perceptions of blended learning in terms of different aspects of engagement as well as explored the benefits and drawbacks of blended learning. With the first research questions of the way students perceived blended learning in pronunciation, the findings showed that learners were highly engaged, behaviorally and emotionally, which is aligned with previous research (Aycicek & Yelken, 2018; Alshiwiah, 2009; Donnelly, 2010, Jee & O'Connor, 2014). Additionally, learner autonomy has been enhanced, which is in lined with previous studies (Singh, 2003; Bicen et al., 2014). This research supports the literature by exploring more details on different parts of engagement. With behaviors, learners became more serious, made a greater effort and collaborate better in their learning environment. Regarding emotional engagement, it was highlighted that the feelings of pleasure and achievement were frequently presented among learners. It was also noted that although a large number of students showed increase in their confidence, there remained evidence of shyness.

The second research question focuses on the advantages and limitations of blended learning in teaching pronunciation. It has been agreed that blended learning has a number of benefits. Learners agreed on the effectiveness of blended learning in their achievement, giving them more sense of self-control and flexibility (Smyth et al., 2012.) Although the benefits of blended in the field of pronunciation is limited, the result

in this research showed the consensus with the findings from Ramírez Rodríguez (2014). In terms of challenges, learners still struggled with common challenges in previous literature, including (1) the lack of time and (2) difficulties with tools and technology (Schell & Phillips, 2012). It was encouraging in this study as learners felt that they received adequate support from the instructors and their peers. Moreover, they were informed with the assessment clearly from the beginning and agreed on it. That was the reason why students were not in doubt of unfair assessment.

CONCLUSION

This research investigated learners' perception of hybrid learning in learning pronunciation in a private university in Vietnam. In summary, this paper explored learner's viewpoints on behavioral engagement as well as emotional engagement. At the same time, the strengths and weaknesses of blended learning in pronunciation were also explored and discussed in the eyes of undergraduate learners. The findings indicated that learners were highly engaged in blended learning classroom. Regarding to behavioral engagement, learners showed the high level of effort-making, seriousness, autonomy and collaboration. In terms of emotional engagement, learners appreciated the sense of pleasure, sense of achievement, sense of confidence. However, there remained shyness and the lack of confidence in practicing pronunciation. Moreover, hybrid learning was confirmed to be effective and new, especially to enhance vocabulary and language acquisition. The main challenges were the limitation of time and the problems of technology.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research showed that the undergraduates were highly engaged in hybrid learning and appreciated the effectiveness of hybrid learning during the process of pronunciation training. Learners also highly valued the feedbacks of the instructors and their peers outside the classroom. Therefore, the employment of blended learning is possible to enhance learners' pronunciation and good attitudes towards language learning.

Moreover, it was showed in the findings that many students appreciated traditional learning sessions with a live interaction. This proves the valuable benefits of traditional classroom learning which seems to be irreplaceable despite the rapid development of e-learning. As a result, hybrid learning which combines both classroom instructions and virtual

activities seems to be a perfect approach rather than online learning.

Last but not least, some responses from students suggested that peer work is likely to be more beneficial than teamwork in learning pronunciation. When students work in pairs, they can reduce the shyness and the time to get familiar with their only partner. Besides, the experience of practicing pronunciation in front of a partner seems to be much more comfortable than in front of a group, even a small one.

This study is limited in size therefore it may not be generalized. As hybrid learning could be developed as one of the advantageous practices in higher education, it is recommended that future research on a larger size with more quantitative responses could be employed to explore generalized viewpoints of EFL learners on hybrid learning in pronunciation training, such as students' motivation, interest, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and achievement.

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APPENDIX

Open-ended Questionnaire

1. Briefly describe your experience when studying pronunciation with blended course.
 2. Briefly describe your feelings when you learn pronunciation (in class, online, or both)
 3. In your opinion, what are the benefits/advantages of learning pronunciation with blended learning?
 4. In general, what have you improved when you learn pronunciation with blended learning?
 5. What challenges do you have when you learn pronunciation?
 6. In your opinion, what could be done to make this blended-learning better?
-

Interview Questions

Thank you for your participation in this interview. Your answers will be recorded, and your identity will be kept confidential.

1. Can you tell me about your experience when learning pronunciation.

2: How do you feel about learning pronunciation? (Online/ In Class)

- *Follow-up:* Are you interested in learning pronunciation?

Are you motivated to complete the activities in class/online?

3: Do you think using blended learning (moodle and classroom) is a good way to teach pronunciation?

4: What are the benefits of learning pronunciation with blended learning?

5: What are the biggest improvements regarding to pronunciation/speaking?

6: What are the difficulties in learning pronunciation? (Online/ In Class)

7. What could be changed to make learning easier/ more interesting?

STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF TOP NOTCH AS A TEXTBOOK FOR EFL CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

Textbooks are considered an indispensable resource for an English training program. In Vietnam, English textbooks are often purchased from overseas. This may result in several undesirable outcomes since the imported textbooks may not meet the learners' needs, interests, and level of English proficiency. This paper reports on a study conducted to investigate the perceptions of students in a college toward the textbook currently being used for their English courses.

Participants included 156 students completing the survey questionnaire. The findings show that most students had positive attitudes toward the textbook and considered the textbook met the required standard as well as English learning objectives. The findings also revealed that the textbook had some weaknesses in terms of price and practicality.

The findings would be of significant value to both students and teachers, curriculum designers as well as English program managers to review the current use of English textbooks with a view to improving the quality of imported textbooks for English language training programs at higher educational institutions in Vietnam and in other non-dominant English speaking countries.

Key words: *textbook evaluation, resources, Vietnam, English as a foreign language, higher education*

INTRODUCTION

Textbooks are considered an important source of input of an EFL curriculum. Textbooks provide the content of the curriculum regarding knowledge and skills. Textbooks support teachers in their instruction and help students achieve their learning objectives (Brown, 1995). Evaluating textbooks helps to enhance the success of the learning

program. Textbook evaluation process can be seen as a way to develop our understanding of a language. Since the textbook reflects the purposes, methods and values of the curriculum, it is important that the textbook be selected carefully.

With the rapid development in language teaching and learning all over the world, the market for imported textbooks increases in volume and thus makes the task of selecting appropriate textbooks for language programs more difficult for educational managers. Textbooks play a pivotal role in a language training program. Teachers tend to use textbooks as a reference (Cunningsworth, 1995; McGrath, 2002); textbooks also serve as a framework for EFL teacher to design syllabuses and lesson plans (Garinger, 2002), therefore, textbooks exert a great influence on the teaching and learning process. In other words, the success or failure of an English program may depend on the quality of the textbook (Mukundan, 2007). However, there are several issues involving textbook selection (McGrath, 2002). In reality, textbooks tend to be selected without paying due attention to its pedagogical values and purchasing decision may be influenced by authors' reputation and publishers' marketing (McGrath, 2002). Moreover, textbooks with attractive covers or affirmed with best-selling titles would be given the preference by users (McGrath, 2002; Tomlinson, 2010).

In Vietnam, most English textbooks used at higher education institutions are imported from overseas. It is generally believed that imported textbooks are more updated and up to international standards. However, since most foreign imported textbooks are used for language programs in Vietnam without formal evaluation from relevant stakeholders, there are concerns about whether foreign textbooks are suitable learning materials for Vietnamese students. Adoption of foreign textbooks for domestic use may result in several problems such as inappropriate content, language skills and high costs. As a result, there is a pressing need to evaluate textbooks used for each language program to ensure they meet the language learning goals.

Aims of the study

This study examines students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of a foreign published textbook being used for their EFL classes at a college in Ho Chi Minh city.

Research question

The study seeks answers to the following research question:

What are the students' perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of Top Notch 2 for General English courses at FPT College?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of EFL textbooks

A textbook is defined as a book published to assist language learners to improve their knowledge and skills of a language (Sheldon, 1987). Textbooks are also used as supporting instruments in the teaching and learning process (Ur, 1996). Selecting a suitable textbook is regarded as one of the indispensable stages in the training process. A textbook package includes student's book and workbook, teacher's book, CDs (audio files), and transcripts (Masuhara & Tomlinson, 2008). Textbooks provide direction, support and specific language-based activities aimed at offering language practice for students (Mares, 2003).

Benefits and drawbacks of language textbooks

Benefits of textbooks to teachers

Textbooks often serve as a reliable source of language input (Richards & Renandya, 2002) and instruction materials for teachers to concentrate on the teaching process without having to make efforts to prepare teaching materials (Edge & Wharton, 1998). Teachers usually conduct the lessons based on the organization of the designated tasks and activities of the textbooks, therefore, the lesson plans shall be structured in accordance to the teaching textbooks (Hutchinson & Torres, 1994; Richards & Renandya, 2002). Also, teachers can utilize textbooks as a source of reference to manage their teaching process and focus on the teaching content (Tomlinson, 2008). Textbooks have similar functions as a map in terms of instructing the teaching process (McGrath, 2002; Ur, 1996). Therefore, teachers use textbooks as a monitor to measure developments of students and as an "idea bank" for new directions in how they can deliver a lesson (Tomlinson, 2008).

According to Ur (1996), a syllabus of an ELT program can be carefully and systematically planned with the reference of textbooks. One of the merits of using textbooks is the structure for syllabus designs (Richards & Renandya, 2002). Textbooks play an important role as a support and security provider for new and inexperienced teachers who are not highly confident about delivering lessons in communicative ways (Mares, 2003; Tomlinson, 2008; Ur, 1996). Textbooks provide a reliable and available source of language material for beginning teachers and help them to save time as they do not have to compile authentic

materials.

Benefits of textbooks to students

For students, using textbooks is beneficial in many ways. First, textbooks serve as a tool for keeping tracks of the learning process and measuring language developments. Students use textbooks as effective instruments to revise the knowledge obtained from class lessons as well as familiarize themselves with new language knowledge. In addition, textbooks are considered as one of the most economic and convenient sources for students to obtain language input. They can use textbooks, a collection of adequate materials, for self-assessed and critical evaluations as well as knowledge reinforcement (Cunningsworth, 1995). Last but not least, textbooks can be of great assistance to students and teachers who lack language competence and teaching experience (Litz, 2005).

The significance of textbook evaluation

According to Sheldon (1988), the reasons to conduct textbook evaluation vary. First, textbook selection is often considered as a significant decision in terms of administration and education, which relates to the investment in profession, finance and politics. Through evaluation, educational institutions and organizations can select the suitable resources from a variety of textbooks available in the market. In addition, language educators and teachers who are familiar with the textbook are able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the texts, tasks and exercises.

In recent years, it has been widely recognized that ELT textbooks are not developed mainly for pedagogical purposes but also for commercial purposes (Tomlinson, 2003, 2008, 2010). According to Dendrinos (1992), “textbooks, like any other print books, are pieces of merchandise; the ultimate objective of their production is [for] commercial success” (p.35). In other word, financial success becomes the significant aim of textbook publishing (Litz, 2005; Tomlinson, 2003). Some textbooks contribute in part to the failure of a learner’s English learning instead of positively supporting their language development. Especially, it is not uncommon to find several pedagogical mistakes in textbooks nowadays (Litz, 2005; Tomlinson, 2008). Therefore, there is a pressing need to carry out evaluation of EFL textbooks in order to minimize waste of resources and prevent failure of a language program (Mukundan, 2007).

Research on textbook evaluation

As mentioned before, textbook evaluation seems to be under-researched with limited studies. Most studies on textbook evaluation employ checklist or questionnaire to evaluate textbooks on different subjects.

Litz (2005) conducted a study to evaluate a textbook used by an English program at a Korean university. A questionnaire survey was conducted among eight instructors and 500 students enrolled in English courses at the university. The findings showed that most students and teachers agreed that *English Firsthand 2* met the learning objectives of the language program.

Apart from Litz's (2005) study, several other researchers evaluated language textbooks using self-developed questionnaires (Cunningsworth, 1995; Mahmood, 2011; Rahimpour, (2011); Aghazadeh, 2015). For example, Mahmood (2011) explored whether the textbooks approved by the Pakistani Ministry of Education met the required standards. Rahimpour (2011) developed a 46-item questionnaire to investigate teachers' perspectives on the use of different textbooks in Iranian high schools. In addition to the use of questionnaire, document analysis is also adopted as a method to evaluate textbooks (Ansary & Babaii, 2002; Fukkink, 2010; Jahangard, 2007).

In Vietnam, textbook evaluation remains under-researched. Most studies evaluated national English textbooks and commercial textbooks used in primary and secondary schools (Le, 2009; Nguyen, 2010, Nguyen, 2015). The findings of these studies were mixed as foreign published English textbooks have both merits and problems. Studies on textbooks used at higher education institutions remain limited. As a result, EFL practitioners are not fully informed about the quality and suitability of most of the EFL textbooks at tertiary level. It is significant to conduct a study to provide more insights into the current use of textbooks for English programs in Vietnamese universities.

THE STUDY

Research setting

The study was conducted at a college in Ho Chi Minh City which provides a variety of training programs to about 20,000 undergraduates. The students in the college have to complete General English (GE) courses spanning four semesters to satisfy the graduation requirements. The

textbooks used in GE courses are Top Notch 1 and 2 (third edition) by Joan Saslow and Allen Ascher and published by Pearson Education in 2015. Each level includes 12 units which covers four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). Students enrolled in General English (GE) courses at level 1 use Top Notch 1 and those enrolled in courses at level 2 use Top Notch 2. In addition to textbooks, students accessed to CDs and video clips as supplementary learning materials. These book packages have been selected as official teaching materials at the college since 2011. The textbook examined in this study was Top Notch 2 student's book.

Participants

The participants were 156 second-year and third-year students who were enrolled in the GE courses level 2A and 2B at the college. They were non-English majors with language proficiency at intermediate level, and their age ranged from 19 to 24. With the permission from the Head of English Division and support from two English teachers at FPT College, a questionnaire survey was conducted among the students in semester 1, 2019 to obtain their responses towards the use of Top North as the textbooks for their English classes. The survey was distributed by the class teachers and completed by the students at the end of class hours. It took the students around 10 minutes to finish the survey.

Research instruments

Questionnaire

To answer the research questions, a questionnaire survey was used as a method of data collection. This study adopted Litz's questionnaire (2005) to examine the extent that the textbook Top Notch 2 met the criteria for a standardized EFL textbook used for college students in terms of overall design and content. The questionnaire checklist covered seven aspects of a standard textbook including 25 question items divided into seven main sections for textbook evaluation, which were practical considerations (items 1 and 2), layout and design (items 3 and 4), activities (items 5 to 9), skills (items 10 to 12), language type (items 13 to 18), subject and content (items 19 to 23) and overall consensus (items 24 and 25).

Description of the question items is as follows: *Practical considerations* illicit responses to the price and access of the textbook. *Layout and design* evaluate the appropriateness and effectiveness of the textbook's organization. In terms of *activities*, the question items are further divided into five smaller aspects including balance of activities,

communicative practice, individual, pair and group work activities, grammar points and vocabulary. *Skills* seek opinions on the distribution of four skills and development of sub-skills. Questions on *language type* examine the authenticity and level of the language, the progression of grammar and vocabulary, examples, future use and various accents. Questions about *subject and content* ask whether the topics are relevant to the learner's needs, the practicality, variety and interesting level as well as possible negative stereotypes. *Overall consensus* explores students' further use of the textbook.

The question items used a 5 point Likert scale (Strongly Agree, Agree, Undecided Disagree and Strongly Disagree) to illicit students' responses to the questions. The survey data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. Descriptive statistics were employed to interpret the quantitative data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings from the survey on students' perceptions of the use of Top Notch 2 with regard to seven evaluation criteria including practical consideration, layout and design, activities, skills, language type, subject and content, and overall consensus.

Practical considerations

Table 1

Students' responses to Practical Considerations

Practical considerations	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. The price of the textbook is reasonable.	156	2.6	1.2
2.The textbook is easily accessible	156	3.2	1.1

The questions sought students' responses to the price and accessibility of the book. There were two question items (Table 1) to illicit their answers. The survey data showed that 30% of the students were unsatisfied with the price of the Top Notch 2 (M = 2.55). The students thought the price of the textbook was too high for students. The primary reason for this might be because the students lived on limited budgets and could not afford to pay two hundred thousand VND to purchase a single book as Top Notch. In terms of accessibility, about 40 % of the

students agreed that the textbook was relatively easy to obtain from the Internet or at the bookstores in the city ($M = 3.22$).

Layout and design

Table 2

Students' responses to Layout and Design

Layout and Design	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
3. The layout and design is appropriate and clear.	156	3.95	.94
4. The textbook is organized effectively.	156	3.87	.94

In response to the physical appearance of the textbook, most students (50%) were happy with the layout and design, indicating that the cover and design were quite appropriate and the book's organization was effective and user's friendly. About 50% of students were content with the textbook's organization and structure (Table 2).

Activities

Table 3

Students' responses to Activities

Activities	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
5. The textbook provides a balance of activities (Ex. There is an even distribution of free vs. controlled exercises and tasks that focus on both fluent and accurate production).	156	3.70	.88
6. The activities encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice	156	3.80	.90
7. The activities incorporate individual, pair and group work.	156	3.80	.76

8. The grammar points and vocabulary items are introduced in motivating and realistic contexts.	156	3.53	.93
9. The activities promote creative, original and independent responses.	156	3.40	.97

With regard to students' view of the activities (Table 3), 40% of the students agreed that the textbook provides a balance between free and controlled tasks to enhance students' fluency and accuracy with activities that support communicative practice and encourage a combination of individual, pair and group work (56%) as well as the practical contexts to introduce grammatical structures and vocabulary (45%). The students also agreed that the book provided activities that promote meaningful and creative response from the students (37%).

Skills

Table 4

Students' responses to Skills

Skills	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
10. The materials include and focus on the skill that I need to practice.	156	3.60	.87
11. The materials provide an appropriate balance of the four language skills	156	3.70	.90
12. The textbook pays attention to sub-skills -i.e. listening for gist, note-taking, skimming for information, etc.	156	3.40	.96

With regard to skill development (Table 4), about 50% of the students considered that the material provided enough room for them to develop their language skills (M = 3.60, SD = .87). There was a balanced distribution of four language skills (M= 3.70, St. D = .90). Last but not

least, the students (40%) agreed that Top Notch 2 enabled students to develop sub-skills such as listening for gist, skimming for information and note-taking (M = 3.40, St. D = .962).

Language type

Table 5

Students' responses to Language Type

Language type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
13. The language used in the textbook is authentic – i.e. like real-life English	156	3.67	.95
14. The language used is at the right level for my current English ability.	156	3.65	.87
15. The progression of grammar points and vocabulary items is appropriate.	156	3.63	.89
16. The grammar points were presented with brief and easy examples and explanations.	156	3.67	.96
17. The language functions exemplify English that I will be likely to use in the future.	156	3.58	.85
18. The language represents a diverse range of registers and accents	156	3.70	.82

Students' responses to the authenticity of language used in the textbook was quite positive (M= 3.67, St. D = .95). Also, several students thought the English level of the book was suitable (M = 3.65, St. D = .87). Students' comments on grammar points and vocabulary items were also positive (M = 3.70, St. D = .89).

Subject and content

Table 6

Students' responses to Subject and Content

Subject and Content	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
19. The subject and content of the textbook is relevant to my needs as an English language learner.	156	3.60	.88
20. The subject and content of the textbook is generally realistic.	156	3.63	.89
21. The subject and content of the materials is interesting, challenging and motivating.	156	3.45	.83

With regard to subject and content (Table 6), most students (47%) considered that the topics of the textbook were relevant to their needs (M = 3.60, St. D = .88) with realistic and practical topics (43%); the content was suitable (M = 3.63, St. D = .89) with no cultural biases and negative stereotypes; the topics were interesting (M = 3.45, St. D = .83).

Overall consensus

Table 7

Students' responses to Overall Consensus

Overall Consensus	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
24. The textbook raises my interest in further English language study.	156	3.29	.93
25. I would choose to study this book again.	156	3.16	1.1

Many students showed a “neutral” attitude when asked if the textbook raised interest in further English language study and if they would choose to study the book again with 43.6% and 38.5% respectively (Table 7).

DISCUSSION

The results show that most students agreed that the textbook met their language learning needs and objectives. However, there remained some concerns regarding the cost, language input and activities which were too complicated for them to acquire. In terms of practical considerations, the students in the survey agreed that the cost of Top Notch 2 was too high for them. It might be due to the fact that most students came from provincial areas with limited budgets. Secondly, the majority of students were satisfied with the structure of the book. The findings of this study were in line with those from Mohammadi and Abdi's study (2014). Regarding the activities, the students agreed that there was a balance of activities to improve their language skills. In this regard, the textbook seems to meet the required standard as Tomlinson (2011) maintained that "materials should provide learners with opportunities to use the target language to achieve communicative purposes".

With respect to skills, there was a balanced distribution of four language skills and the textbook concentrated on practice of the skills the students needed. In relation to subject and content, the students were satisfied with a wide range of the topics covered. According to Paltridge and Starfield (2013), skills are one of the key features of a standard EFL textbook and EFL textbooks should focus on the contents oriented towards the specific needs of the students.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The study obtains major findings as follows. The authenticity of the textbook in terms of language type and the diversity of themes appear to be the major strengths of the textbook. The used of real-life English contributes to boosting students' motivation and interest in learning English; the activities are appropriate for their English proficiency levels. Also, the topics of the book vary from culture, education, personal care, to technology. However, realistic considerations are one of the main shortcomings as the price of the textbooks was high for most students to obtain the original versions. Based on the research findings, some implications are made to enhance better use of Top Notch 2 and its book series as follows:

For teachers

First and foremost, the evaluation of Top Notch 2 provides teachers with better understanding of the objectives of the book, which contributes to the successful knowledge facilitation and delivery to the students. The

teachers can confidently interact with students without the fear of not knowing what steps to do next. In addition, this evaluation also gives the teachers an opportunity to look at their lesson design and allow them to be more creative in task combination. Instead of using the activities recommended in teacher's book, they can provide some other self-assessment and communicative tasks for students. Last but not least, through the textbook evaluation, the teachers can overcome some of the weaknesses of the writing sections by providing more appropriate writing activities for the students to practice writing.

For students

The textbook self-evaluation by the students plays a significant role in helping them recognize the correct and suitable objectives in learning English especially when working with Top notch 2. This evaluation helps the students easily follow the structure of the textbook as well as be more engaged in the activities. As a result, the students can develop the ability of self-study and self-assess at home when they have free time besides the in-class lessons. Furthermore, the students can become more interested and inspired in learning English through Top Notch.

For EFL program managers

It is undeniable that textbook evaluation plays a significant part in managing the quality of the course which is one of the primary concerns for EFL program managers. Thanks to textbook evaluation, EFL program managers obtain more evidence to consider the suitability of the textbook for the curriculum in terms of objectives and quality. As a result, language program managers and course designers can make adjustments and adaptations towards the use of textbook to ensure its suitability for the language programs. In addition, teachers should be invited to participate in the textbook evaluation as they are the main implementers. Overall, Ministry of Labor, War Invalids, & Social Welfare are in charge of approving English textbooks for colleges, and it is important for them to be able to make informed decisions based on teachers' reflections about using English textbooks in specific educational contexts.

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TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF USING VIETNAMESE IN ENGLISH READING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated EFL teachers' perceptions of using the first language - Vietnamese (L1) in teaching reading skills of the foreign language - English (L2). It specifically explored the frequency of L1 use of the teachers, the L1 functions in the reading lessons, and the teachers' perceptions. There were 30 teachers at a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City who participated in the research carried out by means of observations, questionnaires and interviews. The results showed most of the teachers tended to use L1 to explain the points that they thought the students could not understand in L2. Although some of them used much L1 of their class time, they recognized its disadvantages. Hence, they would like to minimize the use of L1 in their reading classes to make the reading lesson more effective.

Keywords: *L1, L2, teachers' language use, reading*

INTRODUCTION

In many foreign language teaching situations, "reading receives a special focus", and it is "highly valued by both students and teachers" (Richards & Renandya, 2002, p. 273). Yet, Nation (2003) claims that the first language (L1) and target language (L2) play a particular role in the practice of teaching reading. Although the teachers recognize the important role of using target language; some teachers tend to use L1 more often. Many colleagues of the researcher said that they had to use Vietnamese a lot in their reading class for the students to understand the lessons. In her reading class, the researcher also has had such a problem. That is the reason why the researcher decided to work on this topic so that the outcomes of the research will help herself as well as her colleagues to deal with this issue.

Specifically, this research focuses on a context of a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City to understand what the teachers think about using L1 to teach reading in L2. The research findings point out the perceptions of the teachers. The result shows a general view of how the

teachers used L1 to teach their L2 reading class and it hopefully raised the teachers' awareness in order to "avoid over-use of L1" and "encourage L2 use" (Nation, 2003, p. 1).

Research questions

The research sought to answer the following questions:

- To what extent, do the Vietnamese teachers at the foreign language center use L1 in their L2 reading class?
- What functions does L1 play in the L2 reading class?
- What are the teachers' perceptions of L1 being used in their L2 reading class and its effectiveness?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In the history of methodology and classroom research, many researchers as well as teachers have paid much attention to the use of L1 and L2. The roles and benefits of L1 or L2 in English classroom have been studied and many suggestions for improving the language use in classroom have been given. Harmer (2007) states L1 has both benefits and disadvantages for L2 learning. For example, it is useful for students to "notice differences between L1 and their target language" and to "keep social atmosphere", but this also "reduces their exposure to L2" because the teacher is a source of "useful comprehensible input" (Harmer, 2007, p. 133-134). Meanwhile, Cook (1992) claims whether the teachers want it to be there or not, L1 is ever present in the minds of their L2 learners. L1 somehow exists in L2 class. In one study of Hashim and Seng (2006), they uncovered possible reasons for L1 use of tertiary ESL students while comprehending L2 texts. One of many reasons was it helped students to reduce word-related difficulties and gain more confidence when they learned reading texts in L2.

Furthermore, another research of Tang (2002) in China indicated that the limited mother tongue was used by majority of Chinese teachers and it assisted in the reading and learning process. That research examined whether Chinese was used in tertiary-level English classes in China. Its findings acknowledged the roles of L1, and the study clarified the misconceptions about using L1 in L2 classes because indeed L1 could facilitate L2 learning. One more research in China conducted by Lin (2007) tried to address the question "Will it make a difference if reading comprehension questions are set in learners' L1 instead of L2?". The investigation showed that for beginning learners, the questions could be

set in L1 whenever feasible, but for the learners who were adequate in L1 and L2, this would not make any difference.

Generally, the previous studies have provided a lot of information about L1 and L2 in English language classes. However, this research focuses on Vietnamese teachers' perceptions at a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City to understand exactly the most common factors that affect the language use of the teachers in this local teaching context.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research setting

The research was carried out at a foreign language center in Ho Chi Minh City. The teachers working for this center are Vietnamese. This language center offers General English Courses in the evening time for students and working adults to study. The name of the center must be kept confidential for the sake of their business development. The center was selected because the researcher has worked here for years and aimed to have a deeper insight into the local teaching practices.

Participants

30 EFL Vietnamese teachers who teach General English courses were selected randomly. Their classes are designed to be at intermediate level. The research process was done with their permission, so that the observations, interviews, and questionnaires could be fully exploited for the research purposes.

Table 1

Teaching experience of the English language teachers

Years of teaching English				
Less than 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	6-10 years	More than 10 years
3.3%	40%	13.3%	0%	43.3%

The researcher surveyed 30 EFL teachers, with 21 females and 9 males. The majority of the teachers have extensive experience of teaching English. Table 1 above shows that over 40% of the teachers have worked for more than 10 years, and more than 13% of them have 3-5 years of teaching English. 40% of them have worked for 1-2 years, and only a few participants have recently taught English.

Research methods and data collection procedure

In this research, three different methods of investigation were applied. The reason that “data triangulation” or “a variety of sampling strategies” were used is to “ensure a variety of perspectives” on the research (Allwright & Bailey, 1991, p. 73). During the first two weeks, four teachers were selected randomly and their reading class was observed in 2 hours. Each teacher was observed once. The purpose is to study the amount and functions of L1 in L2 reading classes. The observations help the researcher to “look at the lesson from a range of different perspectives” of the actual lessons (Wajinryb, 1992, p.7). After that, fifteen-minute interviews were conducted to see how these teachers reflected on L1 use in their L2 class. They were interviewed after the class finished during the break time.

Then, questionnaires were distributed personally to 30 teachers. According to Nunan (1992, p. 143), possible “responses to closed questions are easier to collate and analyse” while open ended questions “accurately reflect what the respondents want to say”. Therefore, different kinds of questions were combined to get detailed information about the frequency of language use of the teachers, their difficulties, and their preferences for using L1.

To validate the questionnaire responses, more individual interviews were adopted for four questionnaire respondents. All the interviews are semi-structured (see Appendix 2), which “allows flexibility and extensive follow-up of responses” (Mc Donough & Mc Donough, 1997, p. 183). They were mainly conducted in English.

Data analysis procedure

The questionnaire data was entered into a database, using Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word. Besides, the observations and interviews were transcribed separately with every respondent. Then, the data and transcripts were “analysed by identifying salient and repeated themes”, and “subsequently grouped into major categories” (Stracke, 2007, p. 64). Also, the data results were examined and calculated in terms of the frequencies or percentages of respondents’ answers. “The quantities of questionnaire data” and “the qualitative data” (Nunan, 1992, p. 200) from the interviews, observations were analysed carefully in order to get the “key results” (Brown, 1999, p. 118).

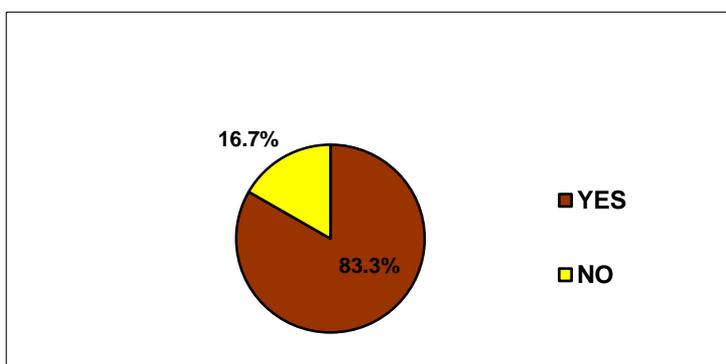
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the research provided the information mainly about how often and why the teachers used L1 in their L2 reading classes. At the same time, it revealed the functions of L1 in L2 reading class and the reasons why the teachers preferred using L1 to teach reading skills to EFL students. The findings generally reflected the teachers' views on their current language use in teaching reading class.

L1 use and its functions in the teachers' L2 reading class

Figure 1

Teachers' opinions on whether L1 should be used in their L2 reading class



When being asked if L1 should be used in L2 reading classes, most of the teachers claimed to use L1 in their class. In Figure 1, over 83% of the teachers said 'Yes', compared to nearly 17% said 'No' to this question. The main reasons that they mentioned were that the students could not understand all the reading texts completely without the help of L1 and L1 would help weak students. Other specific reasons will be discussed in the following part. In contrast, the teachers who disapproved of L1 use said teachers needed to teach English by English. According to these teachers, students have to get familiar with English by guessing to understand the meanings of the words or texts.

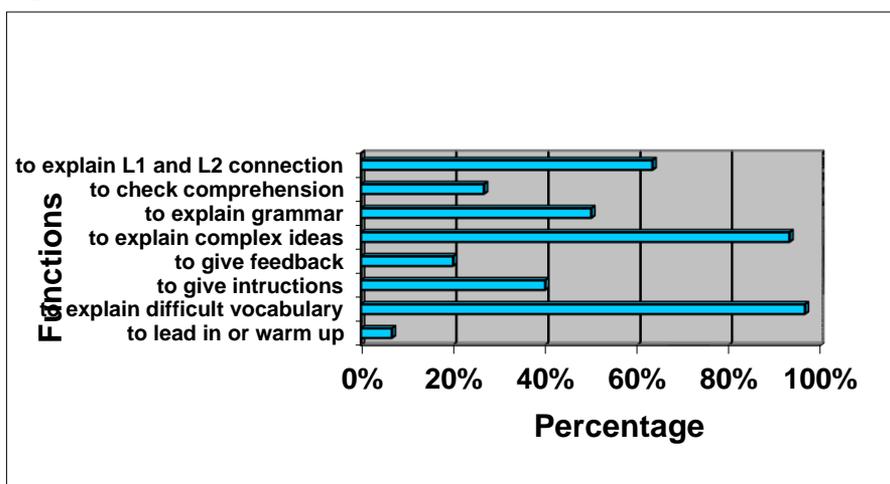
Table 2

Percentage of L1 use of the teachers in their L2 reading classes

	Percentage of L1 use in the L2 reading classes				
	< 10%	10-20%	20-40%	40-60%	60-100%
Number of teachers	1	14	11	4	0
Percentage	3.3%	46.7%	36.7%	13.3%	0%

Moreover, it can be seen in Table 2 that the amount of L1 used in the reading class is considerable. Nearly half of the respondents admitted using L1 from 10% to 20% in their reading classes and they said such percentage was average and acceptable. More than one third (36.7%) of the teachers used L1 with 20-40% of their language use, and the rest of the respondents (13.3%) used L1 as more than 40% in their class. According to a Chinese researcher, Tang (2002, p. 41), no more than 10 percent of class time should be spent using L1 in English classroom. Therefore, the figures of this research are relatively high for a foreign language classroom. The four participants in the interviews said that they needed to reduce the amount of L1 that they actually used in their class. One interviewee claimed that she used L1 a lot in her class, but she could not stop using L1.

Figure 2



Functions of L1 in the L2 reading classes

Figure 2 revealed that L1 was commonly used for some particular functions in the reading lessons. The two most common functions were to explain vocabulary and complex ideas. Many teachers in the survey thought L1 was necessary for explaining abstract words or ideas which were difficult to understand. The next two functions were to explain L1 and L2 connection and grammar points. In the view of Harmer (2007, p.134), teachers and students sharing their mother tongue can use L1 to understand idioms or metaphorical usage in different languages. Some other functions, for example, giving instructions or explanation, are also included, but they do not have significant percentage like those mentioned above.

Table 3

Classroom observation results

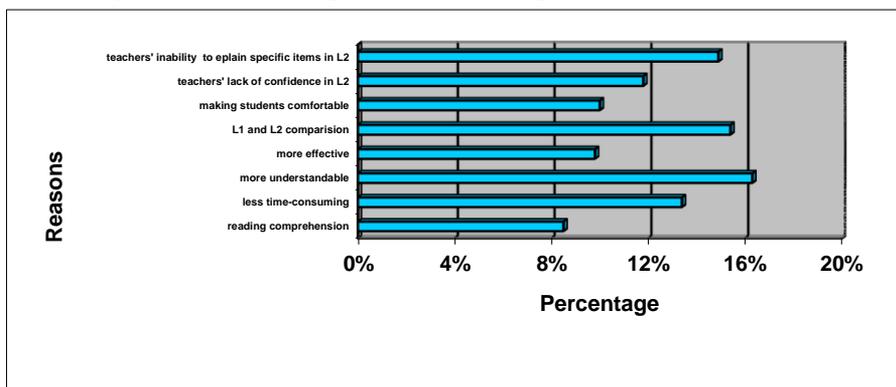
Teacher	Occasions on which the teachers used L1 to teach L2				The total percentage of L1 used in class
	Vocabulary	Instructions	Complex ideas	Complex grammatical structures	
Teacher 1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	45-50%
Teacher 2	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	20-25%
Teacher 3	Yes	No	Yes	No	10-15%
Teacher 4	Yes	No	Yes	No	10-15%

The classroom observations confirmed the findings of the questionnaires. In Table 3, all the four teachers who were observed used L1. L1 was used in similar cases illustrated in Figure 2 above. Although their teaching might be slightly different in terms of the frequency of L1 use or its functions, generally they tended to speak English and then translate it into Vietnamese to explain their points. In other words, translation methods were somehow applied. One teacher, who used L1 as nearly 50% of the time, translated almost all the words that he taught.

Reasons for using L1 in L2 reading class

Figure 3

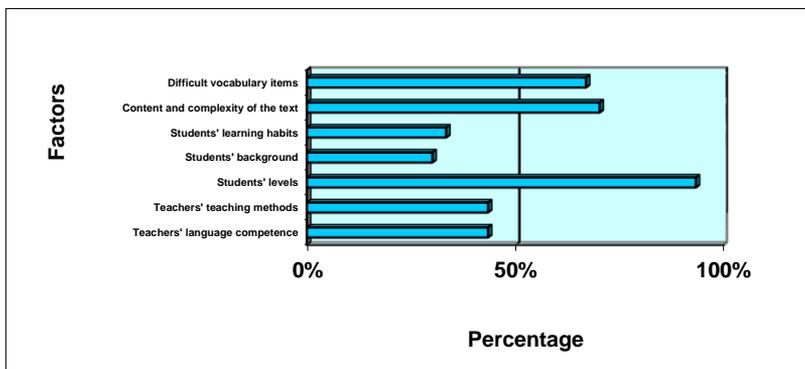
Reasons for teachers' using L1 in L2 reading class



The results provided some major reasons for using L1 to teach L2 reading. In Figure 3, it can be seen the reasons varied, and they ranged from 8.5% to 16.3%. The most common reasons were to make it more understandable and compare the languages, with 16.3% and 15.4% respectively. Another reason, which accounts for 14.9%, was teachers' inability to explain specific items in L2. One interviewee said that she could not use L2 properly for the students to understand some new words and she preferred using L1. This reason is similar to the fact that some teachers lack confidence in L2. They did not think that they were able to use L2 to express complete ideas to their students. Other reasons (e.g. less time-consuming, more comfortable for the class) might explain why L1 was used (see Table 3 above).

Figure 4

Factors that influence L1 use by the teachers



In addition, Figure 4 revealed some main factors which influenced L1 use. Over 66% of the teachers said they used L1 because of their multi-level class even though their students had taken placement tests. The teachers had to use L1 more often for low-level students to follow the lessons. Moreover, the content and difficulty of the text were also chosen as the main factors with 43.3%. The other factors were the teachers and the students, which have relatively equal percentage from 33.33% to 43.33%. The teachers used L1 to accommodate their students' learning needs. Many respondents said when too much L2 was used, their students who did not understand the lesson might feel demotivated and even quit the class. About the teachers, the grammar translation method that they got used to in the past might also affect their teaching methods at the present. In a Grammar-Translation text, reading is the focus and vocabulary is taught through bilingual word lists (Richards & Rodgers, 2002, p. 6).

Teachers' perceptions of L1 being used in their L2 reading class

Table 4

Teachers' views on whether L1 helps students in their reading class

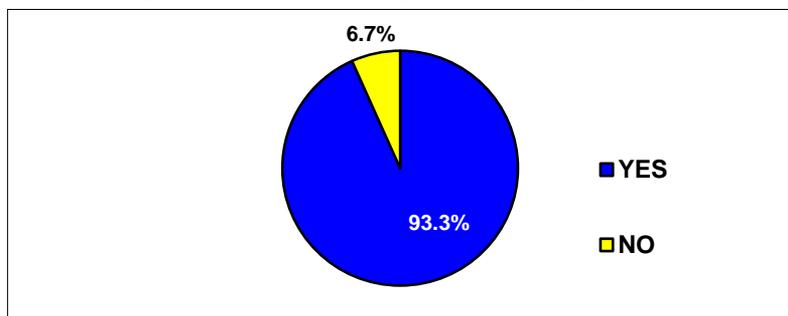
Teachers' views on whether L1 helps students in their reading class			
Not at all	A little	Quite much	A lot
0%	43.3%	43.3%	13.3%

It was obvious the teachers did use L1 in their reading class for some reasons. Table 4 showed how much they thought L1 helped their

students when they used it. 43.3% of the teachers believed that L1 helped their students a little. There is an equal percentage of the teachers who thought it helped students quite much, and only 13.3% of them thought it helped a lot. In general, they showed positive attitudes towards the role of L1.

Figure 5

Teachers' opinions on minimizing L1 in reading class



In the interviews, the respondents also gave similar answers. However, they also would like to minimize the use of their mother tongue as much as they could. This can be seen in Figure 5 that majority of the respondents said yes when being asked if they wanted to limit L1 use. However, it does not mean they would avoid using L1 completely, but they wanted to use it only when necessary. Many teachers thought they could use less L1 once their students' English level was improved. They wanted to get students to be exposed to the target language as much as possible. This was positive response and it showed potential improvement even though much L1 was still used in their reading class. The teachers claimed to make efforts to minimize the use of L1 in their English reading class when they used L1 too often. Also, they might try to take advantage of the benefits of L1 and L2 use because it was "useful for students to notice the differences between L1 and the target language" (Sheelagh Deller, 2003, cited in Harmer, 2007, p. 133).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, some recommendations are made for the improvement of the English reading classes at this foreign language center. First, the teachers should reduce the amount of L1 in their class. To explain the difficult words or complex ideas, the teachers can use L2 to enhance the students' reading skills, which involve guessing skill. Students do not need to understand completely every word in a reading text, but they need to read for general ideas or specific information.

Practicing reading skills is much more important than translating or understanding all the words in a text. Second, one of the reasons for using L1 is the students with different levels in one class. In this case, the students should study in the class of their actual language level. Placement tests are advised to be better designed for the benefits of the learners. Third, the teachers can try to increase L2 amount gradually so that the students will feel comfortable to study. Besides, the teachers should be aware of controlling L1 amount in their L2 classes, especially the classes in which much L1 has been used. L1 can be applied in L2 class in such necessary situations as linguistic comparison. Furthermore, learning and teaching activities can be designed appropriately for multi-level classes, so that the less able learners can learn from the more able as well as the teachers, and thus it will not take teachers much time to explain a text in L1 (Hess, 2001, p. 3). For checking students' understanding, a variety of activities can be used. According to Lavery (n.d.) from Teach English (British Council), teachers can organize clarification games, in which students work in pairs/ groups to give synonyms/ opposites; guess the underlined words in a reading text. Lavery also states it is important to promote self-checking by encouraging students to ask for clarification and do verbal checking. Hence, the students will have more opportunities to speak and demonstrate how they can comprehend a sentence, a paragraph, or a passage. The learning process, therefore, can be more active and engaging. The students will also be able to develop their critical thinking skills after reading a passage based on one specific topic.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, this research helps to provide a deeper insight into the L1 use of the teachers in their English reading classes. It is not true that L1 should be avoided completely in teaching English reading skills or only L2 must be used in reading classes. In fact, L1 can be used in reading classes to some extent. The important thing is to use it appropriately, but not to overuse it like many cases found in the study. It is hoped the findings will make the teachers more aware of the essential role of L2 and the supporting role of L1 in EFL classes. Meanwhile, the teachers, who are the subjects of this research, can self-evaluate and reflect on their L1/ L2 use in their classes. The study examined and pointed out the tendencies of L1/ L2 use, preferences, and perceptions of the teachers. Also, hopefully its results can help the teachers to improve the effectiveness of the language use in their reading classes in their local teaching contexts.

This research, however, has some limitations. First, some teachers

might have provided incomplete information or avoided talking openly about their actual language use in their reading classes. Besides, the questionnaires and interviews were done in the short break time. Some teachers were busy, and they seemed to answer in a hurried way. Although a friendly atmosphere and open discussion were created, such limitations need to be taken into account. Moreover, several factors might affect the research results considerably. They might be the ages, genders, language proficiency, and educational backgrounds of the teachers. Additionally, further research can be carried out to understand fully the perceptions of the students as well as teachers in order to find more practical ways to improve the quality of the L2 reading classes.

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THE UTILIZATION OF COGNITIVE AND META-COGNITIVE VIEWS TO TEACH READING SKILLS TO SECOND-YEAR ENGLISH MAJORS: OBSTACLES AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to delve deeper into reading comprehension problems that second-year English majors encounter and propose some practical solutions for these problems in HCMCOU context. The data of this study is collected through the questionnaire and interview. 100 second-year English majors partook in answering the questionnaire to give a snapshot about their reading problems in practice. An experienced teacher in teaching reading comprehension is interviewed to unveil the obstacles in teaching reading skills and suggest some solutions to such problems. The data from the questionnaire indicates that the traditional view of reading tremendously influences the students, and the lack of prior knowledge is the main reason for the problems. The interview results also align with the pivotal role of prior-knowledge, revealing that different learners' needs may hinder teachers from delivering reading comprehension lessons. Also, these findings indicate that activating and building prior knowledge gives the students a reason to read. Therefore, integrated and content-based teaching methods should be considered as remedial action against students' reading comprehension problems.

Keywords: *cognitive and meta-cognitive views, traditional view, schemata*

INTRODUCTION

According to ESL Languages (2019), although Chinese is the most spoken language by native speakers, English has become the global language with about 1,121 billion speakers including native and non-native speakers. Great effort made by the government has created a

challenging but rewarding environment for teachers to harness their teaching skills (TuoiTre News, 2014). In order to put innovation in teaching, especially teaching reading, several research have been conducted. Recent findings have emphasized the significant role of pre-knowledge in understanding a text rather than reading skills. The results indicated that general comprehension has a mutual relationship with students' prior knowledge (Yasuhiro, O., Dempsey, K., & McNamara, D.S., 2009). Furthermore, what students had known before positively affected the contribution of working memory to L2 reading comprehension (Joh, J., Plakans, L., 2017). Besides, prior-knowledge activation method resulted in better reading comprehension, meta-cognitive and inference-making processes (Tarchi, 2015). Therefore, prior-knowledge played a central role, both directly and indirectly influences reading comprehension through the mediation of inferences (Tarchi, 2010).

Although there was much evidence of the significance of cognitive views and meta-cognitive views in reading, their implication in teaching reading in Vietnamese school has not been proved through any official research. This leads to the fact that despite passing reading tests successfully, Vietnamese students still struggle to comprehend a text written by a native writer such as articles on newspapers or even books and research paper. Nevertheless, universities, especially faculties of foreign languages have endeavoured to make adjustments to their language instructional programmes as a solution for that problem. Besides learning skills to pass reading tests, students are therefore taught how to actually comprehend a text or how to make a further step in decoding underlying messages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Views of reading

There has been a shift in not only teaching methodology but also reading theories. They are enhanced from the traditional view focusing on the form of the text to the cognitive view which highlights the role of background knowledge, and they culminated in the meta-cognitive view, which is now in vogue. It is based on readers' ability to control and manipulate the text when comprehending it (Vaezi, 2006).

Traditional view

It was widely believed by behaviorist psychology of the 1950s that learning is based on habit formation, a consequence of repeated association of a stimulus with a response. As a consequence, language

learning is described as persisting language patterned reinforced by the community of language users (Hadley, 1993). Reading is, according to this view, a “linear process” by which readers decode a text word by word and put them together to form phrases and sentences (Gray and Rogers, cited in Kucer, 1987). However, this belief was heavily criticized by Samuels and Kamil (1988). They claimed that reading was treated as recognition process responding to the stimuli of the printed words, where there was little explanation for what went on within the recesses of the mind allowing human to make sense of the printed page. In other words, readers can comprehend the text by adding meaning of words to get the meaning of clauses and sentences. This process has a great emphasis on recognizing and recalling. Thus, in traditional view, reading is considered as a set of hierarchically ordered sub-skills, and having mastered these skills, readers are viewed as experts who comprehend what they read. (Dole, Duffy, Roehler & Pearson 1991).

Cognitive views

Meaningful study and rote learning have been distinguished by Ausubel (cited in Omaggio, 1993, 58). An example of rote learning is to memorize lists of isolated words and rules in the new language. Learning by this way, the information acquired is stored in short-term memory and gradually lost without revision. In contrast, when new information is put in specific context connecting with what the learner has already known, meaningful learning occurs. The information can be easily integrated into one’s existing knowledge and become permanent. This emphasis on meaning eventually formed the top-down approach in L2 learning and led to the explosion of teaching methods and activities which strongly advocated learners’ experience and knowledge in 1960s and 1970s.

These new cognitive and top-down approaches have dramatically changed the way students learn to read (Smith, 1994). In this view, reading is separating not just meanings from the text but a procedure of associating information in the text with learners’ existed one. Moreover, reading is a dialogue between readers and the text, in which the creation of meaning is formed by readers’ background knowledge (Tierney and Pearson, 1994). Reading is not a passive mechanical activity but an active cognitive process heavily dependent on the prior knowledge and expectation of the reader. Goodman (1967; cited in Paran, 1996) described reading as a linguistic guessing game of the brain, a process in which readers sample the text, make hypotheses, confirm or reject them, and formulate new ones.

Schema Theory

Another influential theory on reading instructions and closely related to top-down process is schema theory. It illustrates in detail how learners' background knowledge associate with reading tasks and gives a snapshot about how student's previous experience is significant to interpret the text. The ability to use schemata, background knowledge, plays a key role in readers' efforts to comprehend the text.

This means that past experience will foster new experiences, which may involve the knowledge of objects, situations, and events as well as that of the procedures for retrieving, organizing and interpreting information (Kucer, 1987). In Anderson's research (1994), he explained that one can understand the message conveyed in the text when he or she can recall a schema that provides the detail or explanation of the objects and events described. In other words, comprehension is the process of activating or constructing a schema that provides a coherent explanation of objects and events mentioned in a discourse (Anderson, 1994). Anderson and Pearson (1988) strongly believed that comprehension is the interaction between old and new information, in which new information is modified by old ones. Therefore, new information will be added to one's schemata, a network that restructures itself to accommodate new information (Omaggio, 1993).

Activating and building schemata

Since learners play the key role in this view, their age, gender, experience, and culture will affect the text selection. A text selected precisely will not only make it easy for learners to understand, but also motivate them in reading it. Anderson (1994) noted that when readers cannot bring to mind a schema that fits a text, they may find it incomprehensible. There are many cases that learners do not have a schema that is important for the text and cannot activate relevant schema to understand the text. In such cases, teachers need to be ready to engage in building new background knowledge as well as activating existing one (Carrell, 1988). If the context of the text involves cultural aspects different from students', formal and content schemata become even more important. McDonough (1995) explained that due to the lack of cultural background knowledge, learners may misunderstand the events mentioned in the reading text. That is to say, teachers can help students to merge isolated "parcels" of knowledge into a schema or to build a new one (Bransford 1994).

Applying schema theory to L2 reading

In order to teach reading effectively, the teacher should select the text appropriate to learners' needs, preferences, individual differences, and cultural aspects. It will enable students to comprehend the text as well as activate existing schemata and build new ones. Subsequently, the teacher needs to do the following three stages: pre-reading activities, while-reading activities, and post-reading activities. In the first stage, students have to think, write, and discuss everything they have known about the topic through some of the techniques like prediction, semantic mapping, and reconciled reading. The objective in this stage is to ensure that students had relevant schemata to understand the text. In the second stage, students' interaction with the text will be observed carefully. The teacher can teach students skills such as note-taking which allows them to organize new vocabulary and important details, and summarize the formation in the text. In the final stage, activities will consolidate the knowledge they gained through the text. Accordingly, they will be given a chance to reproduce the language and put it into their daily conversation. Although schema activation and building can occur in all stages, the pre-reading stage is highly important since it provides initial impression and contact of learners and the text.

Meta-cognitive view

Block (1992) declared that it was meaningless to debate whether reading is "language-based" process or "knowledge-based" process since research has gone further to define the control executed by readers on their trial to understand a text. This control has been referred by Block as "meta-cognition".

In terms of reading, meta-cognition means monitoring what one is doing while reading (Pardede, 2017). Not only do strategic readers examine the text, agree or reject hypothesis they have made during reading, but they also involve many activities along reading stages which have been divided into three - *pre-reading*, *while-reading*, and *post-reading stage*. What readers do in the first stage is to identify the purpose of reading and form or type of the text. In the second stage, general features and details of the text are carefully examined in order to get the meaning of the whole text. Readers can read topic sentence to get the general meaning and supporting details for more specific information. Subsequently, they can predict what might happen next in the text by combining prior-knowledge of the topic and the information received in the previous paragraph. Finally, in the last stage, readers can make a conclusion and a summary about the text or they can do some tasks to fully exploit the text. That is the most common way to imply meta-cognitive view in teaching reading.

Obstacles in utilizing cognitive and meta-cognitive views in EFL reading classes

Wexler (2019) has stated that there have been widespread problems with training in comprehension instruction. While the effectiveness of systematic phonics in helping children to decode written language, quite a few teachers have claimed that they were given this information in their training. She also pointed out that teacher training courses are more likely to include reading comprehension. However, what potential teachers learnt in those courses is dangerously inaccurate. One of the reasons is the influential 2001 report of the National Reading Panel, which proposed the “five pillars” of reading instruction, including *phonics, phonemic awareness, fluency, vocabulary, and strategies* designed to boost comprehension. However, she pointed out that the comprehension strategies endorsed by the panel are only achieved when learner’s prior knowledge is adequate to understand the text in the first place.

In a typical comprehension lesson, teachers focus on supposed skills or strategies such as answering eliciting questions or recognizing the author’s attitude. She declared that teaching those skills is likened to pressing the elevator button twice: it may make people feel safer but does not make the elevator go faster. Even when teachers attempt to imply strategies supported by research, they do not adopt it properly in the way it proposed. Instead of providing a difficult text first and modeling strategies to exact its meaning, they put a strategy in foreground and choose a simple text to demonstrate how the skill works, without paying attention to its topic. Studies have shown that students stop getting benefits after only two weeks of strategy instruction (Wexler, 2019).

After being explained a “comprehension skill”, students start practicing it on books which are easy enough for them to read on their own or with little help. However, there has been no evidence that graded texts boost comprehension, and studies have found that students learn more from texts above their level with sufficient support from the teachers (Wexler, 2019). Indeed, leveled reading has little contribution to building knowledge process, which requires staying on the same topic for several weeks. As mentioned, due to the reading texts teachers use to demonstrate a “comprehension skill”, the books students use to practice are not organized by topics.

Another spreading and dangerous misconception is the delusion that students need to “learn to read” before they can “read to learn” (Wexler,

2019). This results in high-stakes tests in reading through not only in elementary but also in middle-school curriculum. Moreover, this belief ignores the fact that gaining knowledge is part of learning to read. Even while students are learning to decode, they can take in far more sophisticated concepts and language by listening to them than by reading on their own. If students are not provided with text-relevant knowledge and vocabulary, they will fail to understand the text when they decode it by themselves. Furthermore, the hesitation in building students' knowledge widens the gap between those lucky enough to gain knowledge outside the school and their less fortunate peers (Wexler, 2019).

Guideline for teachers to enhance student's reading comprehension

After discussing the ideas and concepts presented in the three reading theories, it is crucial to make a good guideline with three distinct reading stages: pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading to enhance learners' reading abilities. Pardede (2017) proposed a guideline for effective teaching of reading, which has been utilised in HCMCOU context before the author's data collection.

Pre-reading strategies (Pardede, 2017)

In the earliest stage of reading, activities are made to make the text easily comprehensible. First of all, teachers should make sure that the level of the text is associated with learners' level and its topic should be in the response of learners' needs. Then, teachers should facilitate learners with necessary background knowledge to get them familiar with the topic and the text. This could be done through letting learners brainstorm ideas and discuss what they have known about the topic with their peers. Finally, teachers should ensure that the text mostly contains familiar vocabulary and grammar points with learners. Should there be any new words or grammar points, it is their responsibility to provide such new inputs to learners.

There are some activities which might be very useful in helping the students to overcome the urge to read the text as soon as they receive it.

- Teacher-directed pre-reading activities

In these activities, teachers directly provide key concepts and vocabulary to learners. In addition, the types of text are also introduced to learners. Each text layout has a different way to display information. Therefore, by knowing the layout, students can easily find necessary

information for comprehension. Such familiarity will significantly contribute to the speed of the learners' comprehension; in other words, they will be able to understand more deeply and faster. Even by looking at the publication date and the author, students may make their own prediction of the layout and content of the text.

- Interactive activities

Discussion is one of the best methods to activate the prior-knowledge. Teachers can lead a discussion on the topic of the text to combine their prior-knowledge and new knowledge needed to understand the text. Furthermore, explicit links between important information in the text and learners' prior-knowledge can be made during the procedure.

- Reflective activities

It is important for students to be aware of the reasons to read the text. They can be guided to have their own reasons to read. The guidance can be provided to young learners from the beginning in order to develop a habit of having a reason to read. For example, student can be guided to ask themselves questions such as "Why am I reading this text? What do I know or what can I do after reading this text?" Such questions can help learners determine what skills they need to use to understand the text (skimming, scanning, reading for gist, reading for details, critical thinking, and so forth).

While-reading strategies (Pardede, 2017)

While-reading stage is where most students' comprehension of the text happened. In this stage, students may adopt a flexible approach and vary reading strategies according to the types of reading materials & purposes for reading. Therefore, teachers play an indispensable role in helping students to develop their skills. The followings may be effective in encouraging active reading which does not heavily depend on the dictionary.

- Anticipating& predicting what will come next in the text

Not only do the students make prediction about what might happen in the text according to the topic, but they also guess what happens next while they are reading it. It would be great if they know how to use the previous information in the text to make prediction while they are reading.

- Deducing the meaning of words by understanding word

formation and contextual clues

It is unnecessary for students to know the meaning of every word in the text. Instead, breaking unfamiliar words into smaller parts such as affixes and bases might help them grasp the meaning of the words and keep the process of comprehension ongoing.

- Identifying the main idea & other salient features

Knowing not only the main idea of the text but also that of component paragraphs might help students locate the explicitly stated information. Moreover, understanding salient features also helps students elicit the main idea of the text and understand how the information is organized.

- Integrating prior knowledge

The schemata that have been activated in pre-reading stage can be used to facilitate students' reading comprehension.

- Skipping insignificant parts

Students should be taught to concentrate on important pieces of information and skip the unimportant ones.

- Reading in chunks

By reading groups of words together, students can ensure their reading speed. This can improve their comprehension by focusing on groups of meaning-conveying symbols at the same time.

- Pausing

Students should be taught to pause at important places while reading to digest and sort out the information they have received.

- Paraphrasing

While reading the text, students can paraphrase or interpret "sub vocally" to verify the information comprehended.

- Monitoring

Students should always ask whether reading and understanding the text has met their need or not.

Post-reading strategies (Pardede, 2017)

Post-reading activities basically depend on the main aim and subsidiary

aim of the lesson. Post-reading activity is to first check students' comprehension and then empower them with further analysis (Barnett, 1988). He also pointed out that second language reading must go beyond memorizing the author's point of view or summarizing the text content due to the goal of integrating new information with the already existed one. Students must be flexible in adopting varied reading strategies. For example, scanning might be suitable for newspaper advertisements whereas predicting might be suitable for short stories. He has proved that group discussion provides a great opportunity for students to focus on information they did not comprehend or comprehended incorrectly.

Furthermore, Philips (1985) claimed that "follow-up" exercises can benefit learners by either transferring reading skills to other texts or integrating reading skills with other language skills. Transferable reading strategies are those that readers can embrace and use with other texts. Post reading usually involves these activities (discussing the text: written/oral; summarizing: written/oral; making questions: written/oral; answering questions: written/oral; filling in forms and charts; writing reading logs; completing a text; listening to or reading other related materials; and role-playing).

To sum up, in the traditional view of reading, good readers are supposed to acquire all of hierarchy set of reading skills. Nonetheless, the cognitive and meta-cognitive views emphasize learners' prior knowledge rather than focus on "comprehension skills". Still, there are some obstacles faced by teachers in utilizing them in teaching reading:

- Paying less attention to phonics instructions
- Putting "comprehension skills" in foreground instead of difficult texts
- Choosing leveled reading texts which are not very useful in boosting learners' comprehension
- The topics of practice texts are not categorized
- Misconception of learning to read before "read to learn"
- High-stakes tests
- Hesitation in building learners' knowledge
- A big gap between learners' acquiring knowledge outside school and those who do not

Therefore, it is pivotal for teacher to make use of students' prior knowledge to generate general context which greatly contributes to their reading comprehension. The role of cognitive and meta-cognitive views is highlighted by its wide application in preparing reading lesson plans. The views usually appeared in the form of three-stage process: pre-reading, while-reading, post-reading. The significant role of activating prior-knowledge of cognitive view is clearly seen in pre-reading stage, while in the while and post-reading stage, the implication of meta-cognitive view helps students comprehend the text and associate new knowledge with the existed one.

Problem statements

Although there were numerous evidences of the significant of cognitive views and meta-cognitive view in reading, the author's observation showed almost no implication of them in teaching reading in Vietnamese school. This led to the fact that despite passing reading tests with flying colors, Vietnamese students still struggle to comprehend a text written by a native writer such as articles on newspapers or even books and research paper. Besides, there was little official research carried out to evaluate the efficiency of reading lessons delivered in Vietnamese schools. Therefore, the author is motivated in carrying the research in order to contribute to teaching activities in HOU.

Research objectives

This research is conducted in order to identify not only the problems that students face in reading classes, but also the obstacles that lecturers have when delivering reading lesson. Moreover, this paper wishes to propose some possible solutions to the mentioned problems.

METHODOLOGY

This paper has been designed as a descriptive research. The two instruments to collect data is the questionnaire and the interview. A computer questionnaire with multiple-choice questions, scaling questions, and open questions has been delivered to the participants. The interview with an experienced lecturer in teaching has been made with the questions:

- Do you think activating students' prior knowledge about the topic is important?
- How did you utilize cognitive and meta-cognitive views in your reading classes?

- What are the obstacles for doing so and are there any solutions for those problems?

Research setting and participants

The current study was conducted at HCMOU. The participants in this research are HCMOU's second-year English majors who are currently having their reading classes at Nguyen Kiem campus. The total number of participants in this research is 105 and only 100/105 answers were used for data analyzing due to their validity and reliability. The obstacles of utilizing different reading views in reading classes come from different aspects. Therefore, an interview with an experienced lecturer was conducted in order to gain deeper insight of the issue and propose some possible solutions for it.

Data collection process

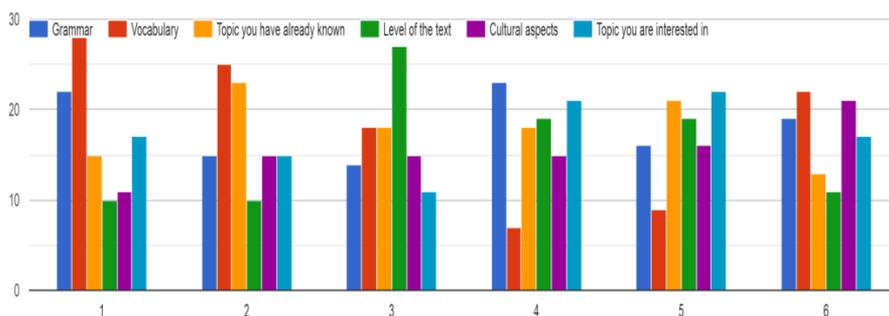
There are three stages of collecting the data. First, through the author's connection with the FFL lecturers, specific timetables of different classes were received. Second, the questionnaire was delivered to the students online in order to check the effectiveness of Pardede's guideline. Finally, an online interview with the lecturer was arranged to have more detail about the topic.

RESULTS

Findings from the questionnaire

Obstacle in utilizing cognitive and meta-cognitive views in EFL reading classes

1. Ranking of reading aspects affecting learner's comprehension

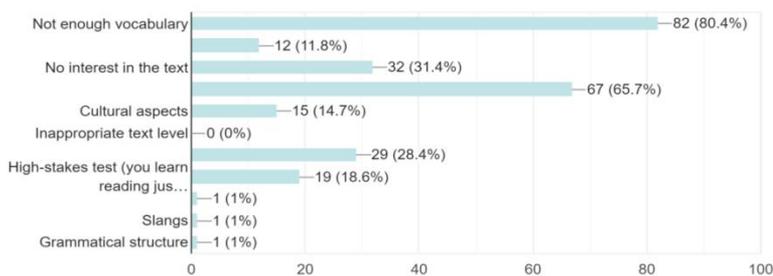


The bar chart gives a snapshot about reading aspects affecting learners' comprehension in descending order (number 1 is the most influent). Surprisingly, vocabulary still dominated other aspects in the ranking, it

was most chosen for the first and second place. In the third place, the importance of the level of the text was highlighted. However, it is clearly to see that there is a shift in grammar and already known topic. The second place witnessed a sharp decrease in grammar, comparing to that in the first place; but the already known topic sharply increased. This reveals that the student participating in survey still heavily depends on the traditional view of reading and their implication (lexical aspect). However, the implication of cognitive view in reading has proved its effectiveness resulting in the highlighted role of already known topic.

Moreover, 5 out of 103 participants voiced that the writing style of the author influenced their reading comprehension. Other two claimed that pictures such as photos, diagrams and maps also help them to better understand the text.

2. The reasons for students' difficulties in understanding a text

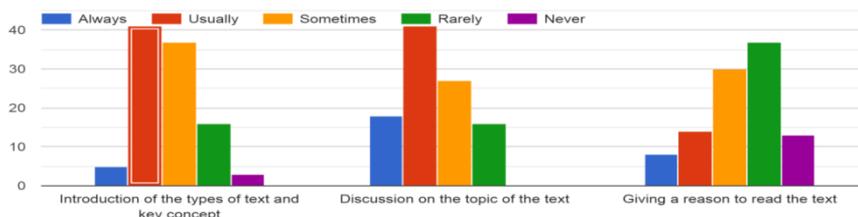


The chart reveals the reasons for students' hindrance in comprehending a text. The main factor that prevents students from understanding a text is vocabulary. 82 students stated that not enough vocabulary mostly affect their reading, while there were only 12 students said that they cannot understand a text with few or no skill provided. The second factor affecting students' understanding is the prior knowledge (65%) whereas only 31.4% of the students consider about their interest in the text. Other aspects of cognitive views, level of the text and cultural aspects, make up for 28.4% and 14.7% respectively. The high-stakes test is also a big problem in reading comprehension (18.6%). Moreover, there are 3 minor factors such as slangs, grammatical structure, and confusing questions in reading exercises and tests (1% each).

This emphasized that the systematic phonics should be delivered more frequently in order to help students overcome their biggest obstacle – vocabulary. Furthermore, the results support Wexler's viewpoint that

all the strategies designed to boost reading comprehension would be useless without prior-knowledge. That Wexler pointed that the high-stakes test was a result of misconception in teaching reading is true in this research context, which is supported by the data above.

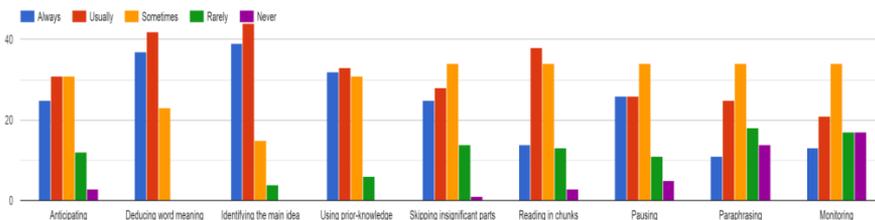
Guideline for teachers to enhance student's reading comprehension



3. The frequency of the activities happening in reading class

It is obvious to see that the discussion on the topic of the text is the most frequently used technique in order to activate students' prior knowledge. Moreover, the introduction of the text type and key concept is also often used whereas students are rarely given a reason to read the text. According to Pardede (2017), this has shown that teacher-directed pre-reading activities are not employed as frequently as interactive activities, and reflective activities are rarely implied in reading classes in HCMCOU context.

4. The frequency of the skills used in reading

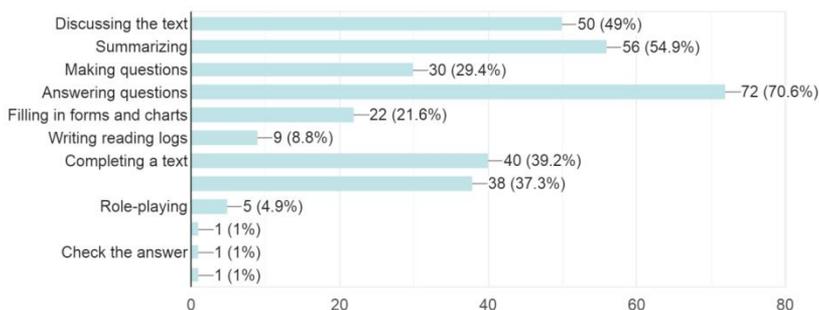


In general, all of the reading skills are frequently used in reading. The bar chart reveals the most frequently used one is reading for gist, which is followed by deducing word meanings. In contrast, monitoring the reading process is almost rarely used. Another noticeable feature is that prior-knowledge plays an essential role in students' reading skills. This illustrates that cognitive view of reading is frequently applied in reading

classes by the students. The meta-cognitive view is applied in reading as anticipating what comes next in the text, which is also often used. The traditional view is almost outweighed by the other views since it resulted in the fact that student can deduce the word meanings through word formation and contextual clues, and only one student voiced that he had to look for the meaning of every word in the text. Therefore, Pardede’s while-reading guideline for enhancing students’ comprehension has proven its significant implication in HCMCOU context.

However, 8 of the students claimed that they pay more attention on answering questions and keywords rather than understanding the text. This is a result of high-stakes tests which make students try to get nothing but the correct answer of the questions provided. This once again highlighted the impact of high-stakes test on the students reading comprehension in Wexler’s viewpoint. Another interesting point is that one expressed his difficulty in understanding “the authors’ emotion”; and listening to audio books helps him gain a deeper insight into the text. This means that learners’ learning styles are quite an obstacle in applying cognitive and meta-cognitive views in teaching reading skills.

5. *The frequently used post-reading techniques*



The chart illustrates the post reading techniques used by teachers in reading classes. According to the chart, answering question related to the text or topic of the text is the most favorite follow-up technique (70.6%). Discussing and summarizing the text have proven its efficiency in expanding student knowledge of the topic and monitoring student reading process (49% and 54.9% respectively). 38 students claimed that listening to or reading related materials on the topic is an effective way to build prior knowledge. Other techniques such as making

questions, filling forms and charts are also quite often implied. However, monitoring techniques are still an unfamiliar concept in reading classes, resulting in the rare implication of reading logs after each lesson. Role play is the least useful post-reading technique when there were only 5 students confessing that it is done in their class. One student claimed that his teacher expanded vocabulary based on the topic whilst the other said she usually checked the answers with her teacher or peers.

Findings from the interview

An experienced lecturer in teaching reading skills at HCMCOU highlighted the importance of prior knowledge and always started his lessons with schemata activation. Through contextualizing and setting scenes for the topic, the students will have a great opportunity to empower themselves and share their knowledge. This can be “a natural way to build students’ engagement and interest, making the topic worth investigating”. Although it can be cut short due to the time limit, students will have a strong sense of reading purposes that encourage them to read and expand their knowledge.

From his perspective, cognitive views can be implied through top-down approaches and meta-cognitive can be utilized as “helping the students identify the purposes of reading a text or relating themselves to the understanding of the text”. Therefore, the cognitive and meta-cognitive views argued that the instruction should focus less on the linguistic aspects but more on the reading experience. Not only should students have a clear purpose of why they read, but the activity leading intensive reading comprehension should also be interesting and engaging.

There are two obstacles in applying the views in reading classes. He claimed that “it is difficult to know if the students are reading”, and “the students do expect to read more materials like those in IELTS, but the curriculum is not IELTS oriented”.

He also proposed some viable solutions to those issues. In order to get students involved in reading tasks, showing the students the value of reading extensively is a sensible way to convince them to read non-IELTS oriented materials. Moreover, he adopted different forms of writing products, in which students could be asked to illustrate one or two particular interesting points in the text. Besides topics can be made for reflective reading and writing, giving students a chance to comment on their peers’ work to show how much they have understood the text while receiving a good model from their instructors. Through integrated reading classes, both reading and life experiences are shared among

students helping them know how to improve themselves as reflective readers and writers. He also stated that “HCMCOU is changing its curriculum by linking reading to writing, an innovative method to test students’ reading ability”.

DISCUSSIONS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

It is noticeable that there are two factors hindering applying innovations in delivering reading lessons to students, one from the teaching aspects and the other from the learning aspects. In terms of identifying the reading views students are following, the second-year HCMCOU English majors are heavily affected by the traditional view of reading. However, the idea of cognitive has been starting to grow in their mind set. The majority of the students have claimed the importance of prior-knowledge in their reading. Unfortunately, the meta-cognitive view, represented by knowing the ongoing reading process, is quite an unfamiliar term for students.

From the learners’ perspective, grammar, vocabulary, and level of the text were the most challenging factors in their reading text, and seemed to outweigh other ones like familiar or interesting topic, and cultural aspects. They claimed that they still benefited from the lessons delivered by their lecturers, whichever reading views and methods are applied. They also declared that high-stakes tests along with cultural aspects are big issues. Surprisingly, they did not find the levels of the text inappropriate. Moreover, limited applied reading strategies are recorded among the students. Such familiar skills as reading for gist, deducing word meanings and reading in chunks are repeatedly used.

From the lecturer’s perspective, there are only two obstacles in utilizing cognitive and meta-cognitive views in his reading lessons. Firstly, he may not know exactly if his students are actually reading. Without precise monitoring, it is hard to give the suitable teaching method, and all the attempts to get students involved in reading activity may be ruined. Secondly, learners’ need is quite a big hindrance for all lecturers. Many students insist on reading IELTS oriented materials in class for their personal goal while the curriculum is not IETS oriented. Therefore, lecturers have to do their utmost to convince them to read other materials.

In order to overcome the problems, many solutions have been proposed. First of all, the three-stage model of reading lesson has proven its efficiency (pre-reading, while reading, and post reading stage). Besides, cognitive view can be implied through top-down approaches and meta-

cognitive can be utilized as a tool to identify the purposes of reading a text or relating themselves to the understanding of the text. In addition, different forms of writing products can be adopted like writing a summary, poster, blog writing, and so on. Students can comment on their peers' work to show how much they have understood the text while receiving a good model from their instructors. Integrated reading classes can significantly boost students' reading and life experiences. HCMCOU is changing its curriculum by creating integrated classes, linking reading to writing in order to acquire a better way to gauge students' reading ability.

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APPLIED LINGUISTICS

TIME-COURSE ACTIVATION OF SEMANTIC PRIMES IN L2-ENGLISH WORD RECOGNITION

Dr. CLAY WILLIAMS

Akita International University

ABSTRACT

Recent studies have shown that Chinese and Japanese students of English uniquely fail to exhibit any facilitation effects in masked priming tasks, even at relatively high levels of English proficiency. As English language learners from alphabetically transcribed L1 backgrounds have been repeatedly shown to yield robust semantic priming facilitation, the lack thereof with East Asian learners suggests a script-specific effect wherein Chinese character learning during L1-literacy instruction leads to the development of qualitatively different lexical retrieval processes from alphabetically-transcribed languages. The following study was undertaken to determine how long words must be presented to enable semantic priming facilitation. The study tested 48 advanced-level Japanese learners of English in a lexical decision test wherein target words were preceded by primes. Four separate versions of the test using different length of exposure of the primes, from 50 milliseconds to over 200 milliseconds, were used in testing, though each subject only took a single version of the test. Through comparison of testing results in the 4 different versions, differences in time course semantic activation were measured. In the end, the participants never showed any semantic prime facilitation effects, thereby suggesting that this is indeed an L1 script-specific characteristic.

Keywords: *semantic priming, masked priming, East Asian learners, word processing*

INTRODUCTION

Correlations between L1 reading proficiency and L2 literacy attainment have long been widely acknowledged. Certain widely publicized effects, such as that teaching illiterate students of L2 to read in their L1 first producing a marked gain in the efficiency and proficiency of L2 literacy acquisition (e.g., Chu-Chang, 1981), have led to changes in entire educational infrastructures. The bilingual education approach used throughout much of the U.S.A. is, at its base, predicated upon this idea that L1 reading proficiency is purely helpful to L2 literacy acquisition.

This faith in the facilitative nature of L1 literacy skills, however, may not be entirely well-founded in the case of languages with profound differences in orthographic systems. As Koda (1997) points out, languages with wildly differing orthographies may lend themselves towards altogether dissimilar processing and decoding strategies. These variations in the processing strategies used with particular scripts have the potential for various negative effects on L2 literacy acquisition. At the mild end, the differences in L1 and L2 orthographic processing strategies may simply result in sub-optimal (but still entirely functional) reading strategies to be employed, as the reader unconsciously applies the strategies he/she acquired in learning to read his/her L1 to a dissimilar script. In more extreme cases of orthographic variation, the learner's L1 decoding processes may be completely ineffective or altogether useless, leading to frustration and slow acquisition by the learner. Williams (2016) points out, for example, that in cases of Chinese learners of English, there is a minority of learners that seems to fail to connect English orthography to phonology as Chinese characters do not directly represent sound. This leads to severe limitations in their ability to acquire English literacy, as they become over-reliant upon orthographic patterns, literally trying to memorize spelling patterns of each word with no sense of phonological patterns within the language. Using such inefficient strategies will inevitably lead to increased misidentification of vocabulary, which in-turn, leads to a steady decrease in overall comprehension of reading passages. Shen (2005) asserts that for every 1% of the vocabulary of any text that is unknown to the reader, there will be a cumulative 2-4% drop in the reader's overall comprehension of any given passage. As such, it is extremely important for L2 literacy pedagogy to be grounded in a well-established understanding of the effects and variations that different L1 scripts produce in both the literacy learning strategies and reading processes of popular L2 orthographies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The dual route model

Despite the plethora of writing systems in use in the world today, the foundation of reading is basically the same in all languages: namely, they all involve the recognition and decoding of orthographic and phonological information. If we consider it for a moment, it is a logical conclusion – in most scripts, orthographic and phonological information (for readers of alphabetic script such as English, think letters and sounds) are the only information that one would typically have available pre-lexically (Chinese script does have a major variation on this – see

below). This general limitation has been assumed in the scientific community for nearly a century (e.g., Saussure, 1922, as cited in Colheart, 2005), and undergirds one of the major theories of reading comprehension in use today: the dual route model. The details of the dual route model have been developed over time, with various researchers adding features (e.g., Colheart, 1980; Patterson & Morton, 1985; Colheart et al., 1993; Colheart et al., 2001). The model, which is applicable across all languages and writing systems, stipulates that word recognition is achieved through two separate processing systems which work in tandem to search the mental lexicon. The first route, the “lexical route,” searches based upon orthographic features, whereas the second route, the “non-lexical route,” searches based upon phonological features. Functionally, what this looks like is that when the reader is presented with a word as visual input, the reader immediately breaks the word down into orthographic units (one can think in terms of letters, but it is quite possible that certain letter “chunks” produce searches in combined form), and searches the lexicon for a match. Simultaneously, the nonlexical route breaks the word down into phonological code and searches the lexicon that way. When a match is successfully made, the search process is suspended on both sides. The model has plenty of supporting evidence, as it fits with familiar data from priming studies. Numerous studies have confirmed that readers experience facilitation to word recognition in the presence of phonologically-similar primes, including homophones (e.g., Humphreys et al., 1982), and phonological neighbors (Ferrand & Grainger, 1992). Similar facilitation has been found in studies using orthographically-related word primes (e.g., Humphreys et al., 1982; Grainger & Ferrand, 1996).

The case of Chinese script, however, bears special mention, as the profound differences in its logographic script – as compared with the various alphabets and syllabaries which predominate among modern writing systems – necessitated a personalized adaptation to the dual route model. Chinese characters are usually composed by combining different fixed-form graphemes (called radicals), each of which has its own pronunciation and meaning. One can often combine various characters which, individually, would have their own pronunciation and meaning, to produce a separate character with a different pronunciation and meaning. Because of this feature of combinability, it was vital to be able to account for sub-graphic features in Chinese. Additionally, Chinese characters make frequent use of semantic-phonetic compounding strategies, wherein one radical represents a semantic “class” of the resulting word, and the other helps to represent phonology. As such, some aspects of semantics are often accessible to the reader pre-

lexically – a feature which doesn't exist in most other scripts. In order to accurately depict these script features, Weekes, Chen, and Yin (1997) have developed a “triangle” model – which is essentially a Chinese-language-specific adaptation to the dual route model. In this “triangle” model, the three representational levels – semantic, phonological, and orthographic – are each linked to each other via pathways referred to as the “semantic” pathway and the “non-semantic” pathway. The distinct names from the more familiar lexical and non-lexical routes reflect critical differences in Chinese processing: namely, in the case of the semantic pathway, that semantic information can be processed pre-lexically, and in the case of the non-semantic pathway, that sub-character level phonology can be engaged in the search process.

Priming effects in word decoding

As the dual route model would predict, there has been copious evidence produced demonstrating that these two routes (i.e., lexical and non-lexical) are actively engaged in word recognition. This has mostly taken the form of effects found in various forms of word priming. Segui and Grainger (1990) report that when primes were presented, orthographic neighbors produced interference effects. Grainger and Ferrand (1996) found that both orthographic and phonological primes produced robust effects in lexical decision tasks. Such orthographic effects are strongly suggestive of lexical route use in word decoding. Phonological priming facilitation (which would indicate non-lexical route use) has been found in various speeds of presentation, so long as the prime is presented for a minimum of 45ms (Ferrand & Grainger, 1992; 1993). Such priming effects are not restricted to orthographic and phonological primes, though. There is robust evidence for semantic priming, as well. Such semantic priming facilitation has been found at varying presentation speeds: from 250ms (e.g., Neely, 1977), to 66ms (Perea & Rosa, 2002), to a mere 43ms (Bodner & Mason, 2003), which would be practically invisible as it is too fast for readers to be conscious of having seen it. It is important to note, however, that, as semantic information is not available pre-lexically in alphabetic scripts, the findings of semantic priming facilitation are not indicative of any specific route, but rather such facilitation is a product of the decision making process. According to Forster's Search Model (1976), when we see or hear a word, we make a rapid search of the lexicon, flagging any close orthographic or phonological neighbors as possible candidates, and then come back to that “shortlist” to conduct a more fine-tuned examination before selecting the (usually correct) result. As all shortlisted candidates would be opened, and therefore their semantic, syntactic, etc. information

would be briefly available in the short-term memory, this explains why we can see facilitation effects from semantically related words. Essentially, the prime speeds up this final decision process by enabling faster recognition of similar semantic features.

Recent studies on cross-script semantic priming

These three prime types – orthographic, phonological, and semantic – are all directly related to readers’ word-level decoding ability, and therefore the presence and relative strength of priming effects can be used as a stand-in for gauging word-level reading ability, and would enable us to see any sizeable differences emerging in L2 readers of various L1 backgrounds. Williams (2012) directly applied this idea in order to measure the efficacy of a 1 semester intensive English program at an English-medium Japanese university. He measured the students’ susceptibility to semantic and phonological word priming in a lexical decision task both at the beginning and the end of the semester-long program. At the beginning of the semester, students produced no priming effects for phonologically related primes, but by the end of the semester there were measurable facilitation effects. As for semantic primes, in the beginning, the students were producing a significant priming delay effect (i.e., semantically related primes preceding target words caused the students to answer more slowly), and while the delay disappeared by the end of the semester, no facilitation effects appeared. A follow-up test (Williams, 2014) evinced still no facilitation effects for semantic primes, despite considerable gains in reading speed. Another test (Williams, 2015) showed that students produced normal priming facilitation for orthographic primes, as well as phonological primes. Further tests revealed normal facilitation effects for both semantic and phonological primes in students’ L1 Japanese (Williams, 2016), and the same pattern of semantic primes producing a delay at low levels of proficiency, but no effect at mid-high levels of proficiency in L2 English was found in Chinese L1 students (Williams, 2017). Finally, in order to ascertain whether the failure to obtain priming facilitation for semantically related primes was not due to some feature of the lexical decision task, Williams (2018) employed a semantic categorization task using masked-priming, but in the end, the results were the same – no semantic facilitation effects were found. However, subjects did show a significant delay for semantic distractor items (target words), which seems to indicate that it was not the lexical decision task that impaired semantic priming effects, but rather the presentation speed of the semantic primes. This absence of semantic priming facilitation by Japanese and Chinese learners contrasts starkly with a plethora of other

studies of L2 English learners of other L1 backgrounds (e.g., Schoonbaert et al., 2009; Devitto & Burgess, 2004; Phillips et al., 2004), but as those studies were invariably conducted with speakers of alphabetically-transcribed L1s, this lack of facilitation effects for semantic priming is likely to be evidence of a script-specific effect. Chinese and Japanese both use Chinese characters in the written form of their respective languages, and it is possible that the presence of pre-lexically available semantic information has trained their brains to ignore certain steps in analyzing the shortlisted vocabulary before making a final decision in word recognition.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study was designed to elucidate the question presented by the prior studies – namely, if Japanese students are unable to produce facilitation effects for semantic primes in a masked priming paradigm, at what presentation speed will semantic priming facilitation become apparent? As the students from previous research have typically been recruited from a university where English was the medium of course instruction, and thus, they would presumably have relatively high levels of English language proficiency, it is assumable that they all could read English fairly effectively, and of course they could match words to their meanings. The suggestion from previous research is that particular features of the masked priming paradigm (wherein primes are typically presented after a “mask” – usually a series of hashtags – and displayed for less than 80ms, the combined effect of which typically makes the prime effectively invisible to the reader’s conscious mind) were driving this lack of priming facilitation, and that if the primes were made visible, such priming facilitation might appear. As such, the research questions are as follows:

- 3 *Do visible semantic primes produce semantic facilitation effects in Japanese learners of English?*
- 4 *If so, at what presentation speeds do semantic facilitation effects become apparent?*

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The study recruited 48 university students from an English-medium university in northern Japan. All subjects were 2nd or 3rd year, had already completed the mandatory EAP intensive English coursework (typically during their first year of study at the university) and were

enrolled in regular content coursework. They were all L1 speakers of Japanese, educated K-12 in Japanese, and had no more than 3 weeks (total) of prior experience abroad in English-speaking countries. All were normally-abled and had normal or corrected-to-normal vision.

Materials

Five different lexical decision test scripts using a priming paradigm were written for use on the DMDX platform (Forster & Forster, 2003). Each script had 150 test items divided between 5 different prime-type categories. The categories were: 1) semantic primes (i.e., prime is semantically related to target); 2) phonological primes (i.e., prime is phonologically related to target); 3) non-word phonological primes (i.e., prime is phonologically related to target; target is a non-word letter string); 4) negative control (i.e., no relationship between prime and target; target is a non-word letter string); and 5) positive control (i.e., no relationship between prime and target; target is a real English word). See Table 1 for details. As non-word responses do not pertain to the research questions at hand, the analysis herein will only deal with types 1, 2, and 5 (i.e., positive answers). The items were the same on each test script, but the prime duration was varied per script. The prime presentation time course for each script were, 51ms, 102ms, 153ms, and 204ms, respectively.

Table 1

Prime Types

- 1) Semantic Prime condition: doctor → HOSPITAL
 - 2) Phonological Prime condition: hate → EIGHT
 - 3) Non-word Phonological Prime condition:
loser → POOZER
 - 4) Negative Control condition: raise → SNOPPLE
 - 5) Positive Control condition: restore → LABEL
-

Procedures

Participants were tested separately in a quiet, distraction-free environment. One of the scripts was assigned randomly to each participant (while ensuring equal numbers of test subjects for each

script). A practice session preceded the actual test, in order to familiarize subjects with the lexical decision test paradigm. Test item presentation was randomized. Those subjects who were tested with scripts using 102ms or higher prime presentation time were warned to answer according to the second word (which employed a larger font to distinguish the two), as when the prime is visible longer, participants would be conscious of seeing the prime. The total test time was between 10 and 15 minutes for each subject. Reaction times were recorded automatically by the DMDX software for later analysis.

RESULTS

The overall reaction times according to priming condition and prime presentation time are presented in Table 2. Comparing reaction times of semantic and phonological prime types to the positive control category for significant difference revealed that phonological primes produced a significant ($p < 0.05$) facilitation effect (i.e., participants were able to recognize the target word faster) at prime presentation times of 51ms, 102ms, and 204ms, respectively, but not at 153ms. Semantic primes, by contrast, produced a statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) delay effect in the 51ms and 102ms prime presentation conditions, but did not significantly effect reaction time in the slower prime presentation conditions.

Table 2

Reaction times across presentation times and prime types

Prime Presentation Time	Semantic Primes mean RT	Phonological Primes mean RT	Positive Control mean RT
In milliseconds			
51ms presentation	720ms**	657ms*	694ms
102ms presentation	721ms**	673ms*	706ms
153ms presentation	700ms	678ms	688ms
204ms presentation	734ms	699ms*	731ms

* = significant facilitation effect / ** = significant delay effect

DISCUSSION

The results fit squarely with previous studies (e.g., Williams, 2012; 2017). There were phonological prime facilitation effects across all presentation lengths except for 153ms. The fact that the facilitation effects exist at both higher and lower presentation lengths suggest that this may have been a fluke, or also, the degree of presentation time may have been just enough to be distracting to participants, thereby slowing down reaction time, but this is highly speculative. There is little reason, however, to suspect that there is something inherent to 153ms prime visibility length that would cause differences in word processing, and the difference with other presentation length results is likely due to external factors such as the aforementioned distraction or subject attention levels. As for semantically related primes, while there is a pattern of semantic prime delay in faster prime presentation times, the subjects do not at any point become susceptible to prime facilitation. Rather, the increase in presentation time mirrors the proficiency variable found in previous studies where subjects were shown to change from being delayed by the semantic prime to a null effect. While there is no semantic facilitation, nevertheless, a delay effect does suggest some interaction between the prime and target word. It has previously been suggested (Williams, 2017) that the disappearance of this delay effect as proficiency develops suggests that Japanese participants essentially learn how “turn off” the semantic check during that final check of shortlisted words before final decision in word processing. The suggestion has been that the pre-lexical availability of semantic features in students’ L1 precludes the development of that post-search/pre-decision semantic check typically detected in L1 speakers of alphabetically-transcribed languages, and thus the development of an additional process would be required for L2 reading by Japanese/Chinese students of English to resemble reading by L1 speakers of English (or even L2 speakers of English who are from L1 backgrounds which are written alphabetically). At lower levels of proficiency, in masked conditions, students are slowed by attempts to process and translate the prime word, and in order to accelerate their response time, as they gain proficiency, instead of learning how to more efficiently access shortlisted words for meaning, the students instead learn how to suspend the process of checking this shortlist, thereby increasing their reading speed, but also eliminating any sort of effect for semantically related primes. The results of this study suggest that prime presentation length functions much like proficiency, in the sense that, the more aware of the prime word the subjects were, the more able they were to ignore semantics in favor of merely reacting to the target. The

fact that they were still receiving facilitation effects from phonological primes show that they were not completely ignoring the prime – they would still read it – but they were able to “shut off” semantic processing independently from phonological (and quite likely – but not tested herein – orthographic) processing.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study are rather startling, as, taken together with previous studies on semantic priming with Japanese learners of English, there is heavy implication that students will always show a divergent pattern for word recognition vis-à-vis other EFL learners from alphabetic writing system backgrounds. While not engaging in an automatic semantic consultation in the pre-decision stage of word processing would not seem to significantly harm their overall language and academic proficiency (keep in mind that the subjects in the present study were all studying at an English-medium university, and as such, were probably in the upper percentiles of the Japanese population regarding general English proficiency), the absence of semantic crosscheck of shortlisted word candidates in reading tasks nevertheless would theoretically lead to an elevated chance of misreading. It would be interesting and worthwhile to compile data comparing Japanese/Chinese learners of English with learners of other language backgrounds (and similar proficiency levels) to ascertain whether or not they do indeed suffer from higher rates of word-misidentification in reading aloud tasks. If so – and the results of this study are highly indicative that that may be the case – it would be incumbent upon those tasked with teaching Japanese learners to consider how one can instruct learners to develop an entirely new reading process, foreign to the L1 script. It is unknown at this time what it would take to develop such processes in an L2 learner (albeit the fact that they develop quasi-automatically in L1 literacy learners suggests that the key may be found in observations of differences in approach made with child learners). It would also be useful to test the variable of age of L2 acquisition, as it may well be found that child learners are more open to developing different reading processes for different scripts than older learners are. Japan has been more averse to starting English lessons at early ages compared to neighboring countries (i.e., Japan only started compelling a 1x/week English lesson to elementary 5th and 6th graders since 2011; previously, English started from junior high school), so the effects might look different among children who started English reading from early elementary or kindergarten. Regardless, the possibility of interference in literacy acquisition and general reading proficiency among Japanese

L1 readers makes this issue an important one to analyze more carefully, so that we can fully understand its implications, as well as how to mitigate it.

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STRATEGIES FOR TRANSLATING ENGLISH IDIOMS INTO VIETNAMESE: AN ANALYTICAL APPROACH

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ABSTRACT

Idioms have been considered as a common form of language containing wisdom, experiences, and valuable educational lessons that have been passed from generation to generation. In today's globalized Vietnam, English idioms have become necessary in cross-cultural communication, but their Vietnamese translated versions receive little attention. In order to examine which translation strategy, formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence and what linguistic and cultural features were used by the final-year English majors who are pursuing a fourth – year English program at Tra Vinh University in translating English idioms, the study used the sources from two the educational websites: elight.edu.vn and iyoloenglish.edu.vn for collecting the data. The result showed that the participants gave priority to the use of the dynamic equivalence (accounting for 70%) and formal equivalence in their translation (accounting for 30%) to render the English idioms into Vietnamese versions. Simultaneously, the majority of the participants could use correct or acceptable Vietnamese linguistic and cultural aspects in their Vietnamese translation. Besides, the study also proposed some implications for foreign language pedagogy and for further studies.

Keywords: *idioms, translation strategy, formal equivalence, dynamic equivalence, linguistic and cultural aspects*

INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization, English is considered as a necessary tool to promote economic, medical, educational and cultural exchanges. As a result, English has been an essential subject taught in most schools and universities. In addition to mastering the language skills well, foreign-language learners are required to be proficient at translation if they

wish to reach an advanced level of English. Although the importance of translation is obvious, learners do not pay much attention to it especially idiomatic translation. That reason makes students unable to recognize a crucial role of idioms although these idioms bring us a large amount of cultural and linguistic information. In society, idioms have been the primary language of people and presented in most conversations. Moreover, idioms may contain wisdom, lessons, experience passed from generation to generation. Therefore, understanding idioms is a necessary part in learning a foreign language and developing translation skills. In this paper, the authors proposed two questions:

1. *What strategies (formal equivalence or dynamic equivalence) do English majors apply to rendering English idioms into Vietnamese?*
2. *What linguistic and cultural features are displayed in their Vietnamese translated versions?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of idioms

Al- Shawi and Mahadi (2012) stated culture plays a vital role when translating idioms. According to Borah and Sharma (2016) an idiomatic phrase or sentence consists of an idiomatic expression containing a special meaning in a special context. As a result, they suggested translators should rely on the cultures of both source and target languages in order to translate. Therefore, avoiding translating individual components in an idiom is a must.

Translation strategies

Krings (cited in Akbari, 2013) defined translation strategy as the ideas of translators who could be aware of some translation situations and found a way for tackling any problems that occur in a concrete situation. Loescher (cited in Akbari, 2013, p.33) simply understood it as “a potentially conscious procedure that translators found useful ways to solve the problem in translating a text, or any segment of it”. Besides, the translation strategy could be defined as a way which translators chose to make the target language become easier for readers to comprehend (Adelnia & Dastjerdi, 2011). Jaaskelainen (cited in Akbari, 2013, p.33) considered strategies as “a set of steps or processes that favor the acquisition, storage, and/or utilization of information”. Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-momani, Bani-Khair (2016) found that the majority of the participants had difficulties in understanding English idioms and that

there was lack of teaching translation strategies in the language teaching curriculum. Therefore, the participants could not use any strategies to guess the meaning of the idioms. Another view was taken by Nida (cited in Panou, 2013) that equivalence was the main strategy to translate texts, including formal and dynamic equivalence. Using the former was to stick to the original text in both form and content while using the latter aimed at keeping the meaning in the target text close to the audience. Furthermore, Filep (cited in Akbari, 2013) said that a strategy could be something a translator attempts to translate unfamiliar words and expressions in an acceptable way. According to Cuddon (cited in Romanenko, 2014), the sound techniques included alliteration, rhyme, assonance, anaphora, and epistrophe. To increase the memory of the target audience, Linghong (2006) pointed out that short sentences (fewer or equal eight syllables) strongly impressed readers and make them remember longer. Nguyen (2013) proposed some useful strategies dealing with the problem such as using more general words, translating based on cultural replacement, using usual words (less expensive words), paraphrasing related words or unrelated words, using loan words plus explaining and omitting some unimportant words.

Equivalence in translation

According to Filep (cited in Akbari, 2013), the translation strategies strongly linked with equivalence but what the equivalence was. As stated by Kashgary (2011), equivalence became the heart of the translation process. Simultaneously, he said equivalence could show abilities of translators in keeping some traits of the original text. Nida (cited in Kashgary, 2011, p.49) supported dynamic equivalence and explained “the concept of equivalence including three factors such as equivalence, nature, and closet”. Newmark (cited in Kashgary, 2011) argued that translators can use their knowledge of a language or a set of the language parameters such as syntax and vocabulary strategies to deal with a translated situation, but it is not totally parallel in the target source. As Pym put it (2007), equivalence only happened when both the source and target language share the same linguistic value to some degree.

Non - equivalence and culture-specific concepts

Baker (cited in Kashgary, 2011) stated that the big challenge in every translation process was an issue of finding equivalence for the target language. When discussing non - equivalence, researchers should focus on levels of linguistic uses in both languages. When comparing equivalence and non-equivalence, Snell-Hornby (cited in Kashgary,

2011) claimed that non-equivalence was something too inert, one-way communication. Hardly do two languages have exact equivalence, so it is not reachable. From the previous studies, Kashgary (2011) affirmed non-equivalence was a fact that happening in all languages and it has caused some untranslatable cases. Nguyen (2013) listed some typical kinds of non-equivalence relating to culture-specific concepts or differences in many linguistic aspects such as physical or interpersonal perspectives, expensive meanings, and forms. Chau and Chun IP (2014) found the social or cultural contexts of the related terms in both languages would be helpful for translating the both languages and that these terms should be learnt for translation purposes.

Localization

Worldwide, the majority of translators have faced the diversity of language, so they developed methods to translate clearly and helped readers to comprehend better. One of these methods was applying localization. As can be seen, domestication was seen as a translation instrument which limited the cultural gap between two languages. Moreover, avoiding confusion was one of the advantages of localization (Stepanova, 2017). As Venuti put it, localization is how a translator chose to deemphasize the degree of exoticness of the original text to bring the closeness of the translated language to the audience and therefore making it easier for them to understand the translated text (cited in Yang, 2010). In general, translators attend to fluency and coherency so that they can make people better comprehend and feel closer to the translated version as if it were written in their own language.

Foreignization

Despite its strangeness in the early time, foreignization was gradually accepted later. By contrast to localization, foreignization was a requirement of keeping foreign characteristics such as cultural and linguistic values to make the translated version sound exotic to the reader (Venuti, cited in Yang, 2010). Therefore, the target text brought the strangeness for target language readers.

METHODOLOGY

The participants and instrument

The participants were 20 English majors who are studying English as a foreign language at Tra Vinh University. They followed a four-year undergraduate English program and at the time of the study, they were

in their final year. There were about 80 English majors, but the researchers only chose 20 of them randomly to participate in the study to guarantee the in-depth analysis of their translated texts afterwards. Prior to this study, they had completed 12 credits of oral and written translation courses in the program, so their knowledge of the translation can be assumed to be fairly rich.

The instrument used in the study was a list of fifteen idioms and their popular Vietnamese versions from two educational websites: elight.edu.vn and iyoloenglish.edu.vn. Regarding the former website, it is an educational website whose mission is to share knowledge and to provide lots of online English courses for everyone, especially employees and students not having enough time to study English in language centers. By its convenience, nearly 7000 people visit this website every day and the number of page viewers reaches approximately 10000. In addition, it has been ranked as high as 95099 in the world. The latter is also about education, which offers many online courses and useful methods to learn English well. To help learners to study easily, this website is connected to Facebook and nearly 17000 people have been following it. From these results, it is believed that these websites are accredited to reliably collect data for the current study. In regard to these websites' credibility, a list of fifteen English idioms was extracted and was given to 20 final year English majors to translate into the Vietnamese language.

Research procedure and data analysis

All the participants were seated in a quiet room at school. They were told about the purpose of the meeting and that their translated texts were used for the study purpose without any other intentions. During the translating time, they were not allowed to surf the Internet or use any dictionary to look up meanings and they must work individually. They were seated at a comfortable space to prevent cheating. The researchers explained the task and gave the participants sufficient time to complete the translation task. Initially, 30 minutes were allotted, but then 5 additional minutes were given to encourage all tasks to be completed. Finally, the researchers thanked the voluntary participants and collected the translated paper sheets for analysis afterwards.

Then, the researchers use the Microsoft Excel to help count the number of the translated idioms that applied dynamic equivalence strategy, the formal equivalence strategy and none of the two. The researchers started their analysis from the first idiom translated by 20 student participants and then continued with the second idiom. This process

continued until the fifth translated idioms. Doing so, the researchers could count the number of the idioms using each of the strategy carefully and more accurately. The translated idioms which were nonsense or not sticking to the intended meanings will be left out in a separate column. Finally, we converted the number into the percentage. After having the number of the strategies used to translate each idiom, the researcher began to look for their use of linguistic features, mainly focusing on the correct use of the Sino-Vietnamese and Pure-Vietnamese meanings of the fifteen idioms.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The use of formal and dynamic equivalence strategies

Table 1

Percentage of using the two strategies by 20 participants when translating 15 English idioms in the websites: elight.edu.vn and iyoloenglish.edu.vn

English idioms	Percentage of acceptable idioms		Percentage of unacceptable idioms
	dynamic equivalence	formal equivalence	
Better safe than sorry	90%	10%	0%
One swallow doesn't make a summer.	65%	30%	5%
A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast.	75%	20%	5%
Call a spade a spade.	75%	15%	10%
When in Rome, do as the Romans do.	85%	15%	0
Beggar's bags are bottomless.	75%	20%	5%
A flow will have an ebb.	75%	20%	5%
As poor as a church mouse	70%	30%	0%
Every Jack has his Jill.	80%	20%	0%

English idioms	Percentage of acceptable idioms		Percentage of unacceptable idioms
	dynamic equivalence	formal equivalence	
Robbing a cradle	60%	0%	40%
An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth	65%	20%	15%
Neck or nothing.	50%	45%	5%
The proof of pudding is in the eating.	60%	15%	25%
One scabby sheep is enough to spoil the whole flock.	65%	30%	5%
Habit curses habit.	60%	0%	40%

Table 1 above showed the percentage of the two kinds of strategies that the students used in their translated works. Overall, the majority of the participants chose dynamic equivalence to translate the idioms. Standing at the second place is the participants' use of formal equivalence. Only a small number of the participants were unable to use the two strategies. The purposes of this first question analysis focused on equivalence in translation proposed by Filep, translation strategies by Kashgary, formal equivalence by Catford and dynamic equivalence by Nida.

More specifically, regarding the participants' translated texts, only the idiom "Neck or nothing." received half of the participants who used "dynamic strategy" while 45% of the participants chose formal strategy and the remaining 5% rendered the idiom as something nonsense or meaningless in the Vietnamese context. "Robbing a cradle." and "Habit curses habit." are the two idioms receiving no formal equivalence while 40% of the participants could not find the targeted meanings in the Vietnamese context. Surprisingly, 60% of the participants rendered these two idioms applying the dynamic strategy to target their meanings in the Vietnamese context albeit their strange use of words such as cradle and curses. In contrast, no one in the group could use formal equivalence appropriately in the Vietnamese meanings.

Overall, the result indicated that the group of the participants could use both of the strategies appropriately to translate most of the idioms into Vietnamese and it seemed that they mastered the two strategies well.

Linguistic and cultural features used to translate the idioms

Regarding the linguistic and cultural features, the findings revealed that the students tended to translate the texts using the Sino – Vietnamese, pure – Vietnamese, Localization mentioned by Stepanova and Foreignization by Venuti. Or what Chau and Chun IP said knowing the social – related cultural terms is crucial in translation (See the translated texts of the participants in the attached Appendix).

Better safe than sorry

Pure Vietnamese was mostly applied to this as “Cẩn thận vẫn hơn phải hối hận”. Two Sino-Vietnamese translations were used as “Cẩn tắc vô áy náy.”, “Cẩn tắc vô ưu”. The others were pure Vietnamese as “Phòng bệnh hơn chữa bệnh”, “Chú trọng an toàn, còn hơn nói lời xin lỗi”, “An toàn là bạn, tai nạn là thù”, “Thà an toàn còn hơn phải hối hận”.

One swallow doesn't make a summer.

The translated text “Một cánh én không làm nên mùa xuân” was most found. No Sino-Vietnamese was employed here. However, three unacceptable translated sentences were identified as “Con én thường lạc vào mùa hè/hạ”. Many students succeeded in replacing the kind of bird and season of the original source by their appropriate counterparts in the Vietnamese translated version.

A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast.

The majority used correctly pure Vietnamese to translate this idiom as “Nghèo cho sạch, rách cho thơm”, and standing the second place is “Cây ngay không sợ chết đứng”, which was also found to be accepted in this situation. No Sino-Vietnamese was found, but some unacceptable translations were “Thà ăn sạch sẽ, còn hơn ăn sáng đầy dơ bẩn” and “Một bữa ăn vội vàng còn hơn một bữa ăn sáng đầy dơ bẩn”.

Call a spade a spade.

No Sino-Vietnamese were discovered. Some other translated texts were acceptable, such as “Có sao nói vậy”, “Ăn ngay, nói thẳng”, “Sự thật mất lòng” and “Nói thẳng, nói thật”. Nonetheless, three unacceptable sentences were “Gọi sao là vậy”, “Gọi cái thuổng là cái thuổng đi” and “Lập lại những gì đã nói”. This idiom received almost similar results to

the above idioms in that many acceptable Vietnamese versions were perfectly used.

When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

Most of the participants used the dynamic equivalence and Sino-Vietnamese to translate the idiom as “Nhập gia tùy tục”. Interestingly, other translated versions were seen as pure Vietnamese and using the formal equivalence as “Sống ở Rome, hãy cư xử như những người dân Rome”, “Khi ở Rome, hãy cư xử như cách người Rome đã làm” and “Khi ở La Mã, hãy cư xử như cách người La Mã đã làm”.

Beggar’s bags are bottomless.

Over 50% of the participants used pure Vietnamese and dynamic equivalence to translate the idiom as “Lòng tham không đáy”. Another acceptable translation using pure Vietnamese, dynamic equivalence to translate the idiom was “Tham không chừng mực”. The other formal equivalence translation could be accepted as “Túi ăn mày thường không có đáy” although we, at first, may have to think of the meaning of this way of translation. However, one translated text as “Nghèo đến sạch cái túi” triggered a completely different meaning.

A flow will have an ebb.

This idiom posed some misunderstanding. Some thought it was translated as “Sông có lúc”, but the others as “người có lúc”. They referred to a different comparative subject. Many of them chose either of these to translate their text. No Sino-Vietnamese was found. But, in fact, “Sông có khúc, người có lúc” is the correct one. “However, many other translated texts using dynamic equivalence could be accepted as “Mỗi dòng sông đều có lúc suy yếu”, “Lúc lên, lúc xuống” and “Mỗi dòng sông đều có khúc ngoặt của nó”. To sum up, many linguistic characteristics used in the Vietnamese versions are very interesting and acceptable.

As poor as a church mouse

The majority used pure Vietnamese, dynamic equivalence to translate this idiom as “Nghèo rớt mồng tơi”. Interestingly, “Nghèo xơ, nghèo xác” was also found to be in favor for the translated version. The others used formal equivalence and therefore the language sounds so strange to the Vietnamese audience, such as “Nghèo như con chuột nhà thờ” and “Nghèo như chuột chùa”. Although the latter has the term “chùa” using the dynamic equivalence, which is common in Vietnam, it still sounds

unnatural.

Every Jack has his Jill.

Most of the participants purely used native Vietnamese and correctly translated the idiom as “Nồi nào úp vung nấy”. Interestingly, we found “Rau nào sâu nấy” as the translated version for the idiom. A few chose formal equivalence and pure Vietnamese to translate the idiom as “Mỗi chàng Jack đều có Jim của riêng mình”, “Mỗi Jack đều có Jill của mình” and “Mỗi Jack đều có Jill của anh ấy”. Nevertheless, they are so unclear in the Vietnamese society because of the foreign names “Jack” and “Jill”. These versions were seen to be so exotic to the Vietnamese audience. “Ngưu tầm ngưu, mã tầm mã” was the only Sino-Vietnamese was found to be so interesting here.

Robbing a cradle

The majority translated the text correctly as “Trâu già gặm cỏ non”. They could use pure Vietnamese and dynamic equivalence to translate the text. More interestingly, one translated version was found to be a simple explanation as “Quen một người nhỏ tuổi hơn” instead of a true translated text. It sounds so funny when hearing the translated version as “Già còn thích chơi trống bỏi”. Although this translation does not use Sino-Vietnamese, it still sounds unpopular with a majority of Vietnamese people. In contrast, some were vague and incorrect, such as “Giật nô”, “Bần cùng sinh đạo tặc”, “Cướp giật cái nô” and “Cướp một cái nô”.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth

More than half of the participants found the true meaning of the idiom “Ăn miếng trả miếng”, which is easy to understand. What is more, pure Vietnamese was also used correctly to translate the idiom as “Mắt đền mắt, răng đền răng”. Interestingly, Sino-Vietnamese was used correctly to translate the idiom as “Ăn đền, oán trả”, “Mạng đền mạng” and “Gieo nhân gì, gặt quả nấy”. However, “Răng môi lẫn lộn”, “Lá lành đùm lá rách” and “Gậy ông đập lưng ông” were not the right meaning of the original text.

Neck or nothing.

The majority could have a correct pure Vietnamese for the translated version of the idiom as “Vào hang cọp, mới bắt được cọp con”. Other linguistic features could be seen to be acceptable as they could address the meaning of the idiom as “Có hết hoặc không có gì” and “Một mắt, một

còn". Nevertheless, "Được ăn cả, ngã về không" was found to be slightly unfamiliar with possibly some groups in the Vietnamese society. "Tranh giành cổ chấp" was the only version found to be unacceptable. What intrigued us here is that "Neck or nothing" is hard to guess its literal meaning and its idiomatic meaning, but many of them could have the correct translation.

The proof of pudding is in the eating.

This English idiom was popularly rendered as "Đường dài mới biết ngựa hay". Interestingly, some other translated sentences were also acceptable as "Lửa thử vàng, gian nan thử sức", "Cách duy nhất thử pudding là ăn nó", "Muốn biết ngon không phải ăn thử mới biết", "Ăn bánh để thử" and "Bằng chứng nằm trong cái bánh". Noticeably, pudding was the only English word to remain in the translated version, but it sounds fine for those who know English or know what "pudding" is.

One scabby sheep is enough to spoil the whole flocks.

This English idiom was rendered as "Một con sâu làm sàu nồi canh" at the best choice of the majority. In addition, other acceptable versions could be seen as "Một con cừu bệnh hư cả đống len", "Một con cừu ghê làm hư cả đống len", "Một con cừu rã làm hư cả đống len", "Một con sâu phá hoại nồi canh ngon". However, "Một con cừu rã làm hư cả đống len" sounds so strange in the Vietnamese society.

Habit curses habit.

Plenty of the participants correctly translated the idiom as "Lấy độc trị độc" and some as "Quả quýt dày có móng tay nhọn". Noticeably, "Dĩ độc trị độc" is the only sentence sounds unfamiliar with some groups in the Vietnamese society because of its use of Sino - Vietnamese. Two students translated the idiom as "Cái nết đánh chết cái đẹp", which produced a different meaning from that of the source language. When looking at the literal meaning of the idiom, one is hard to know that it is about something to deal with a solution for something, but many of the participants were still able to have the correct translations.

Generally, it seemed that the majority of the students preferred to use the dynamic strategy to render their texts and that there seemed to be a relationship between utilization of this strategy and the Sino-Vietnamese preference. This can be seen as the indicator of their Sino-Vietnamese sophistication and their awareness of deploying appropriate translation strategies to satisfy many of the Vietnamese readers who prefer to listen to texts that sound more florid.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

The majority of the participants know the two strategies pretty well, “dynamic equivalence” and “formal equivalence”. This study can be seen as a mirror to reflect what they had learnt. Only the minority of idioms received inappropriate translated texts. Through this result, we can see that many students in this group have good knowledge of these two translation strategies and avoid using word-for-word translation. To discover what linguistic and cultural features were used in their translated texts (Vietnamese versions). It was interesting to find that many of the students participated in the study could choose appropriate Vietnamese (either pure Vietnamese or Sino Vietnamese) to translate the English idioms so that they could impress the Vietnamese audience. It also suggested that many of the students were familiar with these idioms in both English and Vietnamese contexts. Only a minority of the students could not figure out the true meaning of some of the idioms.

Implication and suggestions

It is seen that learning foreign languages is not the process to focus only on linguistic theory but the step to understand its culture and custom which are implied in idioms. The authors like Al-Khawaldeh, Jaradat, Al-momani, and Bani-Khair (2016) also supported this perspective, where translation strategies and figurative meaning of idioms should be highlighted and taught. Therefore, some suggestions can be made. First, flexibility is required for contributing to the success of translating English texts since the ultimate destination of a professional translator is to impress readers in their skills of bringing the original text into the target text without letting readers have a sense of a translated text. Secondly, future research on a larger sample should be conducted to have a more reliable result. Thirdly, there should be more research on bilingual translation of idioms to see if they match with each other. Finally, a research on untranslatability of idioms can be considered as an interesting topic, so future researchers can dive into it to see how the participants will cope with the problem.

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APPENDIX

These idioms are used for research's aim. The information is completely secret. Thank for your supporting.

- Translating these idioms from English to Vietnamese

1. Better safe than sorry.

...Cẩn thận vẫn hơn phải hối hận.....

2. One swallow doesn't make a summer.

...Một con én không làm nổi mùa xuân.....

3. A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast.

...Nghèo cho sạch, rách cho thơm.....

4. Call a spade a spade.

...Nói gài, nói xa, chẳng qua nói thật.....

5. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.

...Nhập gia tùy tục.....

6. Beggar's bags are bottomless.

...Lòng tham không đáy.....

7. A flow will have an ebb.

...Sông có lúc, người có lúc.....

8. As poor as a church mouse.

...Nghèo rất, mèo g. đ.đ.....

9. Every Jack has his Jill.

...Nai nào, ngựa này.....

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SYNTACTIC CONSTRUCTION OF NOMINALIZATION USED IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS RESEARCH ARTICLES BY NATIVE ENGLISH WRITERS AND VIETNAMESE COUNTERPARTS

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ABSTRACT

Nominalization is widely acknowledged as one of the most distinctive linguistic features of academic writing. Consequently, different aspects of nominalization have been addressed in research; however, there have been few studies exploring the use of state nominalization in Applied Linguistics research articles (RAs). The present study aimed to examine the similarities and differences in syntactic construction of nominalization in Applied Linguistics RAs written by Vietnamese and native English writers. This paper was a corpus-based comparative analysis of English state nominalization. The corpus consisted of 30 Applied Linguistics research articles written by Vietnamese researchers (VNRAs) and 30 research articles written by native English counterparts (NERAs), with a total of 322,763 running words and 10,830 tokens of state nominalization. The findings showed the significant differences in syntactic construction between two groups of writers. In particular, the native English writers have tended to employ modified nominalization in the head position of nouns, in subjective positions and in preverbal positions of passive constructions, which strongly establishes grammatical metaphor in academic writing. In contrast, Vietnamese writers have had a tendency to use nominalization in complement position of a noun phrase, in that-clause post-verbal position and in predicative positions, which express the lexical meanings of the words, not to establish grammatical metaphor.

Keywords: *applied linguistics, native English writers, nominalization, research article, Vietnamese writer*

INTRODUCTION

Discourse approaches are traditionally concerned with individual texts and the social conditions that consist of their consequence and production. They always associate language with “ways of acting, interacting, valuing, believing, feeling, and with bodies, clothes, non-linguistic symbols, objects, tools, technologies, times, and places” (Gee, 2011, p. 25). Although various approaches are related to discourse, there are two main themes that can be classified as the discourse-based analyses of academic writing. The first theme concerns discourse as social practice which includes the reception of the text from its social role and the importance of the writer and the text in building the context they occur. The second theme called “generic elements” or “moves” is “the recurring pattern of meanings in texts of similar types” (Charles, Diane, & Sasan, 2009, p. 1). According to Halliday (1994), academic writing has been seen as a social practice, and the productions of academic writings are under the influence of social context.

The early researchers tended to use discourse methods separately, the recent studies, however, have been conducted by employing corpora in combination with quantitative techniques. According to Swales (2004), corpus-based studies have not been examined in context of whole texts or in a specific social context. The investigation involving large amount of data from many sources and researchers provided information about frequency and distribution that comes from surface features of the language. The results show that corpus-based research plays an important role in clarifying the characteristics of academic purposes. In particular studies, Hyland (2005) examines many individual linguistic features and the results show that they change according to different genres or disciplines. A contrastive corpus investigation can be able to contrast the differences between two languages. Interested in this work area, International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE v2) was established by Granger et al. in 2009. This newest version consists of a large corpus from many essays written by students from L1 background with more than 4.5 million words that were collected from Europe, China, Japan, and South Africa. It has been used in many research projects and played as the basic tool not only for many MA and PhD theses but also for the development of EFL research. According to many studies based on ICLEv2, there are systematic changes in L2 depend on L1 production. Thus, there is a tendency to alter closely to pedagogical materials.

An investigation was carried out by Mauranen and Ventola (1996) in University of Warwick. Seventy-two voluntary overseas students were required to attend an academic writing course. The most common

problems were given that the difficulties they met in their writing process included metaphorical term. Moreover, when comparing the use of nominalization in abstract and research articles from the disciplines of computer science, linguistics, biology, and mechanical engineering, Holtz (2009) indicated that the most different is found in Linguistics articles. In particular, Linguistic articles contradict themselves in the use of nominalization, so this problem motivates the need to investigate not only how nominalization is employed in linguistics articles but also the comparison of the use of nominalization in linguistic articles written by native and non-native writers.

The comparison between written productions by non-native writers and native English writers raises many interests in linguistics. The differences from their writings and their meaning in linguistics features were the issues that need to be clarified. Practically, non-native writers encounter many difficulties when applying figurative languages in their writing. Language in their writing used as the 'lexical meaning', also known as the dictionary definition, rather than metaphoric. Littlemore et al. (2013) investigated the use of metaphor in two hundred essays written by Greek and German. Researchers used the Group (2007) Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP) and extended version MIPVU developed by Steen and Dorst (2010) to identify the metaphor in the essays. The result demonstrated that the metaphoric densities increase across the level from KET (5.8 percent) to CPE (13.7 percent). In the study of metaphor in native and non-native student writings, Claudia (2017) identified the use of metaphor in native speakers' writing occupied a higher percentage than non-native speaker's. In other words, the quantitative evidence shows that the lexical meanings of words are the most common form in the corpora (Chapetón, 2017). Arizavi (2005) found that nominalization is widely admitted as an valuable feature of scientific writing. However, there was an exception, the finding investigated by Baratta (2010) indicated that nominalizations do not play a remarkable role within academic writing in 'Language, Literacy and Communication' (LLC).

In short, nominalization 'is the single most powerful resource for creating grammatical metaphor' (Halliday, 2004b, p. 656). Although many investigations were conducted, there were few investigations that compare the use of nominalization between Vietnamese and native writers, especially in Applied Linguistics research articles. This study was carried out to explore the differences and similarities in terms of syntactic construction of nominalization, which is an important part of grammatical metaphor, in Applied Linguistics research articles written

by Vietnamese and native English writers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of nominalization

The definition of nominalization from different perspectives is presented as follows. Mathesius (1961) conducting a comparison of modern English and modern Czech revealed that there was a strong tendency of employing nominal, verbless phrases instead of dependent clauses in English. Because of this nominal tendency, the sentences in English to be more condensed than in Czech. Mathesius (1961, p. 338) term this nominal feature in English as "complex condensation of the sentence". He convinced that the most frequently used sentence condensers are present participle, infinitive, and gerund. A comparison of the following two sentences clarifies the process of complex condensation.

(1a) Would you mind me opening the window?

(1b) Would you mind if I closed the window?

(Mathesius, 1961, cited in Vachek 1976, p. 338)

Casule (1989) continued to analyze the functioning, meaning, structure and use of the verbal noun in the modern Macedonian standard language as one of the representatives of the process of nominalization. He pointed out that the verbal nouns in the modern Macedonian literary language are the central, highly regular, and most productive condensed exponent of the process of nominalization.

In *The Grammar of English Nominalizations* (1963), Lees claimed that nominalization is a transformation process. In this movement, nouns are transformed from their based verbs and noun phrases are transformed from their corresponding sentences. In the following sentences, *drawing* and *appointments* in (2b) and (3b) are derived from based verbs *draws* and *appoints* in (2a) and (3a). And noun phrases (2b) and (3b) are transformed from their corresponding sentences (2a) and (3a)

(2a) John *draws* the picture.

(2b) John's *drawing* the picture.

(3a) The committee *appoints* John.

(3b) The committee's *appointment* of John.

(Lees, 1963, pp. 67-68)

Halliday (1994) gave his theory of determining nominalization as a source of grammatical metaphor. Through this device, processes (realized as verbs) and properties (realized as adjectives) are restricted metaphorically as nouns; The following illustrations reveal more about this kind of metaphor.

(4a) He *cut* those trees in order to build a new house in that area.

(4b) The *cutting* of those trees helps him to build a new house in that area.

In these sentences, the verb "*cut*" is transformed into a noun "*cutting*". The verb "*cut*" is nominalized.

The present study relies on the definition of Halliday (1994), in brief, in terms of grammatical category, nominalization occurs when verbs and adjectives are transformed metaphorically as nouns. In terms of semantic function, nominalization most commonly happens when processes and properties function as things.

It can be defined as a process that a verb (the process) is transformed into a noun, and it can play the role of a noun (the thing) (Halliday, 1994). When we nominalize a process, it helps authors bring information into a nominal group. Instead of functioning as Process or Attribute in the clause, they function as Thing in the nominal group. For example:

is impaired by alcohol	alcohol impairment
they allocate an extra packer	the allocation of an extra packer
some shorter, some longer	of varying length
they were able to reach the computer	their access to the computer
technology is getting better	advances in technology

(Halliday, 2004)

Nominalization is also a device for the creation of grammatical metaphor. As mentioned above, Halliday (1994, p. 353) argues that nominalization is "a piece of wording that is metaphorical has as it were an additional dimension of meaning: it "means" both metaphorically and congruently" Here is an example for the comparison given by Halliday (2004).

(5a) The argument to the contrary is basically an appeal to the lack of synonymy in mental language.

This is a relational process clause. The lexical density is 8 (one clause, eight lexical items).

We might reword it as:

(5b) In order to argue that [this] is not so [he] simply points out that there are no synonyms in mental language.

Types of nominalization

As reported by Halliday and Matthiessen (1999), there are 13 types of grammatical metaphors. However, only four types of metaphors related to nominalization, they are selectively illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1

Types of nominalization

Types of nominalization	Semantic shifts / Grammatical shifts	Examples
Type I metaphor	from quality to entity/ from adjective to noun	<i>able – ability</i>
Type II metaphor	from process to entity / from verb to noun	<i>cut – cutting</i>
Type III metaphor	from circumstance to entity / from adverb /preposition. phrase to noun	<i>very fast - the speed</i>
Type IV metaphor	from relator to entity / from conjunction to noun	<i>so – the result</i>

As can be seen in Table 1, Type I is constructed by the semantic shift from quality to the entity, or grammatical shift from adjective to noun, for example, *able* → *ability*. Type II is built by the semantic shift from process to the entity, or grammatical shift from verb to noun, for instance: *cut* → *cutting*. Type III is realized by the semantic shift from circumstance to the entity or grammatical shift from adverb / prepositional phrase to noun, like *very fast* → *the speed*. Type IV is

constructed by the semantic shift from relator to the entity, or grammatical shift from conjunction to noun, like the word *so* → the result.

The present study focuses on the frequencies of nominalization by employing corpus-based method. Hence, only Type I (Adjectival nominalization) and Type II (Verbal nominalization) were investigated. The following table describes the list of typical suffixes in nominalizing process.

Syntactic construction

The term *construction* could be defined as "a characteristic formal pattern of syntactic categories or features, usually associated with some meaning and/or discourse function" (Svenonius, 2015, p. 2). The definition given above is intended to indicate syntactic form, that means the usual use of the word construction in syntax. Applying the bottom-up approach (Askehave & Swales, 2001) in combination with the functions of nominalization, in this study, it was intended to analyze the syntactic constructions of nominal phrases in Applied Linguistics research articles.

Arizavi (2015) classified the syntactic constructions into six categories. Each type of constructions assumes a different performance in text. There is a notice that only nominalization in head position of noun phrase, in subject position, and in pre-verbal position of passive construction express the ideational grammatical metaphor.

Table 2

Syntactic constructions of nominalization

Position	Purposes	Examples
In subjective positions and followed by copula verbs or main verbs	Express simple relationships with the predicative elements of the clauses	Improvements <i>were</i> necessary for selection and time allocation
In the head position of noun phrases	Indicated fuller recognition of the need for elaboration on the subjective element than the predicative element	Intuitive limited simplification of texts <i>may produce</i> linguistic features

Position	Purposes	Examples
In complement position of noun phrases in preverbal positions of the clause	Support to the head of the phrase, taking less process-bearing status than the head of the phrase	Engagement in interaction <i>necessitates</i> minimum levels of basic speaking
In preverbal positions of passive construction	Manipulate the text-recipient attitudes on the significance of the process carried out	Self-correction <i>was encouraged</i> in later stages of acquisition
In predicative positions	Exhibit a type of treatment is done to achieve some effect by the use of the nominalized form	While the reported Kapa value <i>demonstrated</i> agreement between
In that-clause post-verbal position	Functions as the accusative element of the preceding verb and the agentive element of the verb that follows it	Our findings <i>led us to draw the conclusion that</i> student empowerment is

(Arizavi, 2015, pp. 21-23)

Nominalization and Grammatical Metaphor

As indicated by Halliday (1999, p. 245), Ideational Grammatical Metaphor includes 13 types of shifts, consisting of nominalization as described in Table 3.

Table 3

Domains of elemental metaphors

Congruent:	Metaphorical			
	→ circumstance	→ Process	→ Quality	→ Thing
Quality → unstable				(1) instability
Process → absorb			(3) absorptiv e	(2) absorption

Congruent:	Metaphorical			
	→ circumstance	→ Process	→ Quality	→ Thing
Circumstance → instead of; on the surface		(6) replaces	(5) alternative; superficial	(4) replacement; surface
Relator for/because → [b, for/because a] so [a, so b]	(10) because of; as a result	(9) causes, proves; ensues, follows from	(8) casual; consequent	(7) cause, proof; result
∅		(12) occurs; imposes; does, has		(11) phenomenon, fact
Thing, circumstance → drive [be safe] decided [today]	(13) expansion of Thing <in Environment of 1 or 2> driver [safety] driver's [safety] [safety of the driver] today's [decision] [decision] of today			

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 1999, p. 245)

However, only four types of nominalization are obviously represented in the above table (in **bold**). The scope of the present study focuses on the derivation from verbs to nouns and adjectives to nouns.

To sum up, Halliday (1994) suggests that nominalization could be viewed as instances of metaphor, which gives a general theoretical framework to the analysis of nominalization, encourages us to contribute on the paradigmatic relations between the nominal unit and clausal units, and obligates us to remember that the nominalized or metaphorical structure creates a special combination of linguistic categories.

Previous studies

The differences in aspects of used nominalization in writing texts were engaged by many linguists. Therefore, there has been a tendency of analyzing this kind of process in recent years. Hadidi (2012) carried out a comparative study of IGM in Business and Political Texts. The corpus in his research consisted of three Political and three Business texts with the intention of analyzing how many instances of IGM were used, what the frequencies were, as well as the function of IGM in the corpus. After collecting all nominal phrases in the corpus, a combination between the

original and the unpacking versions were conducted. The findings pointed out that nominalizations were used in both of genres aimed at making the tone of the texts sounds denser, abstract, and formal. Kazemian (2013) adopted Hallidayan SFG to evaluate the employment of nominalization in 10 texts drawn from the magazines. The frequencies, the functions of nominalization as well as process types were analyzed. The study displayed that the tone of the texts was more abstract, technical and formal thanks to IGM along with nominalization. Arizavi (2015) considered the application of nominalization from local and international Applied Linguistics journals. The corpus in this study included 150 discussion sections from 75 English RAs from local Iranian journals in Applied Linguistic and 75 English RAs from international journals in the same field. It was found that the international RAs authors presented a higher frequency of nominalization than local authors. The result could be interpreted by the unawareness of the functions of nominalization, or the unfamiliarity between congruent and incongruent of the form-function.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The corpus employed in this discourse analysis study is the collection of Applied Linguistics research articles. Research article is “a significant rhetorical artefact, which acts to both conceal the contingency of knowledge and persuade readers to accept claims” (Hyland, 1998, p. 7). Otherwise, research articles represent a valuable resource for genre studies as evidenced by their continued use as data for investigating the writing conventions, social practices, and values of a discipline and research community (Bondi and Hyland, 2006).

The focus of this research lies on the qualitative and quantitative analysis of instances of nominalization in two corpora of research articles written by Vietnamese and native English writers, so mix-methods research including quantitative and qualitative data were employed in this study.

Corpora and Sampling method

As can be seen in Table 4, a total research articles of 60 was collected from 33 journals of Applied Linguistics which were divided into two sub-corpora: Vietnamese research articles and Native English research articles. There were 30 RAs in VNRA with 185,558 words, and 30 RAs in NERAs with 187,217 words. Despite the difference in the number of RAs between the two corpora, there was an equivalent number of words

(i.e. token).

Table 4

Corpora description

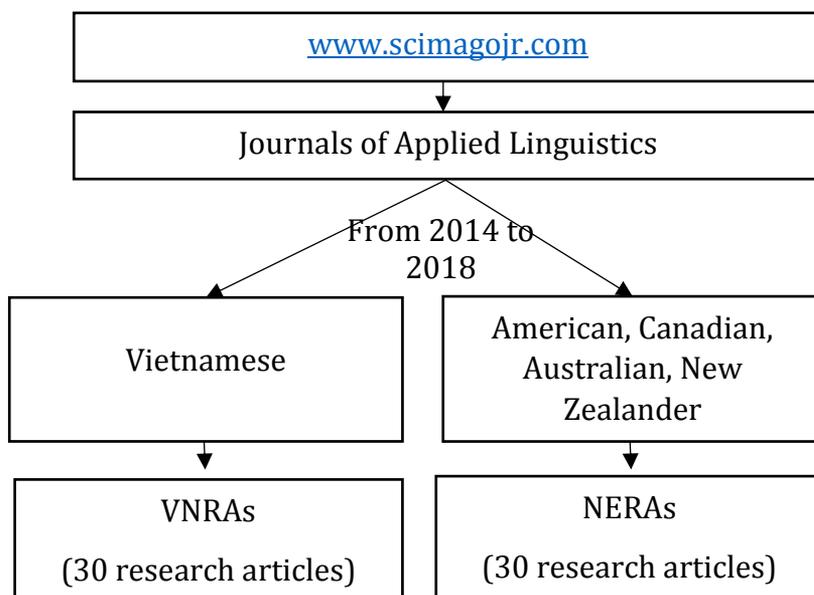
	Number of RAs	Number of words (token)
VNRAs	30	150,184
NERAs	30	187,217
Total	60	372,775

Data Collection

The data for this study including 60 research articles cited from the domain of Applied Linguistics from the years of 2014 up to 2018 was collected with the following steps.

Figure 1

The data collection



Firstly, the source of the two corpora was selected from www.scimagojr.com. In this website, there is a wide range of journals with various disciplines including Linguistics and Language. In order to

download RAs from on-top websites, researchers have to subscribe to each article, whereas free-of-charge RAs were selected from middle-top websites. In this study, most of the research articles were downloaded from the middle-top websites due to limited financial support; however, the researcher only chose the journals with high h-index. Secondly, from the selected journals, research articles in the field of Applied Linguistics were collected. Lastly, 60 downloaded RAs were classified based on author's biodata. The first corpus (VNRAs) included RAs written by Vietnamese. The second corpus (NERAs) contained RAs written by native English speakers. Sixty RAs were coded NE1 through NE30 for the articles in NERAs and VN1 through VN30 for the articles in VNRAs.

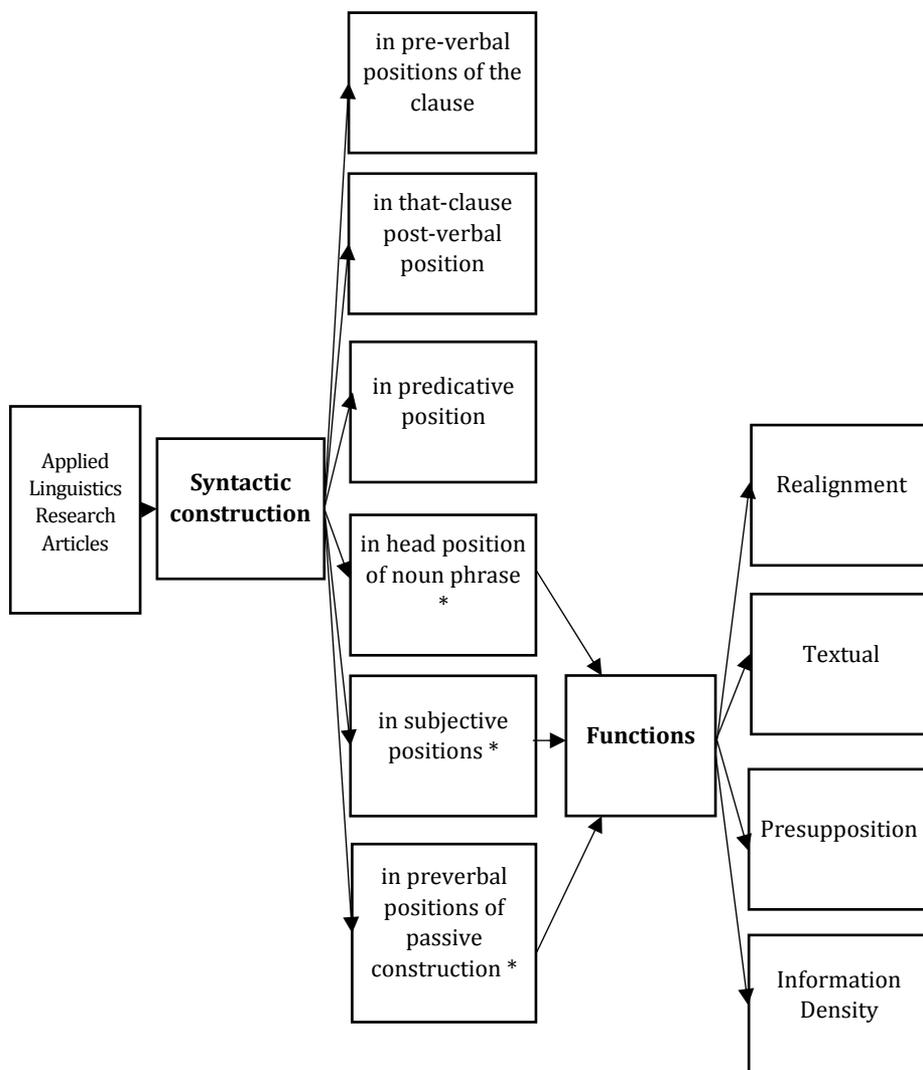
Data analysis

As mentioned earlier, both the quantitative and qualitative data were collected and put in two corpora: NERAs and VNRAs.

This study focused on the syntactic constructions of RAs written by Vietnamese corresponded with the language of the sample international corpus. The recognition of the clauses was based on the definition given by Halliday (1994). Because of the limitation of time, only 500 single clauses in each corpus containing nominalization in the sample would be selected and analyzed manually. The clauses were classified into six types of syntactic constructions given by Arizavi (2015), who defined that if the nominalizations place in the following positions, such as in the head position of a noun phrase, in subjective positions, and in preverbal positions of passive construction, they express metaphorical terms. This was also the material of the next process. Afterward, a comparison between two sub-corpora would be conducted, this enabled us to identify the similarities and differences in the use of nominalization in each rhetorical move.

Figure 2

The data analysis procedure



Categories that marked (*) indicate Grammatical Metaphor

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

With the adoption of theories proposed by Arizavi (2015), the syntactic construction of nominalization was classified into six categories. Quantitatively, native English and Vietnamese writers used these six

categories in different ways, i.e., there were significant differences in how they created metaphorical terms.

Table 5 compares the employment in syntactic constructions of nominalization for six categories in VNRA and NERA. It is clear that the use of nominalization in category 5 was a noticeably larger proportion than the others, reaching over 46.8% in VNRA and 36.6% in NERA. The occurrence of nominalization in category 6 was the least of all, only 5.8% and 8.0% of nominal forms appeared in VNRA and NERA respectively.

Table 5

Syntactic construction of nominalizations in VNRA and NERA

Category	VNRA		NERA	
	F	%	F	%
Category 1* (nominalization in head position of noun phrase)	60	12.0	80	16.0
Category 2 (nominalization in pre-verbal positions of the clause)	75	15.0	47	9.4
Category 3* (nominalization in subjective positions)	49	9.8	106	21.2
Category 4 (nominalization in that-clause post-verbal position)	55	11.0	47	9.4
Category 5 (Nominalization in predicative position)	234	46.8	180	36.0
Category 6* (nominalization in preverbal positions of passive construction)	27	5.4	40	8.0
Total	500	100	500	100

Category 1: Nominalization in head position of noun phrase

In this category, to show fuller attention of the need for the subjective element, modified nominalization stands in the head position of noun phrase. In the following examples, the complement of the noun phrase in the subjective position has been underlined. The nominalization in this category gives information on the process that conducted on the complement to indicate the result announced after the main verb of the clause.

Generally, the rich, dynamic **environment** of the internship *appears* to present preservice teachers many challenges and uncertainties through which they can develop resilience, remove their unrealistic assumptions or expectations and become familiar with real-life practices of the profession.

(VN24)

The **implications** of this study for teacher educators *are* the formative assessment potential of the standards requires pedagogical consideration in professional experience alongside their more commonly understood role as summative assessment criteria.

(NE20)

Category 2: Nominalization in pre-verbal positions of the clause

In pre-verbal positions of the clause, nominalized form in complement position of a noun phrase plays the role of supporting the head of the phrase. As a result, nominalization in this category "taking less process-bearing status than the head of the phrase" Arizavi (2015, p.22). In the following examples, the phrase "*in communicating*" narrows the scope of "*inadequacy*". Other examples are given to clarify this fact clearly.

This lack of confidence and related perceived inadequacy **in communicating** in English *was*...

(NE23)

The expression of some degree of **dissatisfaction** or discontent with a particular situation by a participant *has examined* with respect to whether it developed into troubles talk or a complaint.

(NE23)

Category 3*: nominalization in subjective positions

In this category, a nominalized form was recognized in subjective positions and it was followed by linking verbs or main verbs. This group of nominalization was mainly used to indicate simple relationships with the predicative elements of the clauses.

Curriculum **development** from this perspective *starts* with a first-stage focus on input – when decisions about content and syllabus are made;

(NE02)

The one **exception** is the LINC context where lack of skills was identified as a greater challenge than support

(NE03)

Category 4: nominalization in that-clause post-verbal position

Nominalizations in that-clause post-verbal position functions play the roles of the accusative element of the preceding verb and the agentive element of the verb that follows it. Several verbs *like illustrate, conclude, imply, demonstrate, etc.* are the main verbs in dependent clauses.

From studies into the impact of teacher research more generally, some authors have concluded *that* teachers' **engagement** in research has the potential to be transformative.

(NE13)

On that matter, Tsiplakides and Keramida (2010) point out *that* the **expectations** teachers have on their students strongly influence students' success or failure on their learning process

(NE30)

Category 5: Nominalization in predicative position

Nominalization in predicative positions was also the most common in both corpora. This type of nominalized forms functions as accusative elements that the authors chose to demonstrate a type of treatment done to achieve some effect by the use of the nominalization:

We *address* the other potential **contributions** this work can make to inform practice, policy, and research.

(NE10)

This study aims to *gain* an in-depth **understanding** on this issue by investigating English teachers' perceptions and practices on ICC in ELT in the context of Vietnamese southern tertiary institutions,

(VN28)

Category 6*: Nominalization in preverbal positions of passive construction

In this last category, nominalized forms stand in preverbal positions of passive construction. Nominalization in the subjective non-agentive position "serves to manipulate the text-recipient attitudes on the significance of the process carried out" Arizavi (2015, p.22). In the following examples, the author chose this kind of nominalization to ignore the role of participants from the intentional act, and at the same time, take advantage of passivization.

The argument for **replication** *has been made* exceedingly well by Makel and Plucker

(NE09)

On the other hand, certain **limitations** to integrating cultural approach to English teaching *are revealed* as the lecturers' cultural knowledge, the availability of native English speakers, time allowance for culture teaching, as well as the system of education which is not of intercultural education.

(VN28)

DISCUSSION

According to Halliday (1985), there are two kinds of expressions: congruent (non-metaphorical) and incongruent (metaphorical). He also defined Ideational Grammatical Metaphor (IGM) as the material which includes process types and nominalization. The exploration of the functions of nominalization in both corpora was conducted to clarify the differences between Metaphorical Expression and Non-metaphorical Expression. Under the aspect of nominalization's functions, nominal processes in the text were examined in order to point out the purpose of authors.

Concerning syntactic construction of nominalization, Gerot and Wignell (1995) stated that only ideational meaning, meanings about things and ideas, is the recognition of grammatical metaphor. According to Arizavi

(2015), the first 1,000 nominal phrases of two corpora were determined and then classified into six categories in order to examine how nominalizations used in collected RAs create metaphorical meaning. Associated with Arizavi's (2015) positions, it is obvious to notice that only nominalizations in Category 1 (in head position of noun phrase), Category 3 (in subjective positions) and Category 6 (in preverbal positions of passive construction) strongly satisfy the intention of nominal phrase, which is to construct grammatical metaphor.

This study aimed at considering syntactic construction of nominal phrases in both corpora (i.e., NERAs & VNRA). The results of this study indicated significant differences in the purpose of using nominalization in VNRA and NERAs. Halliday and Martin (1993) described nominalization as the grammatical metaphor since a process is derived into a more abstract experience. The nominal process is the indicator of text formality, the more formal the text employs, the higher the lexical density of a text is. Both Vietnamese and native English writers tended to raise the higher lexical density of a text under the help of Information Density function. This was also the most used function in both corpora. This result may be explained by the fact that Grammatical Metaphor, as well as nominalization, is one of the elements that support the higher degree of lexical density in written English, which given by Halliday (1985, 1994).

The second most used function in NERAs was "realignment function". Native English writers attempted to ignore the role of participants so as to create higher concentration of the experiential meaning rather than personal pronouns. Under the help of the third most purpose, textual function, a large amount of information could be replaced by an abstract phenomenon. Interestingly, there was a special function that only existed in NERAs, which realized as Presupposition function. Native English writers gave their opinion about a previous issue by using nominalization. Contrastingly, Vietnamese writers applied textual function as the second most used function in their writings. They sum up previous ideas by giving new packed information. Then, there were only 18 times of realignment function which aims at achieving abstraction and objectification in the writings. However, there was no instance of nominalization as Presupposition in their writings.

The reason for this finding can be explained based on seven features of scientific English given by Halliday and Martin (1993) including interlocking definitions, technical taxonomies, special expressions, lexical density, syntactic ambiguity, grammatical metaphor, and semantic discontinuity. He stated that the item lexical density was the

by-product of Grammatical Metaphor. This finding also supports the studies of Hadidi (2012) and Kazemian(2013) that nominalization, as well as grammatical metaphor, enhance the tone of the text more dense, abstract, technical and formal. As the earlier discussion, non-native writers tended to use lexical meaning in their writing rather than metaphorical terms. This tendency might be familiar with how they create a textual function which uses nouns to sum up the previous phrases. Possibly, this is the reason why the frequency of textual function was much higher than the realignment function.

It could be concluded that both Vietnamese and native English authors seem to share the quantitative similarity in the use of nominalization. However, in terms of ideational function, there are some differences in respect of employing metaphorical expressions. This might be due to the fact Vietnamese writers are not as fluent and efficient in English as the native writers. As Wenyan (2012) claims, it seems that the use of metaphorical terms is more typical of the language of native English speakers than writers use English as a second or foreign language like Vietnamese.

Interestingly, the percentages of nominal phrases used in RAs written by native English authors were higher than Vietnamese's once in the scope of Category 1, 3 and 6. The total number was 226 phrases (45.2%) in NERAs and only 136 phrases (27.7%) in VNRAs. In terms of the other categories, Vietnamese writers employed the higher percentages of nominal phrases in their RAs. It can be seen from table 5 that Vietnamese journalists mainly conducted nominalization in pre-verbal positions of the clause, that-clause post-verbal position and in predicative positions.

From the discussions above, a conclusion could be drawn that there is a difference in the use of nominalization in Applied Linguistics research articles written by Vietnamese and native English writers in spite of insignificant difference in the frequency of nominalization used in the two corpora. The Vietnamese authors tend to employ lexical meaning rather than metaphorical expression in their research articles. In contrast, the native English writers use nominalization terms in their writing effectively. This finding is in line with the studies of Jeannette Littlemore et al. (2013) and Chapeton (2017). They argued that the lexical meanings of words are the most common form in the corpora of non-native speakers' writing, whereas the employment of metaphorical term in native English writers made up the higher percentages.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

Nominalization is one of the most important grammar structures causing a higher lexical density as well as GM in scientific texts. The main goal of the current study is to adopt a systemic functional approach to investigate the use of English nominalization that may be present in Applied Linguistics research articles written by Vietnamese and native English authors. Through the analysis of 60 RAs, the present study determines the frequency of nominalization used in both VNRA and NERA if there are any similarities and differences in RAs written by Vietnamese and native English writers. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, the first 1,000 nominalized phrases' positions, as well as their syntactic functions were explored.

One of the most considerable findings of this study is that there are significant differences in syntactic construction between two groups of writers. In particular, native English writers have tended to employ modified nominalization in the head position of the nouns, in subjective positions and in preverbal positions of passive constructions. As mentioned earlier, these kinds of nominal phrases strongly establish grammatical metaphor in academic writing. Contrastingly, Vietnamese writers have had a trend of using nominalization in complement position of a noun phrase, in that-clause post-verbal position and in predicative positions which express the lexical meanings of the words, not to establish grammatical metaphor. That means that Vietnamese writers tend to use default nominalizations (Baratta, 2010).

Implications

The findings of this research provide insights for making some implications that may be suggested for Vietnamese EFL teachers, learners, and journalists.

First, both teachers and learners should pay more attention to employ not only textual but also ideational and interpersonal. The relationship and interaction between these three metafunctions is the basis of the whole model of systemic functional linguistics (Thompson, 1996). Furthermore, Fadda (2012) indicated that the main writing problem was grammar, the present study, thus, raises students' awareness of using nominalization as well as grammatical metaphor proficiently. Nominalizations affect the academic text in many ways: condense information, present texts in a less personalized way, and devote to the formality of the text. Hence, EFL learners should use nominalization

appropriately.

Second, it may have a remarkable contribution to Vietnamese writers' awareness of the importance of nominalization in academic writing. It is necessary for them to have an awareness of how to take all advantages of forms and functions of nominalization. Moreover, they have the ability to adapt with standard ways of using different types of nominalization in their writing. As a result of using nominalization, writers may prevent unnecessary repetitions of the same word and ignore the role of participants from the intentional act, that means their writings become more abstract and formal.

Limitations of the study

Firstly, the major limitation of this study is the quite small size of the corpus used for analysis. The corpora include 30 RAs written by Vietnamese and 30 RAs written by native English writers in Applied Linguistic domain with 372,775 tokens in total. With the small size of the corpus, the findings may not generalize the whole context of the research objectives.

Secondly, the study has just addressed the use of the state nominalization, not the others kind of nominalizations such as agentive nominalization, instrumental nominalization, manner nominalization, locative nominalization, objective nominalization, reason nominalization and so on.

Thirdly, the present study only focuses on the syntactic construction of 1,000 first identified nominalization within analyzing the function in head position of noun phrase, subjective positions, and preverbal positions of passive construction. The function of nominalization in the other positions such as pre-verbal positions of the clause, that-clause post-verbal position, and predicative position are not mentioned.

Recommendations for further research

Based on the limitations of the study, future researchers need to employ the corpus size and explore the use of nominalization as well as the metaphorical term in other disciplines such as Computer Science, Biology, Mechanical Engineering and so on. In addition, it is hoped that other types of English nominalization such as agentive nominalization, instrumental nominalization, manner nominalization, locative nominalization, objective nominalization, reason nominalization, and so on should be examined based on the systemic functional approach. Moreover, nominalization in pre-verbal positions of the clause, that-

clause post-verbal position, and predicative position need to be under in-depth investigation. Finally, further studies may address other functions of nominalization used in research articles.

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THE RECIPE FOR 2ND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT: CONNECTING SLA THEORY WITH CLASSROOM PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

English teachers draw upon a variety of classroom practices and activities, usually developed from a combination of theoretical knowledge from teacher training, and practical experience from daily classes. However, it is also important to consider the psychology of the learner, both linguistically and developmentally. Second language acquisition (SLA) looks at the processes for learning an additional language. In this paper, the author seeks to provide some awareness for teachers of the 'why' behind their practices, rather than the 'what'. The author examines a number of theories and studies in order to start to point towards an ideal combination of factors that bring about second language development. Of particular concern are the roles of input, interaction, output and practice, and how they come together to facilitate collaboration and noticing in learners. The author then considers what implications this exploration has had on his own knowledge and teaching practices, and in turn, provides some considerations for fellow teachers of English.

Keywords: *second language acquisition, input, interaction, output, practice*

INTRODUCTION

Lourdes Ortega (2009) refers to 'ingredients' that she suggests are necessary for second language (L2) development (p63). There is much debate over the ideal combination of factors that brings about second language acquisition (SLA). There are some who believe that languages are acquired implicitly, only through subconscious processing of input (communicative exposure) - arguably none more so than Stephen Krashen (1977,1983,1991). There are others who have suggested that more cognitive, analytical, and even collaborative processes are also necessary (Swain, 1985; Long, 1980; Schmidt, 1983; Mackey 1999;). While I agree with people such as Michael Long (1981) that input is essential in L2 development, I believe that merely exposure to an L2 is

insufficient to bring about acquisition, other than in very young learners. It is my view that there are, indeed, other factors that contribute to successful L2 development. Input, interaction and output (as well as the 'noticing' they result in), all play a vital role. In addition, the value of practice cannot be ignored. While the aim of this review is not to identify the perfect recipe, the theory and evidence behind some possible ingredients will be explored, before reflecting on how understanding them might affect my pedagogical approaches.

Background

The notion that exposure to language input is necessary for the acquisition of a second language would not be met with much, if any criticism. Stephen Krashen, whose theories have shaped language pedagogy of the last 40 years or more, believes that it is the *only* thing needed for second language learners to acquire an L2. In his 'monitor model', Krashen (1982), theorises about various conditions necessary for L2 acquisition. He claims it is language input that can be understood by the learner (comprehensible input) that leads to acquisition, provided that the learner is open to the input, or as Krashen puts it, has a 'low affective filter', and that the input needs to be pitched at a slightly higher level than the learners' current performance ability in order for the L2 to be acquired. He calls this slightly higher level 'interlanguage plus one' (see Gass and Selinker, 2008 for a detailed overview of interlanguage). Krashen argues that while explicit instruction might bring about learning, it does not result in acquisition. According to Krashen's distinction between these terms (Krashen 1982), acquisition is said to happen implicitly, much like the way children acquire their first language. A native speaker of English, for example, would likely be unable to explain why they use the present perfect to talk about life experiences - they just do. In contrast, he claims that learning is an intentional and explicit process, focusing more on declarative knowledge (*"This is the present perfect [subject + have + past participle]. We use it to talk about life experiences - things we have done"*). Krashen also claims that the processes by which these two outcomes are achieved are unconnected; that language forms learned in the classroom under formal conditions, cannot then be acquired; and that production and practice do not bring about acquisition, but are the result of it. That is, the ability to produce language comes from the acquisition gained only via comprehensible input. This notion is problematic, not least because while Krashen's distinction is based on clear differences, such as explicit vs implicit knowledge, and declarative vs procedural knowledge, it seems 'acquisition' and 'learning' are used

interchangeably by other researchers. If a speaker of an L2 is able to communicate fluently, drawing on proceduralised knowledge, then the language they are producing is said to have been acquired (the use of the term 'acquisition' for this review will follow the latter interpretation).

The limitations of input

Before discussing the view that exposure to an L2, alone, is unlikely to facilitate acquisition, it must be conceded that there is evidence in support of Krashen's claims. A whole approach to language teaching pedagogy has come about that applies Krashen's theory - the 'Natural Approach' (Krashen and Terrell, 1983) - which simply provides input for L2 learners to acquire a language implicitly. Taking an anecdotal example of a hypothetical true-beginner English class, 'i+1' could be observed in the teaching of the most basic structures, such as 'My name is...' and 'I play tennis. The teacher would not explain anything, such as the function of the pronoun 'my', but would simply provide input slightly beyond the level of the learner. The affective filter would be lowered by keeping the lesson very simple, and focused on common and relatable topics. The new vocabulary item 'tennis' could be made comprehensible using a picture or mime. However, in moving the lesson on to the past tense, some holes in Krashen's theory might emerge. Continuing with the tennis example, the time adverbial 'yesterday' could be clarified through visual and contextual aids, such as a calendar. However, the addition of the *-ed* inflection on the verb might present a possible problem for the learners. The regular past tense marker, in this case, is non-salient and the sentence would be understood with or without it, and therefore the learners may acquire the language incorrectly, as might be evidenced in the inaccurate production of the form. In this case, the teacher (or a classmate) would need to provide some form of negative feedback to draw attention to the inaccuracy, and likely an explicit explanation of what was wrong, and what is correct.

While anecdotes are useful in raising questions, it is necessary to seek some hard evidence. A good place to start in pointing out problems with the idea that input alone is sufficient for SLA, is with Richard Schmidt's (1983) longitudinal study of Wes, a Japanese immigrant to Hawaii, who learned English naturally in a non-classroom context during his time living there. Schmidt observed that Wes became quite proficient in meeting the communicative needs of everyday conversation but that, in contrast, he was drastically lacking in accuracy, and was reliant on context markers to make the message clear (e.g. time adverbials) rather than accurate language. This presented problems for Wes, as in example 1.

Wes: today I'm buy cigarettes
RS: do you mean this morning or now?
Wes: not I'm bought / I'm buy! (annoyed tone)

(field notes, December 1980)

Example 1. (Schmidt 1983, p166)

If, as Krashen posits, input is the only requirement for achieving proficiency (Krashen 1991 p410), Wes should have been able to become more native-like in his production of English.

'Noticing'

A particular phenomenon, not present in Wes' interactions with his interlocutors was noticing it. Hypothesised by Schmidt (1990) to raise awareness in an L2 learner of the gap between their interlanguage and the target language, noticing is the learner's awareness of their inability to produce a new language form, which prompts the learner to consciously seek to understand and apply this new form. This process is intentional, and therefore takes a different form from implicitly processing the input. In Wes' example above, the clarification request from his interlocutor prompted him to try to consciously reformulate, despite the lack of success. According to Schmidt, Wes did not engage in 'conscious learning strategies' (p172) and significantly favoured meaning over form. As a result, he lacked 'attention to the language code' (Ortega 2009, p 58). From Wes' perspective as long as his message was understood, the accuracy (or lack of) his communication was irrelevant.

While Wes' case serves to demonstrate that input alone is not sufficient for SLA, it is necessary to focus on some research that (a) is more relevant to language pedagogy - Wes did not 'learn' English in a classroom - and (b) points to what else, if not input, leads to L2 acquisition.

The benefits of interaction

Interaction is thought by many to be a key factor in SLA. Long's (1981) 'Interaction Hypothesis' has been the subject of much focus over the last 40 years. Briefly, his view is that comprehensible input is brought about by the modifications to the language (Ellis 1991) (e.g., following a clarification request) and that negotiation for meaning, brought about by interaction (and the negative evidence it can provide), is also necessary. In order to put Long's theory to the test, Alison Mackey (1999) sought to address the question of whether conversational interaction could bring about SLA. She conducted an empirical study of

the benefits of interaction on the acquisition of question formation in English. The participants in the study were paired with a native speaker and had to ask questions in order to carry out 'information gap' tasks, which were comparable to those seen in language classrooms - picture differences, story completion, and picture sequencing. The subjects were divided into four main groups: 'Interactors', who could go about the tasks in a completely open manner; 'observers', who simply observed the interactors but were not allowed to join in with the interaction; 'scripteds', who could ask the same questions as the interactors, but to whom the NS responses were bound by a set, pre-modified script; and a 'control' group, who received no treatment, in order to account for any 'training effect' resulting from the activities. Mackey concluded that modifications resulting from interaction contributed to the development of the L2. In fact, the more involved the students were, in the negotiations for the correct form, the higher the level of development, both in terms of the level of complexity of the questions, and also the frequency of the more complex questions. The interactors saw significantly more development of 'level stage increases' than the other groups (see Table 1), and they also produced more high-level questions (see figure 1)

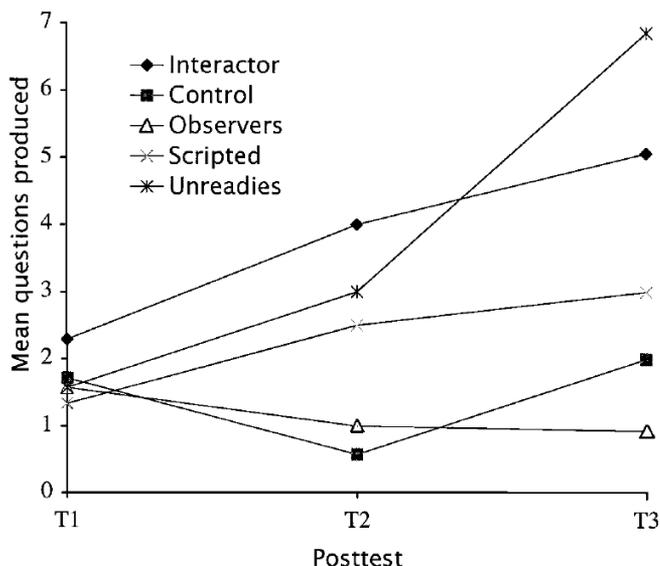
Table 1

Sustained stage increase by group (Mackey 1999 p571)

	Interactors	Controls	Interactor unreadyies	Scripteds	Observers
Percent Ratio	71% (5/7)	14% (1/7)	86% (6/7)	16% (1/6)	57% (4/7)

Figure 1

Increase in questions at stages 4 and 5 produced by each group in the posttests (Mackey 1999, p 573)



These findings are useful in demonstrating the benefits of interaction - providing opportunity for negative feedback, prompting negotiation for meaning, and modified output. However, in my view it falls short of being directly applicable to the classroom context, as it involves the observation of native-speaker (NS) and non-native-speaker (NNS) dyads, which do not often occur in the classroom. It is only useful to compare with genuine, equivalent pairs in the real world, but as pointed out by Ali Shehadeh (2003), negative evidence provided in real-world settings is rare - even in his study on the role of output and hypothesis testing on internalisation of L2 knowledge, the NS interlocutors involved presented no challenge to the poorly formed output by their NNS partners (p165). Of course, in a classroom, the teacher might 'recast' the inaccurate utterance in the correct form, or elicit this from the student by way of a prompt, but this one-on-one interaction between student and teacher makes up a small proportion of a typical lesson.

The role of collaborative output

While Mackey's findings help to support the notion that output and interaction are valuable in their contribution to SLA, it seems necessary

to turn to research that is even more applicable to the classroom and looks at the interaction between students in NNS-NNS dyads. Another prominent SLA researcher, whose experience of L2 learners in an immersive language learning environment has highlighted the limitations of Krashen's theory, is Merrill Swain. She spent a number of years working with native English immersion students of French in Ontario. She observed that while native English students learning alongside their French native peers were communicatively proficient and capable, they lacked the accuracy necessary to be considered native-like. She put forward the 'Pushed Output Hypothesis', which suggests that by producing language (output), learners notice the gap between what they are able to say and what they want to say, prompting them to analyse previous input and their current interlanguage (Swain and Lapkin 2001), and are pushed to reformulate their message into a more target-like construction.

In an empirical study of some of the aforementioned students, Swain and Lapkin (2001) explored the effect of output on learners' attention to form, through collaborative tasks. Students were divided into two groups and through a pretest, treatment, post-test design, were required to work together to complete a short written narrative. Pairs in one class had to produce their narrative from a jigsaw (information gap) sequence of pictures in which each student had only half the story, while those in the other group had to produce theirs from an audio text, provided in the form of a Dictogloss activity (the text is played a fixed number of times then the listeners have to reproduce what they have heard). The collaborative dialogue that emerged between pairs in both groups, revealed that language related episodes (LREs) occurred as a result of noticing gaps. Swain and Lapkin (2001) define LREs as 'any part of a dialogue where students talk about language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct their language production' (p104). Many of these LREs resulted in more accurate production of the intended message. (see example 2).

Example 2. (Swain and Lapkin 2001)

(Class J, Pair 4)

B: Yvonne va à l'école.

(Yvonne goes to school.)

A: Se part à l'école.

(Yvonne leaves [uses non-existent pronominal form] for school.)

B: Oui. Elle . . . se marche

(She walks [uses non-existent pronominal form])

A: Se part, parce que . . .

(Leaves [uses non-existent pronominal form], because)

A: Est-ce que c'est part ou se part?

(Is it leaves or leaves [in the non-existent pronominal form])

B: Part.

(Leaves.)

A: Part? Just part?

(Leaves? Just leaves?)

B: Ya.

A: Ok. Yvonne part à l'école, um . . .

(Yvonne leaves for school)

Again, if merely input is sufficient for L2 acquisition, then these immersion students should have reached the same competency as their native peers, but they did not. A very recent study by Laura Collins and Joanna White (2019) observed the collaborative dialogue of students in 'intact' classrooms, visiting three classes of French speaking students of English in their natural classroom environment. This study also found that LREs occurred, and that negotiation for meaning took place. The majority of LREs resulted in correctly resolved production of accurate language (see table 2).

Table 2

LRE resolution by language feature

Language feature	% resolved	Raw totals
Vocabulary	71%	345
Grammar	84%	73
Pronunciation	84%	31

The number of LREs concerned with vocabulary are clearly higher in the case of Collins' and White's study. However, an interesting observation evident in both studies, is that explicit attention to form (grammar) provided by the teacher, prior to the interaction phase, resulted in more negotiation concerned with grammatical accuracy, perhaps because the declarative knowledge allows awareness of what should be correct. If knowledge were implicit, it would just *feel* wrong, but it would not be possible to have a conversation about why - LREs would not be possible.

The value of practice

The research discussed thus far begins to create a picture of what is necessary to bring about second language acquisition - input, output, interaction, attention, noticing, and negotiation for meaning - but in all the examples of dialogue produced by the test subjects, the participants were not fluent. There were many hesitations, self- and peer-corrections, and the resulting conversations were far from native-like. This observation brings the focus onto the value of practice. As mentioned earlier, Krashen claims that production and practice are possible because of acquisition. Robert DeKeyser (2007), takes a firmly opposing view of SLA. He has spent a large amount of effort exploring the connections between skill acquisition theory and language learning. He takes the view that learning a language is a collection of skills that can be learned explicitly, before being automatised. He posits that declarative knowledge learned through explicit instruction, or explicit attention to input, can be proceduralised, and subsequently through further and extensive practice, automatised.

Skills, and subskills, that have been internalised exist in the procedural memory (the 'hard-drive' of information that we draw on in order to carry out tasks, while new skills require the attention of the working memory (the 'processor chip' we use to think about what we are doing). In the case of developing an L2, practice gradually moves new language knowledge to the procedural memory, allowing attention to, and analysis of new skills by the working memory. Once again taking as an example the use of the present perfect, a learner would use their working memory to produce the structure for life experiences, initially under fairly controlled practice conditions, before gradually proceduralising its use through extensive, freer practice. The learner might then come across its use for talking about completing a to-do list. The fact that the fundamentals of the structure have already become procedural knowledge means that (a) the new aspect of the skill is relatively easy to process, and (b) that there is ample 'processing power' available to take on this new aspect of the structure. Despite the

opposing hypotheses of De Keyser and Krashen, they seem (at least in part) to be in harmony - if, due to internalisation, the demand on the working memory is low, the affective filter would also be low, facilitating 'openness to input', which, as already established, Krashen claims is necessary for acquisition.

Impacts on teaching practice

It is interesting that many of the practices I carry out in the classroom already apply some of the theories discussed above. For example, adapting readings to facilitate collaborative learning by making them into jigsaw tasks, or having students collaborate to reconstruct a spoken passage. My reasons for adapting tasks in this way were mainly based on intuition but prior to undertaking my MA in TESOL, I would have been un- or less able to explain the rationale for them. Incorporating into my class tasks like those above, which have a strong communicative focus, and through employing task-based learning activities, I could see that they were effective, because I could see my students becoming more confident and proficient with the language, but I might not have been confident in explaining why they worked. Only now do I really understand what the linguistic and psychological implications are of the activities I ask my students to do. In other words, rather than simply observing that these activities result in language development, I now have a far greater understanding of the underlying processes resulting from interaction, noticing, negotiation for meaning, modified input and output, and practice. For example, the opportunity for noticing gaps in students' language ability that a collaborative text reconstruction provides, allows the learners to reflect on their own capability in an L2 and seek to improve it. Combine this with some meaningful explicit instruction of the correct form, and teachers can help this reflection become more focused and therefore, more effective. Until undertaking my studies, I was perhaps guilty of leaning too far in the direction of an engaging, communicative classroom, and away from explicit grammar instruction. However, the benefits I have been made aware of cannot be ignored. Explicit instruction, integrated into communicative lessons and curricula, facilitates students' self-development.

Following on from this, a slightly more significant change I intend to make is to incorporate more opportunities for controlled practice. Tasks that draw learners' attention to the correct form, such as sentence ordering and error correction. As mentioned above, I typically take a communicative/task-based approach, and I normally address language points as they arise. I will still do this, however, I now intend to follow up on these incidental language points (identified though common

errors) with more explicit lessons, with controlled, and then freer, practice. This effort, according to De Keyser (2007), will help my students to focus on new language without feeling overloaded, which should allow them to more easily take in new language, and also lower their affective filter, opening them up to further learning.

There is also an aspect of my teaching that I would *completely* change. My typical classroom consists mostly of Vietnamese speakers. Historically, I have kept a strict, 'English only' rule in my classes. However, I was surprised to note that many of the LREs observed in the studies by Swain and Lapkin, and Collins and White, occurred in the students' L1, as can be seen in example 3 (Swain and Lapkin 2001). This suggests, that the use of the L1 in LREs can facilitate L2 development, I am prompted to look further into this as something I could change about my classroom practice. Certainly, in the absence of any further research at the present time, I will change my rule to 'purposeful Vietnamese, only'.

Example 3. (Swain and Lapkin 2001)

(Class D, Pair 11)

B: Isn't it ET se peigne les cheveux [**and combs his hair**],
because it's the last one?

A: Non. Peigne ses cheveux et prépare pour son chemin.
[**No, combs his hair and prepares for the road.**]

B: Right.

CONCLUSION

This review has presented a number of 'ingredients' that contribute to the acquisition of a second language. Input is essential, but it is not the only factor that can result in language proficiency. If it was, then people like Wes, and the students of French in Ontario would not have experienced the difficulties they have had. Output is also essential as it prompts 'noticing' through interaction, and subsequently, negotiation for meaning and form, which focus L2 learners' attention to (a) the shortcomings of their interlanguage, and (b) producing a more target-like structure. Further research would be both interesting and helpful, in two areas: first, comparing the benefits of interaction in different kinds of task. For example, Mackey's (1999) study employed tasks where the native speaker had all the info, while the learner had to ask questions. Swain and Lapkin opted for collaborative tasks. Second, it seems that explicit instruction is also necessary as it can foster the right

conditions for noticing. While this might prove to be true, I cannot yet make this claim. It *is* possible, though, to assert that explicit instruction can provide bite-sized chunks to process and practice, enabling L2 learners to analyse what is correct for a given situation, and therefore modify and adjust their interlanguage to develop their L2.

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APPROACHES

DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERING ENGLISH MAJORS IN DELIVERING ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Many English learners have to cope with certain problems of speech delivering in front of class. This study is aimed to identify the challenges of giving oral presentation and find out some factors causing troubles of English major undergraduates in giving academic speech. Research method is mainly focused on the mixed quantitative and qualitative process which includes a questionnaire survey sent to 200 students and the semi- structure interview questions raised to 5 lecturers, together with 20 videos of learners in oral performance classes. The findings show that many students face language obstacles in terms of vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and fail to use the body language properly. Moreover, it is also revealed in the study that performers' anxiety, the unfamiliarity of the topics and the peer/teacher- related pressure on students are the main causes of these difficulties.

Keywords: *classroom academic presentation skills, language obstacles, anxiety, peer/teacher-related pressure*

INTRODUCTION

English has generally become a very important language used in different areas of life, particularly in academic field like conferences or seminars. Students of English, thus, have many opportunities to access the scientific fields by their attendance and presentations in these professional workshops. Many researchers like Sibai (2004) have stated that the ability to speak English fluently has become a must if an English major really wants to progress in certain domains. Moreover, as Nunan (2003) states, English is often chosen as the medium of communication in most international conferences, so it is important that students

should always take chance to use English at a required proficiency level to present in graduate seminars or in conferences. Sharing the similar idea, in her study, Kim (2006) has concluded that giving oral presentation skill is clearly of great importance for a student to grasp in spite of some problems a student of English may have to face. As a result, it is obvious that the more chances in accessing the scientific fields English majors have, the more the students have to try to overcome all possible problems they may encounter.

The challenges in giving oral presentation have been studied and seen in many aspects (see Derwing (2003), Murcia (2001), Urrutia & Vega (2010), and Woodrow (2006) to cite but a few). It is concluded from these studies that in order to have a persuasive and informative presentation in academic environment in classrooms, students are asked to self-prepare not only appropriate topical knowledge but also appropriate pronunciation, grammar or vocabulary as well. In addition, sometimes they even have to be well-prepared for some psychological problems like anxiety or fear of making mistakes in order to get themselves familiar with the academic atmosphere in classrooms or in conferences. Therefore, having a thorough study on these challenges facing language students in different academic environment is very necessary to help improve the situation.

It is a fact that English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in all areas of the Vietnam country from primary education level to tertiary one. However, it seems that English speaking ability of Vietnamese learners does not appear to meet the required standard in order to give them enough confidence to have a fluent oral academic presentation. Although there have been so far many studies about speaking ability of English majors in many other areas of the world or in Vietnam, it seems that few papers concern the oral presentation skills of English majors in Quy Nhon University education environment. As a result, this study is of great significance aiming at identifying challenges in giving oral presentations faced by English-major undergraduates in Quy Nhon University and investigating important factors contributing to the existence of these difficulties.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic oral presentation is an activity where the presenters convey their ideas to the audience in an academic environment like in college or university (Munby, 2011). In EFL academic context, the presenters in almost all cases are lecturers or students who communicate with the audience by using English as a foreign language. Therefore, apart from

some common psychological challenges anyone who presents in their mother tongue has to face like anxiety, lack of confidence or motivation, these presenters in EFL context may encounter some difficulties related to language such as misuse of vocabulary or mispronunciation.

As for psychological problems, Horwitz et al. (1986-cited in Subasi, 2010) has stated that a person is likely to be more anxious when presenting in a foreign language class if she or he has difficulties in communicating with other people, thereby encountering difficulties that negatively influence his or her ability during the presentation. In their studies, Woodrow (2006) and Derwing (2003) have identified anxiety as one of the popular causes that negatively affect the learners' oral performance. Similarly, Park & Lee (2005) explored the relationship between L2 learners' anxiety, oral performance, and self-confidence and concluded that the higher the anxiousness was, the lower they scored in their oral performance. In the same way, Oxford (1990) confirms that the affective side of the learner such as anxiety, motivation, inhibition, shyness, lack of self-confidence, or peer pressure has a big influence on his or her language learning success or failure. Therefore, it is clear that any research on student's presentation skill like this study must investigate these factors.

Regarding language problems, Tuan and Mai (2015) synthesized all findings from Nunan (1999), Johnson (1995) and Canale and Swain (1980) about the four components of communicative competence, namely Grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence and emphasized that those who do not possess these components are unlikely to communicate well. Similarly, Brown (2014) confirms that students have to be aware of five language - related components which may cause troubles to them namely: grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency and pronunciation. As a result, these factors will also be carefully considered in this study.

Having reviewed the previous theoretical and empirical studies related to subject of the study and witnessed the reality of teaching and learning English in Quy Nhon University, the researcher is encouraged to investigate the possible problems encountered by students which may negatively affect their EFL presentation skills and some reasons why these problems exist.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims at answering two research questions:

- *What challenges do the English major undergraduates encounter when giving oral presentation in the public?*
- *What underlying factors cause difficulties for undergraduates in presentation skill of English?*

METHODOLOGY

Participants

To gather the quantitative data, 200 EFL students (188 female and 12 male) participated in filling in the questionnaire. They were third grade students at the Department of Foreign Languages in the (2018-2019) academic year in Quy Nhon University. Moreover, 20 videos of third - year students' presentation recorded during speaking classes in the first semester of the school year 2018-2019 in Quy Nhon University were collected. To gather the qualitative data, 5 lecturers of English (4 female and 1male) teaching Speaking skill at Quy Nhon University were interviewed. It is worth mentioning that among those teachers who were interviewed, one was the holder of PhD diploma and the other four held MA certificates.

Instruments

Three types of data collection instruments were employed.

The videos were recorded during 20 speaking classes with the permission of the lecturers. The action of video making was a usual routine as the form of formative assessment that the lecturers of speaking classes often carried out, so the students were recorded in the normal classroom atmosphere. Then these videos were quantitatively analyzed in terms of 10 detailed possible mistakes belonging to three major domains, namely correctness of language, clarity of speech and body language appropriacy.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part 1 included a list of 10 detailed difficulties which are similar to those used to analyze the videos; Part 2 listed possible factors that might lead to those difficulties with blanks for them to explain more about the reasons. All the participants were students coming from the researcher's classes who voluntarily answered the questionnaire.

Moreover, to gather the qualitative data, the researcher conducted

interviews with 5 university lecturers at Department of foreign languages. The interviewing questions used for teachers were also similar to those in the 2 parts of the questionnaire. All teachers' answers were recorded for later qualitative analysis. The questionnaire and the interview questions were relevant to the case of the study as they aimed at answering the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Problems

To identify the problems students face when they deliver an academic oral presentation, the researcher has analyzed 20 videos, students' answers for part 1 of questionnaires and teachers' responses.

All 20 videos were carefully analyzed for 3 aspects: correctness of the language, clarity of speech and interaction with audience. Table 1 shows the results of video analysis.

Table 1

Popular problems encountering learners' oral presentation

No.	Main criteria	Detailed criteria	Videos meeting < 50% criteria requirement	Videos meeting 50- 70% criteria requirement	Videos meeting >70% criteria requirement
1		clear pronunciation?	5 (25%)	12 (60%)	3 (15%)
2	Correctness of language	appropriate use of vocabulary?	7 (35%)	9 (45%)	4 (20%)
3		good structures and registers?	7 (35%)	11 (55%)	2 (10%)
4		Clarity of expressions	4 (20%)	14 (70%)	2 (10%)
5	Clarity of speech	good connection of ideas?	7 (35%)	8 (40%)	5 (25%)
6		appropriate use of signal words?	6 (30%)	9 (45%)	5(25%)

No.	Main criteria	Detailed criteria	Videos meeting < 50% criteria requirement	Videos meeting 50- 70% criteria requirement	Videos meeting >70% criteria requirement
7		structured and clear conclusions?	3 (15%)	11 (55%)	6 (30%)
8		suitable gestures to keep audience's attention?	12 (60%)	7 (35%)	1 (5%)
9	Body language	Eye- contact technique	9 (45%)	8 (40%)	3 (15%)
10		various techniques of body language?	11 55%	8 (40%)	1 (5%)

As shown in table 1, the majority of presenters can meet from 50% to 70% of the requirement of correctness of language and clarity of speech. However, the percentage of students who fail to reach 50% in these domains is much higher than that of those who meet over 70% of the requirement. It is easy to see that the most popular domain the learners face is body language where the number of presenters who do not have right gestures of presentation and various techniques of body language is remarkably high, 60% and 55%, respectively. Moreover, 45% students violate eye-contact technique. The number of presenters who can control over 70% their body language is very low, around 5 to 15 %. As for correctness of language and clarity of speech, a similar number of presenters (35%) fail to meet 50% of the criteria requirement in terms of appropriate vocabulary, structures and idea connection. About 20 - 30% students have trouble in pronunciation, signal words and clarity of expression.

In short, the video analysis can reveal some areas of difficulties for learners of English in their academic oral presentation in terms of appropriacy in body language, correctness of language and clarity of speech.

To understand the factors that lead to these challenges, it is necessary to get some information about the students' and teachers' perception of

their difficulties in these domains.

200 students were asked to rank the frequency of their making mistakes in 10 detailed problems of three domains. Table 2 shows the result of the questionnaire.

Table 2

Students' perception of their difficulties

No.	Main domains of problems	Detailed problems	Frequency of making mistakes		
			Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1	Correctness of language	clear pronunciation?	27	163	10
2		appropriate use of vocabulary?	65	94	41
3		good structures and registers?	103	74	23
4		Clarity of expressions	43	132	25
5	Clarity of speech	good connection of ideas?	34	102	64
6		appropriate use of signal words?	21	92	87
7		structured and clear conclusions?	23	65	112
8	Body language	suitable gestures to keep audience's attention?	83	90	27
9		Eye- contact technique	73	95	32
10		various techniques of body language?	124	52	24

It is easy to see from table 2 that of all three domains, the number of students who sometimes make mistakes is much higher than that of those of Always and Rarely. As for correctness of language, the most serious problem to the students is mispronunciation with totally 190 answers of both Always and Sometimes. Ranking the second are the difficulties in structures and clarity of expression with around 175 choices of Always and Sometimes. The least serious problem to students is vocabulary when 41 students say that they rarely mistaken in using vocabulary. Moreover, clarity of speech does not seem to be of the most serious problem to students when the number of Sometimes and Rarely is far higher than that of Always. In other words, having a clear speech by using signal words to connect the ideas and a structured conclusion does not appear to be a difficulty to most of the respondents.

As far as body language is concerned, over 170 students admit that they either always or sometimes cannot use appropriate gestures, eye - contact, or techniques of body language.

Teachers' perception of the difficulties

Five teachers were interviewed about the 10 mistakes of three domains, and then their records were qualitatively analyzed. The following are the results of the interview analysis.

All 5 teachers interviewed (TI) agreed that the majority of their students did not use appropriate body language. In her record, TI1 said '*...it seems to me that my students can't keep calm when they are speaking in front of me and other students; they look at the ceiling most of the time they speak...*'. Dealing with the same question, TI3 mentioned the stressful faces with thinking eyes of her students during the presentation time. Similarly, TI4 admitted that even though she has guided her students some techniques of using body language to contact with the audience, it seems that they forget all they have learned, so many of them fail to contact their audience or showing their emotion when they are asked to present orally.

Regarding the correctness of language, 4 out of 5 teachers claimed that mistakes in grammar and vocabulary often occur in their students' speeches, which affects the quality of the talk very much. 3 teachers mentioned mispronunciation as a popular problem their student presenters face. There are 2 teachers saying that many students cannot use language expression clearly at all.

As for clarity of speech, TI2 did not think this was the problem for her students because '*... my students are always given time to prepare for the*

talk...'. In contrast, T13 and T15 said '... many students just use simple sentences to express the ideas. When they tried to use some complicated signal words to create the variety for their talk, they often make mistakes....' All 5 teachers agreed that students could have structured a clear conclusion for their presentation. *'... I think perhaps this the time students know that he is going to end his talk, so he does it calmly...'*, T13 said.

It can be noticed that the majority of difficulties found in video analysis, questionnaire to students and teachers' interview are similar in terms of three major domains and a little different regarding the detailed problems. To be more specific, a large number of learners of English meet difficulty in using the appropriate body language like gestures, eye contact, or the movement of the body. The second most serious challenge to students is the correctness of language when many of them fail to give an effective academic speech because they make so many mistakes in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. Using signal words to connect the ideas and giving a clear conclusion to the talk are the least serious problems although it is thought by almost half of the respondents.

Factors causing problems

To identify what causes above -mentioned problems, the researcher used responses from the teachers' interview and the students' answers for Part 2 of the questionnaire. The answers from the teachers showed three causes in terms of the performers' anxiety, the unfamiliarity of the topics and the peer/teacher- related pressure on students. The questionnaire asked the students to choose the possible reasons for their language and performance difficulties and there was a blank for them to add some other explanations. The results of these two sources are shown in the following parts.

Teachers' perception of the factors affecting students' oral presentation

When asked about what may lead to the difficulties the students have to face during presenting time, all teachers agreed that topical knowledge affected students' speaking performance. T11 said that his students usually hesitated to choose the topic to speak if they are given the choice; they often showed their confusion when confronting a new and strange topic. T14 shared the same thought when talking about her observation of the students' activeness level in the different topics of presentation, saying *'they seem to be more confident and better presenting with some kinds of familiar topics like education or*

technology...'. TI5 added that her students seemed to make more mistakes when they were presenting a political problem which is not of their concern.

The majority of them (4 out of 5) believed that their students' lack of vocabulary and grammar knowledge to express their ideas clearly. Only one teacher believed that if his students had enough knowledge of topic, they could find appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas. In contrast, TI1, TI4, and TI5 showed their agreement that the majority of their students had difficulties in choosing the right words and using grammar correctly because they had to think of so many things like the ideas, the talk organization, the body language and so on that they easily made mistakes on grammar and vocabulary. The same number of teachers viewed confidence in presenting time as an important factor that influenced students' oral presentation. Four out of five teachers said that if students were shy, they could not present their talk well with appropriate body language at all. When asked about students' behaviour during presentation, three out of five teachers considered anxiety and pressure as the causes that hinder the students' presenting performance. More specifically, TI2 claimed, "*many students in my class felt under pressure of being assessed by the teacher and by their classmates, so they couldn't keep calm to talk. I think we should provide them with more friendly atmosphere...*"

Students' perception of the factors affecting their oral presentation

Table 3

Students' perception of the factors affecting their oral presentation

Problems	Factors	Percentage of students' choice
Inappropriate movement,	body Pressure to perform well	67%
Less eye contact, and	Confidence/ shyness	84%
Unsuitable gestures	Anxiety	51%
Unclear expression, Inappropriate vocabulary,	Topical knowledge unfamiliarity	95%
Wrong grammar and mispronunciation	Insufficiency in vocabulary and grammar knowledge	75%

When the students were asked to choose the factors affecting their speaking performance among the factors listed, almost all students admitted topical knowledge unfamiliarity as the most influential factors. Many of them added the explanation for this reason that they were sometimes asked to prepare a strange topic in a short time and they could not think of the ideas for their speech. This reason is easy to predict because many studies on speaking performance have already confirmed that the familiarity of the topic can help students find more relaxed and confident in finding the ideas to present, thereby expressing their ideas successfully. And this also confirms the result taken from the teacher interview.

Ranking second is confidence / shyness with over 80% choices. Most of the students explained for their lack of confidence and being under pressure that they felt the hostile class atmosphere when they were in front of the whole class being watched by their teacher and peers, making them clumsy in using their body language. And some said that they never felt safe when standing and speaking in front of many people. This result is in agreement with the previous studies made by Woodrow (2006), Oxford (1990) and Urrutia & Vega (2010), confirming that some psychological factors would cause difficulties for students in their oral presentations.

Insufficiency in vocabulary and grammar knowledge were thought by 75% to be other affecting factors. These students added that in some classes they were not given enough practice on topic - related vocabulary and grammar, so they often made mistakes in choosing the right words and structures to express the ideas.

Finally, over half of the informants (51%) viewed the anxiety as one of the important factors making them fail in their presentation. They explained they were so anxious about being assessed by their teachers that they became clumsy in their body movement when presenting a topic. These results confirm the findings of Park & Lee (2005), Tsiplakides & Keramida (2009) and Al Hosni, S. (2014) about the relationship between anxiety, fear and inhibition and the success of speaking.

Briefly speaking, both teachers and students in the study think that students are sometimes given the strange topic with little time of preparation and practice, leading to their misuse of language (including vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation) to express their ideas. Moreover, they also mention the hostile atmosphere in the class unintentionally created by peers' and teacher's watching and

assessment as another reason making students under pressure and anxious, thereby failing to have eye contact or appropriate body movement. In addition, some students were too shy by nature to speak in the public atmosphere.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings in this study are in line with the previous studies in literature, confirming three domains of problems related to correctness of language, clarity of speech and body language, happening when English majors are asked to present in an academic environment. In fact, many students in the study meet difficulties in choosing the right language to talk about a topic clearly and in using their body movement, gestures and face expressions appropriately. As for the reasons for these problems, it can be seen from the teachers' and students' perspective that these challenges are caused by little preparation and practice time for the unfamiliar topics, the shyness by nature of the presenters, the unfriendly atmosphere made by the teacher's and their peers' watching and assessing.

To solve the problems, it is advisable that the instructors give time for the students to prepare psychologically before giving the presentation and they should build bridges of confidence and friendly relationships between the students themselves and between them and their students. Moreover, the lecturers should personalize and simplify the topics of presentation to make them easier, more interesting and relevant to the students' lives, thereby helping them solve the problem of insufficient vocabulary. Furthermore, the instructors and lecturers should take in consideration improving the vocabulary and grammar by asking students to work in a small group and giving them more time and encouragement so that they can be ready for their own presentation in front of the whole class, then presenting confidently with appropriate vocabulary and grammar. Finally, the information related to the grading criteria and the purpose of the oral presentation activity must be provided and the teachers may remind their students that though vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation are certainly often seen as grading criteria, the attractive presentation style is also counted during their talk.

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CONSTRUCTIVE ALIGNMENT IN TEACHING ENGLISH AT TERTIARY LEVEL: AN INSIGHT INTO AN AUN-DESIGNED COURSE

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the issue of improving teaching and learning quality in higher education has received many concerns from the stakeholders. An example of this phenomenon is the trend of registering for different kinds of quality accreditation, such as National Standard Accreditation, and the Asian University Network Quality Assurance. Following up this trend, constructive alignment has arisen as an effective tool as well as a “must” in the process of quality assurance. This study aims at taking a look at a course designed under the format of Asian University Network Quality Assurance – Speaking class for English majors. To address this issue, a small-scale qualitative case study is conducted within 10 weeks in order to answer the question of whether constructive alignment exists in the real classroom situation. A class of 30 students and their lecturer are involved in the study. After analyzing the data from both classroom observations and interviews, the researcher finds that constructive alignment is not fully implemented in the classroom. Specifically, there are some misalignments between intended learning outcomes and teaching and learning activities and assessment tasks, negatively affecting the implementation.

Keywords: *constructive alignment, teaching English, tertiary level, AUN-QA, Van Lang University*

INTRODUCTION

Quality assurance is one of the most significant issues received concerns in Vietnamese education these days. There are some benefits that quality assurance brings about, including (1) assuring quality of both teaching and learning of any higher education organizations to provide society workforce with proper knowledge, skills and attitude (AUN, 2015); (2) assisting citizens, especially students with the useful

information in selecting suitable and reliable higher education institutions to study; and (3) enhancing teaching, learning and the administration at both school and program level (Harman & Nguyen 2010). Also, the Strategic Plan No. 118/KH-BGDDT from Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) states that the quality assurance process must be conducted in all higher education institutions in the period of 2017-2020 (MOET, 2017a).

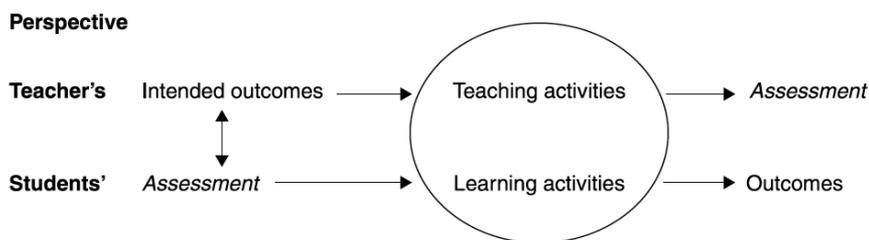
In Vietnam, the quality assurance is conducted by both national and international agencies such as Centre for Education Accreditation – Association of Vietnam Universities and Colleges (CEA-AVU&C) and ASEAN University Network Quality Assurance (AUN-QA). Currently, many programs in Vietnamese universities, including Information Technology of Vietnam National University – Hanoi, or Information Technology, Computer Science & Engineering, and Electronics & Telecommunications of Vietnam National University – Ho Chi Minh City, etc., have received the accreditation from AUN-QA (AUN, 2017). To be more specific, AUN-QA network is the quality assurance within ASEAN countries in term of higher education organizations. The purpose of this accreditation is to ensure the standards among higher education institution and to promote the exchange within the country members (AUN, 2017).

In the criteria of both national and international agencies, especially AUN-QA, the idea of constructive alignment is emphasized. Specifically, these indicate that the intended learning outcomes are achieved via the alignment between teaching and learning activities and assessment methods (MOET, 2017b; AUN, 2016). From these points, it is necessary to examine the constructive alignment in Vietnamese higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Constructive alignment is a significant theory developed by Biggs (1996) and Biggs and Tang (2011). The core concept of this theory is that in the classrooms, the teacher should let students construct their own knowledge and skills with their supports in building up the learning space in which the teaching and learning activities are aligned with both assessment tasks and the intended learning outcomes. They have proposed the framework for applying constructive alignment as the figure below.

Figure 1



Teachers' and Students' perspectives towards assessment (Biggs & Tang, 2011, p. 198)

The theory has been referred many times by other authors such as Warren (2004) and Wang, Su, Cheung, Wong, & Kwong (2013). What is more, the positive impacts of constructive alignment are found by many authors in the literature. These impacts include involving students in using deep learning approaches (Nightingale, Carew, & Fung, 2007; Spelt, Luning, Boekel & Mulder, 2015); enhancing student motivation and satisfaction (Brabrand, 2008; Little, 2017); and improving curriculum and course design (Mavor & Trayner, 2001; Borrego & Cutler, 2010). However, these researchers focus on other fields rather than English teaching and learning.

In Vietnam, some authors have also investigated the application of constructive alignment in higher education. Notably, Nguyen (2017) conducts research in teaching and learning Grammar and Cultural Identity. He confirms the effects of constructive alignment and recommends further research to enhance the application. Moreover, Nguyen and Law (2019) investigate constructive alignment in curriculum design. They agree that constructive alignment has good impacts on reforming curriculum. In short, these studies propose the need for implementing constructive alignment in the Vietnamese context, especially English language teaching at Van Lang University.

Research Question

From the literature and also the fact of applying constructive alignment at Van Lang university context, the study aims at figuring out how constructive alignment is applied in an AUN-designed course for teaching English at Van Lang University – a Speaking class for English majors. Therefore, the research question is:

How is constructive alignment implemented in an AUN- designed course, a Speaking classroom, for English majors at Van Lang University?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study used the qualitative research design. Generally speaking, the qualitative design could provide thick and deep information on the phenomenon if the researcher has interests in the phenomenon rather than the result (Stake, 2010; Creswell, 2011). In addition, Seidman (2006) and Patton (2015) propose that qualitative design is suitable for answering “How” and “What” questions. The case study was also used in the research. According to Creswell (2011), a case study is an in-depth exploration and life-bounded context by using thick and extensive data. Stake (2010) considers that case studies are usually used for qualitative inquiries. In fact, the qualitative case study was the most fixable for the study.

Setting and Participants

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Language at Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh city. The course examined was the Speaking 4 course for English majors. To be more specific, the course focused on teaching public speaking skills for English majors. Also, the course was designed by a lecturer in the Faculty who was qualified in the training program on AUN-based syllabus design. The course syllabus was checked in light of a checklist of AUN-QA as listed below:

Table 1*The checklist of Speaking 4 syllabus in comparison with AUN-QA criteria*

No.	AUN-QA criteria	Speaking Syllabus		4
		Yes	No	
1	Course title	X		
2	Course requirements such as pre-requisite to register for the course, credits, etc.	X		
3	Expected learning outcomes of the course in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes	X		
4	Teaching, learning and assessment methods to enable outcomes to be achieved and demonstrated	X		
5	Course description and outline	X		
6	Details of student assessment	X		
7	Date on which the course syllabus was written or revised.	X		

Besides, the course learning outcomes were evaluated in order to ensure the appropriacy of the course design. What is more, the alignment between the course intended learning outcomes, the teaching/learning activities, and assessment tasks were listed in the syllabus under the form of a matrix.

In this study, purposeful sampling was employed. Creswell (2011) points out that by employing purposeful sampling, the researcher has intentions in choosing individuals for his/her study. Moreover, to ensure the participants had the same experience in the speaking class, homogeneous sampling was also used. Therefore, the participants were the lecturer and 30 students in the Speaking 4 class. The lecturer has the experience of 20 years of English teaching, especially speaking skills. Turning to the students, they consisted of 23 females and 5 males. They have studied with each other since entering the school to present.

Instruments

The study used two main instruments: observations and interviews (teacher interview and student focus group interview). According to Hatch (2002) and Thomas (2010), observations are tools for collecting qualitative data. Through observations, the researcher could observe what the participants actually do in order to check the self-report data from interviews or questionnaires.

In the study, the researcher conducted two regular classroom observations and two assessment observations for a midterm and a final exam. Also, at the end of the course, the classroom lecturer and a focus group of 4 students were interviewed to collect more data.

Data collection procedure

The data were collected within 10 weeks from the beginning of the course. There were two phases: (1) collecting data from the whole participants through observations, and (2) collecting data from individuals via semi-structured interviews with the lecturer and student focus group interview. As mentioned above, the observations in this study included regular classroom sessions and assessment sessions. Before attending to observe the class, the researcher had asked for permission from both the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and the lecturer-in-charge. Also, the researcher had spent time to build the relationship with the students in order to create the comfort before observing the class. Turning to the interviews, there were two steps in conducting them. Firstly, the researcher told all the interviewees about the purposes of the interviews, the privacy and confidential protection. In the next step, the researcher conducted the interviews. During this time, probing questions were made in order to clarify what remained unclear.

Data analysis procedure

The data of the study were analyzed using thematic and comparative analysis. The purposes of those were to identify, categorize the emerged themes, and find out whether the data reached a saturation point or not (Dawson, 2009). Specifically, the data from all instruments were transcribed and coded into identical systems for each resource. Then after reading all the data, the researcher compared, contrasted, and categorized them into main themes and sub-themes. This process was constantly repeated until no new themes appeared.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the study, triangulation of the data and member-checking were employed (Creswell, 2011). Particularly, the data were from different kinds of instruments; the answers from the interviews (self-reported data) were compared with the data from the observations to see what they actually did. Additionally, after transcribing all the data from the interview, the researcher gave them back to the lecturer and student participants to ensure the transcriptions were identical with their original ideas or opinions.

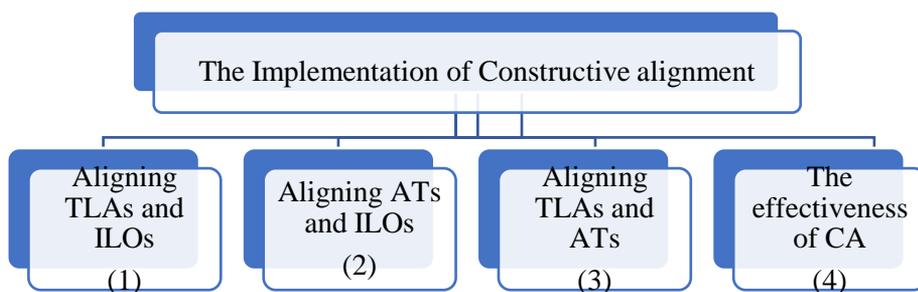
Concerning the reliability of the study, the researcher made a careful set of steps when analyzing the data (Yin, 2009). Moreover, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) state that member-checking and triangulation of the data were other methods of establishing the research reliability.

FINDINGS

After using the thematic and comparative analysis, the themes of the data were organized into the below thematic network, in which the main theme was the implementation of constructive alignment, and the sub-themes were: (1) Aligning Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) and the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); (2) Aligning Assessment Tasks (ATs) and the Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs); (3) Aligning Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) and Assessment Tasks (ATs); and (4) The effectiveness of Constructive Alignment (CA). The data were reported following the theme orders.

Figure 2

Thematic network of the study



Aligning Teaching and Learning Activities and the Intended Learning Outcomes

Through the observations and the interviews, the teaching and learning activities were designed to serve the course learning outcomes. The lecturer stated in the interview “When I design any *learning and teaching activities*, they have to be appropriate for the *learning outcomes*.” (Lecturer Interview). For example, there was one intended learning outcome that “Students will be able to deliver a persuasive speech”. Therefore, the lecturer often let her students make a small speech in class. Another example is that when a student gave a speech in front of the class, other students gave comments based on the given rubrics. By doing this way, the students could achieve the second learning outcome “Students are able to evaluate another speech”. These activities were confirmed by the student focus group.

However, the intended learning outcome of “making an outline for a speech” was not practiced during class hours as two students in the focus group said, “The lecturer did not show them how to *make an outline* nor practicing making it.” (Student focus group interview). Therefore, all the intended learning outcomes were not achieved through teaching and learning activities.

Aligning Assessment Tasks and the Intended Learning Outcomes

According to the data in all instruments, there were two assessment sessions during the course: a midterm exam and a final exam. Particularly, all the assessment tasks aimed at assessing student public speaking skills. However, the formats of two exams were different; the midterm exam was the group presentation, but in the final exam was the individual presentation.

Regarding the opinions of students and in light of the intended learning outcomes, the two assessment tasks could not assist students in attaining all the course outcomes. For example, in term of the learning outcomes “making persuasive speeches”, a student in the focus group stated, “No requirement related to making persuasive speeches was given. In other words, we could choose either type”. Also, in the observation, the researcher recorded that very few numbers of persuasive speech appearing in the final exam. Additionally, the learning outcomes of “making outlines” and “evaluating the others’ speeches” were not assessed in both exams according to what the students’ mentioned in their interview.

Aligning Teaching and Learning Activities and Assessment Tasks

Due to the differences between the midterm and the final exams, the teaching and learning activities partly served the assessment tasks. Specifically, in the interview, the group focus assumed that only the final exam was not related to teaching and learning activities. In addition, some students complained about a lack of identical criteria for midterm and final exams and the ones used for evaluating classroom practice. They all agreed, “The final exam was not identical with the teaching and learning activities because of the different criteria for evaluation”.

The Effectiveness of Constructive Alignment

Both the lecturer and students confirmed the positive effects of constructive alignment. First, they all agreed that when three elements aligned with each other, the motivation was created. Also, the students said that they felt more confident and fluent in the way they delivered their speech. In addition, the lecturer also considered that constructive alignment produced reliable criteria for assessing students' performance.

DISCUSSION

From the findings part, it is concluded that Constructive Alignment was partly established in the classroom. Biggs and Tang (2011) points out that there are three steps to establish Constructive Alignment: (1) Designing appropriate intended learning outcomes; (2) Designing the teaching and learning activities which serve the attainment of these learning outcomes; and (3) Selecting suitable assessment to measure whether the students achieved the learning outcomes or not. In comparison with the guidelines from Biggs and Tang (2011), in the research context, some intended learning outcomes were matched very well with both teaching and learning activities and the assessment tasks; however, some of them were not. In other words, the barriers existed among these three elements. According to Thian, Ng, and Ewe (2018), they found the same thing; i.e., the first problem in setting up constructive alignment was the alignment between the teaching and learning activities and the intended learning outcomes. What is more, Nguyen (2017) states the gap between assessment tasks and the intended learning outcomes could be easily found in this study. Despite some similarities to the previous studies, this research showed another issue of a lack of identical criteria in assessment tasks and in the way of assessing in the regular classroom. This issue caused the barrier in the teaching and learning activities and the assessment tasks. Finally, the

study confirmed the effectiveness of constructive alignment in the way that it created the motivation for students in learning and helped them better achieve the course learning outcomes (Brabrand, 2008; Thadani, Kwong, Chong, & Wong, 2013). However, the study indicated a new role of constructive alignment in creating reliable criteria for assessing students.

From all the barriers within the constructive alignment in the research context, the researcher considered some suggestions for improving the situation. Firstly, the lecturer needed to promote student motivation in learning to help them engage more in the teaching and learning activities. Moreover, backward model (Richard, 2001) could be applied in designing the course in order to use the intended learning outcomes as the foundation for designing teaching and learning activities as well as the assessment tasks. Lastly, the assessment criteria should be more stable and be announced clearly to the students during the course of instruction.

CONCLUSION

The study focused on constructive alignment in teaching English at tertiary level in an AUN-designed course at Van Lang University. To be more specific, the framework of Biggs and Tang (2011) was employed, and 30 students and their lecturer were involved in the study. The main concern of this research was the implementation of constructive alignment. After collecting all the data, the findings illustrated that constructive alignment was established; however, some barriers still existed. In other words, some of the intended learning outcomes were not served by the teaching and learning activities. Additionally, the assessment tasks could not assess the attainment of all course learning outcomes. Furthermore, the study confirmed the positive effects of constructive alignment in creating student motivation, helping students in achieving the learning outcomes, and making reliable criteria for assessing students.

Despite these significant findings, the research was limited in some aspects. Firstly, due to the characteristics of qualitative case studies (Stake, 2010; Creswell, 2011), the research might not be applicable to other contexts. Secondly, in spite of pointing out the problems in establishing constructive alignment, some other issues related to the coursebooks, students' levels etc. were not mentioned. Lastly, the time constraints did not allow the researcher to collect more data; therefore, the description of the phenomenon would have been richer in some more aspects. As a result, the study suggested other researchers could

investigate the problem in setting up constructive alignment, and the larger-scaled studies could be conducted to contribute to the literature.

THE AUTHOR

Nguyen Thanh Minh is a lecturer at Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam. He has attended some conferences in the field of language learning and teaching. His recent paper was “Applying Blended Learning into Teaching English at Van Lang University” published in the proceeding of ICOE2019 (hold by HCMC Open University). He has participated in teaching both English and Non-English majors. His interests are Curriculum Development and Language Assessment.

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PROMOTING STUDENTS' MEANINGFUL STUDY THROUGH A SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

Out-of-school learning activities such as community service, mentoring, study clubs, etc. which facilitate learners to expand their perceptions and situate experiences (Pugh, 2004) in daily life are not a new pedagogical concept. Specifically, as Pugh (2009) once emphasized the role of service learning as an extremely goal-oriented learning activity with remarkable opportunities for deep learning and active reflection as well as interests and curiosities arousing. The aim of this phenomenological study was to better understand the service learning project experience employed by the third-year English majors at Thu Dau Mot University, especially exploring their personal and professional outcomes. The study used in-depth interviews to gather data. The findings of the study indicated that students were highly motivated to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes and relationships with the people in need. More importantly, the data gathered greatly supported for the expansion of service learning project among tertiary education.

Keywords: *service learning, experience, outcomes, relationship*

INTRODUCTION

With the current trend of educational era 4.0, there is always a must to improve the quality of education and encourage students' active learning ability. In other words, learners have to be well-equipped with four basic skills, i.e. language skills, critical thinking skills, creative skills as well as vocational skills. To fill in the gap between the theoretical knowledge and the practical one, a series of new and innovative teaching methods come into life including the effort of integrating service learning into the curriculum. In deed, service learning is not a new concept for it becomes a great concern of different educational organizations and educators such as Penn (2003), Butin (2006), Miller and Nendel (2010), etc.

Service learning is considered as a transformative pedagogy, which connects “classrooms with the real world, the cognitive with the affective, and theory with practice” (Butin, 2006:131). Its purposes are

not only to involve learners into practical settings but also to direct them to two-way learning activities: being a doer who accumulates a sense of civic responsibility and reflecting their experience. To compare to other types of learning, Witmer (1994) also emphasizes the strengths of service learning:

Table 1

Comparison of Service Learning with Other Types of Learning (Adapted from Witmer, 1994)

Categories of Student Behavior (major emphasis)	Examples of Class-Based Learning	Examples of Field-Based Learning
Doing (acting)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simulations • lab experiments • model building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • volunteerism and youth service • internships
Reflecting (thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lecture • recitation • writing • reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • museum programs • field trips
Doing and Reflecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem-focused instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • service learning

In fact, the community-based learning method is an effective teaching and learning method that has been studied and applied for a long time in the educational systems of many countries all over the world like USA, Australia, Netherlands, Canada, etc. However, this method is quite new and widely inapplicable to the majority of Vietnamese schools, especially to tertiary education. Fortunately, some universities are applying this teaching and learning method effectively and achieve certain quality as VNUHCM-University of Science, Hoa Sen University, Thu Dau Mot University and initially applied experiments at the Department of Sociology, Ho Chi Minh-University of Social Sciences and Humanities. In such a general context, the first step in applying the community-based learning method in the field of interactive teaching is an important and necessary requirement because this method not only brings many benefits to students, lecturers, training institutions but also

is especially useful to the community.

In Vietnam, VNUHCM-University of Science has taken the first steps, applying the integration of service learning into its tertiary subjects. Accordingly, from the school year 2007, the third- and fourth-year students of the Department of Biology began to join with the partner - Dam Sen Cultural Park in two subjects of environmental science and wastewater treatment. Creating a positive effect in students' attitudes and outcomes, this learning model is great favorable in VNUHCM-University of Science. Dang Viet Dai (student of Department of Biology) commented:

“Through service learning, I learned how to organize, work in groups, improve communication skills, write and present reports. This method of learning is more interesting than the old way of learning (just go to the lecture hall to listen to lectures) because students are proactively applying the knowledge they have learned in practice, in solving a specific problem of society and importantly, students feel they are helpful”. (Nguyen Thanh Hai, 2012, vietnamservicelearning.wordpress.com)

As for Nguyen Manh Hung - a student of Department of Biology, he reported that:

“This learning program can be compared to a combination of a Green Summer volunteer campaign and a nature internship. Students have conditions to verify the theory they have learned and at the same time gain experience from the practice”. (Nguyen Thanh Hai, 2012, vietnamservicelearning.wordpress.com)

Since 2017, the faculty of foreign languages at Thu Dau Mot University has launched its service learning project to its students with the aims of achieving social and emotional learning through reflection upon teaching experience. Without a doubt, Binh Duong province, especially Thu Dau Mot city is a city for migrant workers with a great number of homeless illiterate children. There are at least 12 communities who need help in Thu Dau Mot city: Chanh My, Dinh Hoa, Hiep Thanh, Hoa Phu, Phu Loi, Phu Hoa, Phu My, Phu Tan, Phu Tho, and Tan An. Two years later, service learning project has been adaptable to those whose major is English teaching, and it has been upgraded to a compulsory subject to all of the first-year English majors. Surprisingly, there are no studies to find out the students' perceptions towards this course. In other words, to what extent service learning is beneficial to students and what kinds

of reflection students have after experiencing by themselves are not addressed formally.

The purpose of this paper is to understand the impact of service learning project on students' personal and professional outcomes experienced by 10 third-year English-teaching majors who studied the subject "How to organize play activities in English" for at least 2 months. The results enable lecturers at the faculty of foreign languages at Thu Dau Mot University to keep making better use of service-learning project in their teaching process. Moreover, the research paper makes a contribution to research in the same field.

Research Questions

How do students describe their experiences of service learning project on their personal and professional development?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Benefits of service learning

A review of recent literature on service learning supports that students should get involved in service-learning for its benefits of civic outcomes, personal development and academic outcomes.

Several research studies indicate that when student participate in service learning, they can achieve some positive outcomes: attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, social skills, and academic achievement (e.g., Billig, 2009; Conway et al., 2009). Specifically, such students enable to increase their self-esteem and self-concept together with more positive attitudes towards school and education, greater interest in the communities, and stronger beliefs that one can make a difference in the world (Billig, Root, & Jesse, 2005). Also, they can develop various social skills related to communication, leadership, and problem solving as well as improve academic achievement (e.g., Billig, 2009; Harwood & Radoff, 2009).

Noticeable, some researcher's findings indicate that service-learning can facilitate students in terms of personal, interpersonal, social, and academic benefits (e.g. Eyler & Giles, 2002). Socially, learners who take part in service-learning reveal a positive effect on their own social responsibility (Scales, et al., 2000), civic attitudes, and volunteerism (Brandeis University, 1999). In other words, through serving the community, students enable to gain important values, knowledge, skills, commitment necessary for good citizenship (Melchior & Bailis, 2002) as

well as practice and nurture social skills by interacting with different types of people (Search Institute, 2000).

In terms of personal development, service learning can result in self-confidence, self-esteem and personal efficacy (Eyler & Giles, 1996). As far as Madsen (2004) and Love (2008) are concerned, service learning is taken into account as a valuable tool for encouraging critical thinking, student involvement, and more meaningful academic experiences. Many educators believe students learn best when they are actively engaged in the learning process (Bradford, 2005).

In the area of academic grounding, students can be exposed to real-world experience that is not found in traditional classroom teachings and internships (Burke & Bush, 2013). Overall (2010) emphasizes that students will be well-equipped with this authentic and valuable experience for their future career. Gutierrez et al. (2012) supplements the benefit of participating service learning to students, i.e. the opportunity to critically examine the work force and the role that they desire to take. This facilitates students who fail to know what kind of jobs they want to keep track with because through traditional in-classroom teaching situations, students may deal with a concept but will not know whether they really interest the field until they experience it.

METHODS

Research Design

The paper was design as a qualitative phenomenological study to explore students' lived experiences in service learning project in terms of personal and professional development. As a research method, the term "phenomenology" refers to the investigation of the meaning of first person experience or subjective consciousness (Patton, 2002). The fundamental question of phenomenological inquiry is "What is the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience of this phenomenon for this person or group of people?" (Patton, 2002, p. 104). Hence, the researcher constructs a description of the essence of a select human experience.

The researcher took the role of interviewer by conducting open-ended interviews with selected participants. As being suggested by Moustakas (1994), the researcher recognized her personal interest and personal experience in service learning project together with the intention of controlling bias by meeting the interviewee with openness and freshness. This study was not conducted in my official working environment so there were no conflicts of interest or power differentials.

Instrumentation

The primary data collection method was in-depth interviewing with open-ended questions. Open-ended interviewing was most appropriate because the researcher sought to understand the lived experience of students who directly get involved in service learning project (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994; Patton, 2002). The central concept for this inquiry was students' development which refers to the capacity of individuals to successfully fulfill being active learners, exploring ideas and gaining new experiences, and being reflective about what they are doing and seeing (Ridley, 2012). The central phenomenon was service learning project. Responses to the interview provided sufficient data to answer the central research question associated with this qualitative study: How do students describe their experiences of service learning project on their personal and professional development? As the researcher, I interviewed each participant in person for 30-35 minutes at a mutually agreeable time and location conducive to respectful interviewing and take-noting.

Participants

The project had the weight of 30% in the total grading and assessment and was compulsory in nature. At the pilot stage, 40 senior English majors in the Faculty of Foreign Language joined an eight-week service learning project with the major role of teaching Basic English to disadvantaged children in Thu Dau Mot city. The first classroom-based five-teaching-session prepared students with the requirements for service learning project, discussion on the implementation plan, teaching methods to teach disadvantaged children through games and songs. Students were also asked to respond to the following questions: *What are you looking forward to? What are you nervous about? What do you think you might learn from this project?* The idea was to encourage students to realize the reason why they participated in service learning project, the benefits as well as challenges it brings to them. To make meaning out of their experience, students were asked to write reflective journal writing which served as a kind of scaffolding for them to critically examine the impact of their teaching experiences and address their feelings about the community. They were also asked to make a video on their service learning process and submit a final report as a summary of their overall experiences.

The co-researchers for this study were down to ten third-year English-teaching majors out of ten different groups who participated in service learning project in the subject "How to organize play activities in English"

for at least 2 months and me as a non-participant observer as Creswell (2009) recommends, “long interviews with up to 10 people” (p. 65). Each co-researcher, other than myself, met three following basic criteria: (i) was currently learning the subject “How to organize play activities in English” at Thu Dau Mot University, (ii) implemented service-learning project to the disadvantaged children in the needed communities in Thu Dau Mot city within 2 months, and (iii) was willing to reflect their service-learning experience throughout the data collection and analysis processes.

Data Collection Procedures

The researcher collected data by conducting one 30-minute dyadic interview with each co-researcher. For the sake of the co-researcher, the location of each interview was at the greenery study garden at Thu Dau Mot University, thus increasing their comfort levels during the interviews. The interviewer was encouraged to share personal experiences and thoughts including the cognitive and emotional reflections (Ellis & Berger, 2002, p. 854).

Data analysis

To code for significant themes and analyze the data, Moustakas’ (1994) modifications of the Stevick-Colaizzi-Keen method of analysis of phenomenological data were used. First, non-repetitive and non-overlapping statements taken from transcribed interviews were clustered into 10 themes: (i) greater self-regulation, (ii) greater self/other empathy and compassion, (iii) greater confidence, (iv) greater patience, (v) having commitment to the community, (vi) developing problem-solving skills, (vii) gaining more teaching experience, (viii) better communication, (ix) better social competence and (x) better emotional competence. Then, a textural description, i.e. “*what*” they experienced and structural description, i.e. “*how*” they experienced including verbatim examples would be analyzed. In other words, textural and structural descriptions were generated for each of the 10 themes, then analyzed for unique participants and total related words (shown in Table 3). Subsequently, themes with more than 5 unique co-researchers were identified, which resulted in 4 final themes. Finally, composite descriptions were generated for each of the 4 final themes (shown in Table 2).

Table 2*Final themes with structural elements*

Themes	Structural elements
greater self-regulation	Setting goals, selecting strategies to attain those goals, monitoring progress, restructuring if the goals are not being met, using time efficiently, using the reflection to adjust and prepare for the next task.
greater self/other empathy and compassion	Experiencing and understanding what others feel, being kind toward a person facing pain or failure, appreciating other's effort through compliments and kind gesture.
greater confidence	Dressing appropriately, pleasing facial expressions and clear voice, standing-sitting-walking as a confident person, not being afraid to look silly, speaking out loud.
greater patience	Staying calm, tolerating the in-class noise, not getting annoyed with the other's mistake.
having commitment to the community	Wishing to continue the project again, showing love to the disadvantaged children.
developing problem-solving skills	Overcoming the teaching problems, understanding the causes of problems, finding solutions for each problem.
gaining more teaching experience	Learning how to teach children, experiencing which activities children prefer, adapting some creative in-class activities, interacting with the "real" learners.
better communication	Being a better listener, being friendly, smiling with a happy face, making use of body language.
better social competence	Getting along with others with appropriate behavior, regulating emotions, cooperating with the others, performing social tasks properly.
better emotional competence	Recognizing his/ her own strengths and weaknesses, feel motivated and oriented,

RESULTS

Study Results

From 10 verbatim transcripts, 205 significant statements were extracted and were clustered in 10 themes. Then, 4 final themes (shown in Table 3) for unique theme representation and words dedicated to each theme would be analyzed. Noticeably, themes with 5 or fewer total unique co-researchers were skipped from further analysis.

Table 3

Final themes with unique participants and total related words

Theme	Total unique participants (N=10)	Total words related to theme
greater confidence	8	3097
greater patience	7	3142
gaining more teaching experience	10	3500
developing problem-solving skills	8	2780

Theme 1: greater confidence

The verbatim transcript revealed that 8 of 10 co-researchers experienced greater confidence through service learning project. Here are some quotations from their verbal statements:

“To be honest I learned a lot of useful lessons. I felt more matured in all aspects and more in love in teaching English. I could improve soft skills as well as techniques in teaching methods. I am steadier and more confident when standing in front of the students.”

“This service learning project is an important first step for me to get acquainted with my career. Significantly, I will stand on the podium as a truly teacher.”

“Through usually teaching in the disadvantages children, I am more confident than ever before. Besides, my communication skill was improved through talking to the native teachers. Writing reflective writing helps me enhance my writing skill significantly.”

“At the beginning, I was a really clumsy person but gradually I got used to work. I felt more confident since I had real experience in education field. I can enhance myself with better communication. I believe such a necessary skill is extremely vital for my future career to effectively work in a professional working environment.”

Theme 2: greater patience

When dealing with the disadvantage children who never have a chance to school, beyond the problems at the first time, 7 of 10 co-researchers felt more and more patient by staying calm and trying to self-manage. Here are some extracts from their oral report:

“It is obvious that I am stressful during the project because I have to deal with lots of tasks. Therefore, I always arrange these tasks reasonably so that I could complete each work perfectly. This stress is changed into a motivation, which makes my work is better.”

“I taught disadvantaged children so when I had problems with my students, I needed to be calm, wisely look at those situations, think about possible answers to find the best solution which could make students more polite, obedient and concentrate on lessons.”

Theme 3: gaining more teaching experience

Having the chance to interact and teach the “real” students in real working place is all of the co-researchers’ highly appreciation toward service learning project as follows:

“Personally, I value the chances of participating in service learning project which I have a chance to practice teaching English and immerse myself in the beneficial environment. In my ways of thinking, “How can I apply the diversity of teaching methods to different levels and contexts?” is one of the most vital questions I have to answer to serve effectively to my future job which makes the students interested in the lesson. Simultaneously, I need to submit an application of teaching methods and variety of techniques to support the children in a loving English journey.”

“After 8-week service learning project, I find it useful to my future career. As an active participant, I have a chance to learn more about my major which is impossible to learn in the class.

Moreover, I gain lots of skills for my teaching that makes me a better potential teacher.”

“I can work as a teacher of English so I learn lots of skills to manage and control class and adapt different kinds of games in my teaching. Moreover, I got lots of experiences helping me a lot for my work in the future.”

“Service learning project gives me a good opportunity to practice my job in the real working environment. I realized that teaching children is not simple but it requires lots of skills such as class management, organization skills and the use of games. To have a good teaching period, I need to prepare a good lesson plan, make it fun, always be creative and do not put pressure on students.”

Theme 4: developing problem-solving skills

Apart from achieving valuable teaching experiences, 8 of 10 co-researchers could be flexible and creative in the way of finding solutions for a certain problems happening during the teaching process such as how to make his/ her lesson more interestingly and how to deal with the eccentric students:

“I have chance to experience the real job and real working place, contact and interact with different kinds of people, which help improve communication skills and problem-solving ability at work.”

“To solve those problems in the cleverest ways, I asked for advice from Academic staff and use my teaching experiences. First, I asked too dynamic kids to dance songs with slow-motion lyrics to keep calm them or individually dance at the front. It made them too shy to act like that anymore. Second, I always inquired and that boy gradually. Luckily, he has become more positive after my advice. Third, every 20- minute I tried to change teaching methods and associated interesting games for children to relax. Not only could I fulfill the kids’ hobbies, I also could complete the objective of the lessons.

“Some students had limited abilities. Although I tried my best to transfer the knowledge, they still didn’t keep in their mind exactly what I taught...If there is a conflict between 2 students, I will observe, follow and listen to them then I analyze and logically solve this problem in order to build trust and respect of the

learners.”

“For students who did not learn the old lessons, I required them to copy down many times then check it immediately. It helped me to make sure the students can remember all the old lessons. Besides, I gave my class the classroom rules: no eating in class, no sleeping in class, no going out during teaching time if it is not necessary, no cheating when they have test. If they did not follow my principles, they must leave my classroom. For some naughty students, I always kept calm and ignored them because they felt isolated and easily recognized their mistakes so that they could learn better.”

The above-mentioned findings are quite consistent with the literature on the salutary and support for the implementation of service learning project or even service learning as an academic subject. For example, the theme of gaining more teaching experience align with work by Overall (2010) and Brail’s study of student achievement and service learning (2013) with his conclusion that service learning can facilitate students to develop a deeper understanding of discipline-specific knowledge.

The themes of better confidence and developing problem solving skills align with the work of Billig (2009). Last but not least, the theme of greater patience aligns with the work of Roche et al. (2014). More importantly, the findings do not contradict with the literature review on students’ outcomes both personal and academic ones (e.g. Billig, 2009). Although works in the literature review did not represent some themes that emerged from the study (e.g., commitment to the community, social competence and emotional competence), the findings contribute to support the implementation of service learning project as an innovative teaching methods for university lecturers.

It is clear that service-learning project received much positive feedback. Students who experienced the project reported that beyond the initial fear, they gained more than expected ranging from confidence, patience, teaching experience at the “real” classes to problem-solving skills. Working with homeless illiterate children helped them highly appreciate the concept “give and take”. In other words, what students spent: preparing the lesson plan, preparing gifts, dealing with numerous unforeseen teaching situations compensated what they took: being mature, overcoming fear, calming down and better career orientation. Thanks to participating in the project, students could get involve a connection between the campus and the world around it, challenge them to be actively engaged, and involve structured their reflection.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

There is not for no reason that more and more Vietnamese universities and even high schools are implementing or are going to implement service-learning project in their curriculum. Following the worldwide educational trend in the era of comprehensive modernization, to fill a gap between academic knowledge and career preparation, universities should carry out service-learning project for the sake of their learners. However, conducting a service-learning project successfully is quite a daunting task because learners may encounter a series of obstacles such as no knowledge of in-need communities, no physical and mental preparation for joining the project and no enough free time to balance between study and serve the community. To overcome such challenges, teachers should equip students with service-learning framework in advanced, i.e. pre-service (investigation; planning and preparation), while-service (action) and post-service (reflection and demonstration). It is because students just learn and involve themselves when they find it beneficial and interesting.

CONCLUSION

With an ever-increasing innovation in the era 4.0, educational institutions face with the challenges of requiring new approaches in education and preparing students to meet the requirements in the diversified working environment. Service-learning is one of the successful means of teaching methods which fulfills the goal of building critical thinkers, problem solvers, innovators and better communicators. From the findings of this study, beyond the fear and anxiety at the first time and some difficulties during the project, service-learning project is favorable and receives many positive attitudes from students, especially the co-researchers. It is proved that “service learning offers significantly more experiential learning than the typical university course and takes students from theoretical concepts of the classroom to practical applications in the community” (English, 2012). One of the most notable benefits to students is the improvement of personal and professional outcomes in terms of greater confidence, greater patience, teaching experience expansion and problem solving development.

THE AUTHOR

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TERTIARY ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNING COMMUNICATIVE ENGLISH GRAMMAR

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ABSTRACT

Grammar, part of a language, plays a pivotal role in the process of ESL/EFL learning, but how it is taught and learned effectively is always a hot issue. It is observed, nonetheless, that a great number of EFL learners in different contexts can master English grammar well, but they fail to communicate in English well. Therefore, this paper endeavors to explore English-majored students' perceptions of learning communicative English grammar (CEG) at University of Phan Thiet. This mixed-methods study employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect the data from 136 English-majored students. The findings indicated that English-majored students perceived that learning CEG plays an important role in developing their communication competence. It is further found that students had similar perceptions of learning CEG regardless of levels of academic study. Such preliminary findings may contribute their part to assisting ESL/EFL teachers to choose appropriate teaching approaches in teaching English grammar effectively.

Keywords: *EFL context; communicatively English grammar; English-majored student; perception*

INTRODUCTION

The English language has become more and more popular in the context of Vietnam, and it is an important language tool for global integration. Accordingly, mastering English for communication is a common goal among EFL learners, and learning English grammar (EG) is an element that cannot be avoided in the learning process. Harmer (1987) indicates that if learners have not any grammar knowledge they could be difficult to express speech with separate utterance items of separate language functions. Similarly, Pradeep (2013) states that learners can speak

English exactly and proficiently if they are truly expert at grammar knowledge; due to grammar is an extremely important part of teaching and studying the English language. Hence, without any grammar rules, the sentence utterance cannot convey completely meaning to the listeners and the speaker cannot produce accurate structures.

It is observed in the Vietnamese context; many high school students learn grammar to pass examinations because English teaching is mainly exam driven practice. Consequently, most of the learners are not be able to give correct grammar sentences in speech although they own high certificates at high ranking (e.g., Nguyen, 2008; Tran & Dang, 2019). The more students can learn grammar well, the better they can do exercises involving grammar, but they are not able to speak correct grammar in a real-life situation. Thus, learning English grammar becomes tedious and has no impression; this even becomes a fear for weak students. As for English-majored students at the University of Phan Thiet (UPT), it is not an exception. Therefore, the research aims at exploring UPT English-majored students' perceptions of learning communicative English grammar (CEG). The research questions are formed as follows:

1. *What perceptions of learning CEG are held by English-majored students at UPT?*
2. *Do English-majored students from different levels of academic study differ in their perceptions of learning CEG significantly? If yes, how?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

The term Learning Grammar Communicatively in education in general means learning the tenses of the verbs and other elements of grammar structure patterns in order to know how to apply in the real communication situation. The purpose is to develop communicative competence in which oral language is used fluently, appropriately, and with grammatical appropriateness. According to Richards in the Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics (1992: 65), defined Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as “an approach to foreign or second language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language learning is communicative competence”. Many scholars have confirmed the important role of grammar as a vital component of communicative competence. Hymes (1972) defines that communicative competence is what a speaker needs to know to communicate in a speech community. According to Hymes, students not only aim to produce structural or grammatical sentences but also to understand the

situation where the sentences must be used. Communicative competence refers not only to the knowledge of the grammatical rules of a language and how to form grammatical sentences but also to know when, where and to whom to use these sentences in dialogues (e.g., Hymes, 1971; Richards, 1985).

Thus, learning and teaching English grammar communicatively also mention some more goals. Firstly, the teachers expect their learners can use Standard English in many situations. For instance, in the classroom, they can know well grammar structures, do various exercises, and practice speaking through conversations. At the workplace outside, students can use English to discuss their business with people of various occupations. If learners were self-conscious about grammar rules they would give speeches correctly. Secondly, learners are expected that they not only can analyze sentences about simple grammar aspects but also can use terminological grammar correctly in the speeches as well as academic paragraphs. Finally, understanding clearly grammar rules will appreciate other languages. Thornbury (1999) points out that the role of grammar in any communicative approach can be controversial, due to these misconceptions and also to the influence of Natural Approaches which ascribed no grammar role in language learning. Instead of explaining the role of grammar specifically in CLT; it mentions two main types; the shallow-end approach and the deep-end approach. Besides, Thornbury (1999) also states that the shallow-end approach to CLT is based on the thought that to make the learners use language in a communicative situation. It is necessary to combine learning grammatical rules and practicing different patterns in real conversations. In short, grammar is a great important part of English language learning. It has effects on other English skills. Especially, in communication, grammar is the key factor to connect words in the right order to make information clearer and easier to understand. Therefore, English language learners must seriously consider learning grammar.

It is seen that different studies in this area have been conducted. Firstly, it is noticed that the paper concentrate on discovering perceptions of learning and teaching English grammar as well as toward communicative language (e.g., Gopal, 2015; Anne & Hong, 2009; Wazir, 2011; Rahmah, 2018). The second emphasis is on how to learn English grammar communicatively in real contexts such as organizing games and dialogues and the perceptions of applying communicative language game in teaching and learning EFL grammar (e.g., Nguyen, 2005; Nguyen, 2008; Tran, 2015; Mai, 1999; Cam, 2015; Chen, 2014; Phuong & Nguyen, 2017) which have investigated from students' perceptions

towards learning English grammar. A recent study by Anne and Hong (2009) involved an emphasis on Asian Students' Perceptions of Grammar Teaching in the ESL Classroom. This study was conducted with a group of 16 students from seven Asian countries who were enrolled in a credit ESL course at Canada University. The interviewed groups were four students; each group had a separate interview with a researcher. The data were audio-taped and transcribed carefully. The purpose of this study was not to discover the necessity to teach only grammar rules; the study wished to find out students' perceptions about the form and error correction. The findings revealed that although most of the students had similar cultural and educational backgrounds, they perceived quite differently both the form-focused instruction and the role of grammar instruction. A survey conducted by Gopal (2015) has investigated students' perception of Grammar Teaching and Learning in English Language Classrooms. The study was carried out with 15 students who were studying in semester five of the English Language Department of Misurata University, Libya. The interviewed groups included three students; they had answered nine specific questions. The responses were also audio-taped and transcribed. The findings revealed that although they all came from the same cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds they had different perceptions regarding the form-focused instruction of grammar. ESL teachers gathered considerable significance information to meet students' needs, as well as to reduce conflicts caused by different perspectives between teachers and students in the classroom. Chen (2014) analyzed the use of games that can be served as excellent communicative activities and it is also a powerful tool in the process of language learning. The purposes were to help the development of the ability to use the language effectively for the learners. The author also shared her experience of some interesting games and their application in the language classroom. The article revealed that games stimulated communicative skills and released nervousness and shyness. Besides, learners became more actively and creatively about how to use English fluently to achieve the goal. Rahmah (2018) studied students' perception of the implementation of communicative game-based grammar learning and recommended some ideals of game-based activities. The study employed the questionnaire and the interview with 30 participants at a university in Medan, Indonesia; they took part in the English course and this course was taught by the researcher; previously, they knew the rules of English grammar but could not produce language communicatively in real situations. The results showed that these activities brought effectiveness in creating a non-threatening and more relaxing grammar

classes, it changed students' negative perception of grammar learning and improved their perceived communicative skills.

In Viet Nam, there have been also studies related to students' perception of teaching and learning English grammar as well as speaking activities. The study by Nguyen (2005) offers probably the most comprehensive empirical analysis of "How to teach Grammar communicatively". The study was performed at Nong Lam University. There were 100 students and 10 teachers who participated in the study. The result showed that they were offered new methods to present and practice grammatical rules for communication. Students were both learning and enjoying themselves at the same time. This method used games. It played a crucial part in grammar teaching in the direction of communication. The findings emphasized that "games are as a vital part" of a teacher's equipment because they provide not only practice activities but also an amusing and challenging recipe for different classroom activities. Furthermore, Tran (2015) conducted a study to introduce some ways to teach English grammar for communicative purposes and the roles of grammar instruction in language classrooms. The research was carried out over two years from 2007 to 2009 at three high schools in Hanoi, namely Chu Van An high school, Pham Hong Thai high school, and Nguyen Trai high school. The participants included 180 students and six observers who took part in the research. They did observation about the process of activities happening during school time and then provided the researcher with their opinions and recommendations. Concluding remarks were drawn as follows: Firstly, innovative teaching methods improved remarkably learning grammar and students' attitude to grammar teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. Secondly, students had active perceptions of learning grammar knowledge. Thirdly, the students remembered longer the grammar forms and usages by using activities in the class. In another study by Phuong and Nguyen (2017), there were 93 Vietnamese EFL teachers joined in the research at Can Tho University to find out their perceptions toward the roles, the benefits, and the challenges of using communicative language games to teach English to young learners. The findings revealed some useful insights into the issue and provided useful recommendations for EFL teachers on how to deal with the challenges originated from the implementation of communicative language games in the classrooms.

However, there was little attention that has been paid to investigate a clear interpretation of learners' perceptions of learning English grammar for communication occurring in actual conversations and there were no comparisons in English-majored students' perceptions of

learning English grammar communication at each level. Therefore, this research aims at exploring what are English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG as well as to figure out some significant differences in perceptions of learning CEG between levels at UPT and significant relationships among the components of English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG is necessary. Therefore, this study was conducted to provide an insightful understanding related to the perceptions of learning English grammar for communication.

METHODOLOGY

Research context and participants

This mixed-methods study was implemented at the University of Phan Thiet (UPT), Binh Thuan province, Vietnam. This university is the first and unique school in the provincial region. It consists of seven departments, a hundred classrooms, and twenty-five working rooms. The Faculty of Foreign Languages has 35 lecturers (including part-time and full-time ones) and around 450 English majors. English-majored students at UPT have to study two courses of English grammar in the first and second semesters of the 2018 - 2019 academic years. Each course lasts 45 periods or 60 periods depend on the credit and module of each semester. They are firstly learned with Vietnamese lecturers. The teaching tasks at UPT almost focus on giving grammar rules or sample patterns to help students can do all the grammar exercises and grammar structures assignments. There was not much to attach special importance to oral speech or speaking skills. At the end of the course, students do a final examination within 60 minutes.

This study consisted of 136 English-majored students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages (female: 83.9%; male: 16.1%) who were conveniently sampled in giving responses to the questionnaire. The majority of the participants were female. Their age was from eighteen to twenty. In addition, 70.6% of the students learned English from five to ten years, and 29.4% of students learned English for over ten years. Most of them (70.6%) had ever communicated with foreigners. Moreover, 15 students were invited to join the semi-structured interview.

Research instruments

The study employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The former includes two parts: part A asking respondent's demographics; part B asking respondent's perceptions of learning CEG. The 5-point Likert-like scaled (*strongly disagree to strongly agree*)

questions in part B were designed based on the theories of Thornbury (1999) for the roles of learning CEG (number 1 to 10), the goals of learning CEG based on the theory of Richards (1985) and Hymes (1971) (number 11 to 17), and the activities for learning CEG based on the theory of Harmer (1991) (number 18 to 30). The latter is a focus group interview, and it was designed with six main questions asking for in-depth information on perceptions of learning CEG.

Procedures for data collection and analysis

The data collection was conducted in November of the school year 2019-2020. The questionnaires in Vietnamese were administered to 136 English-majored students of the first year and second year at UPT during their recess time in about twenty minutes. They were instructed before completing the questionnaire to ensure that students could understand clearly and finish it. After that, the semi-structured interview was set up with 15 English-majored students; nine students from the first academic year, and six from the second academic year. There were three to four students for each group. The interview was conducted with four groups of students, who volunteered to participate in the interview and they were learning the English grammar course. The interview questions were conducted in the Vietnamese language by talking face to face to make sure that the interviewees clearly understood all the questions and expressed freely their viewpoints. The answers were recorded and transcribed.

Regarding data analysis, the quantitative data gained from the questionnaires were analyzed by using SPSS version 21.0 in which descriptive statistics, independent samples T-test, and Pearson correlation were used to explore perceptions of English-majored students of learning CEG. The mean scores are interpreted: 1.00 - 1.80 = strongly disagree; 1.81 - 2.60 = disagree; 2.61 - 3.40 = neutral; 3.41 - 4.20 = agree; 4.21 - 5.00 = strongly agree. The qualitative data obtained from interviews were analyzed by content analysis approach in the following steps: step 1, the data were presented in a form, checked carefully, and classified into different types of information; step 2, the data were recorded, coded, and grouped into the same types; the last step was interpretation and summary. The interviewees were marked in turn from the first (S1) to the fifteenth (S15).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

English-majored students' perceptions of learning English grammar for communication

As seen from Table 1, the total mean score of English-majored students' perceptions of learning English grammar for communication is 4.0. Specifically, the elements of students' perceptions of the agreements in the descending order in terms of Mean toward learning CEG. Students set the goals of learning CEG, they had the highest agreement about the goals of learning CEG (M=4.11; SD=.76). Also, the students paid more attention to the roles of learning CEG (M=3.99; SD=.60), and the activities for learning grammar communicatively (M=3.94; SD=.61) could be significantly considered to bring many effective results for learning English. The mean score values of perceptions of learning CEG from "3.94 – 4.11". This means that the students had high agreements on these elements related to the perceptions of learning CEG: the purposes of learning CEG, the roles of learning CEG, and activities for learning CEG.

Table 1

English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG

Elements	M	SD
The goals of learning CEG	4.11	.76
The roles of learning English CEG	3.99	.60
The activities for learning CEG	3.94	.61
Total	4.00	.56

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Perceptions of the roles of learning English grammar communicatively

As displayed in Table 2, a majority of students showed high agreement with most of the items on the roles of learning CEG. Most of the students agreed that learning CEG could bring many benefits: increasing learners' confidence (A3: M=4.23, SD=.80), developing speaking skills fluently and accurately (A9: M=3.87, SD=.90, A10: M=4.19, SD=.78), expressing the right purposes in the conversation (A5: M=3.82, SD=.94, A6: M=4.01, SD=.84), motivating the spirit of learning (A4: M=3.93, SD=.94), having

good attitudes toward learning speaking skills (A8: M=3.88, SD=.88), and being aware of spending time to learn EG for communication well (A2: M=3.89, SD=.80). Besides, the students expressed their agreements on the importance and necessity roles of learning English grammar for communication (A1: M=4.21, SD=.92, A7: M=3.91, SD=.86). In general, the participants showed that learning CEG was important for communication and EG played an indispensable role in English speaking skills or communication.

Table 2

English-majored students' perceptions of the roles of learning CEG

No.	10 items	N=136	
		M	SD
A1	Learning CEG plays an important role in learning English.	4.21	.92
A2	Spending time on learning CEG in class is necessary.	3.89	.80
A3	Learning CEG can increase learners' confidence in learning other language skills.	4.23	.80
A4	Learning CEG can enhance learners' interest in learning English.	3.93	.94
A5	Learning CEG can help learners communicate in English well without any misunderstanding in communicative situations.	3.82	.90
A6	Learning CEG can help learners express the right purposes of talking.	4.01	.84
A7	Learning CEG can improve learners' awareness of learning English.	3.91	.86
A8	Learning CEG can improve learners' attitudes toward learning speaking skills.	3.88	.88
A9	Learning CEG can help learners speak English fluently and accurately.	3.87	.90
A10	Learning CEG can bring many benefits to develop speaking skills.	4.19	.78

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

The interview results indicated that almost all participants showed positive attitudes toward learning CEG. Specifically, 13 out of 15 participants (86.7%) confirmed an important role and the necessity of learning grammar for communication in enhancing and improving communicative competence effectively. Since students felt more confident and more comfortable in speaking English when they spoke correct grammar. Moreover, communication between students and foreigners would be easier and they could acquire the purposes of talking as shown in some below examples:

I think that learning English grammar rules for communication without any mistakes is important. Because it helps us communicate easily and express the right purposes in the conversation. EG rules make people master a language. (S1)

I think that good EG will help learners to be confident in communication. When we speak up clearly and exactly, listeners will attain the information that we want to convey. (S4)

However, only two students (13.3%) thought that it was not necessary to speak correct grammar because when we unconsciously used wrong grammar rules, the foreigners still could understand us.

I think it does not need to speak completely correct. If we are too serious about grammar issues, it will be difficult and we have no inspiration to learn. Even we feel stressed. So, it depends on the situation as if foreigners can understand us. Sometimes, foreigners themselves speak wrong grammar. (S1)

I think it is not necessary. Because when we speak wrong grammar structures, foreigners still understand what we say. However, without learning grammar, we cannot speak the correct order of words. (S7)

In short, if grammar mistakes occur frequently, it does not show a truly professional speaker. Therefore, using correct grammar is obliged in any communicative environment.

Perceptions of the goals of learning English grammar communicatively

As seen in Table 3, the results indicate that the English-majored

students strongly agreed to improve and enhance oral performance effectively in real communicative situations (A11: M=4.23, SD=.74, A13: M=4.27, SD=.72), to maximize the capability of learners in using grammar correctly in the spoken activities and being aware of self-correction in the oral communication (A12: M = 4.01, SD=.84, A14,17: M = 4.03, SD=.77), to use different structures appropriately and fluently in the conversations (A16: M=4.10, SD=.77). Additionally, they also consented that to foster inspiration and appreciation of all language varieties (A15: M = 3.79, SD=.86).

Table 3

English-majored students' perceptions of the goals of learning CEG

No.	7 items	N=136	
		M	SD
	Learning CEG can help learners...		
A11	to improve communicative competence.	4.23	.74
A12	to apply grammar in speaking skills accurately.	4.01	.84
A13	to enhance their oral performance.	4.27	.72
A14	to maximize their capability by using grammar correctly in spoken activities.	4.03	.75
A15	to foster an interest in and appreciation of all language varieties.	3.79	.86
A16	to use different structures appropriately and fluently.	4.10	.77
A17	to be aware of self-correction the errors in their oral communication.	4.03	.77

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Other results in interviewed groups were found that many participants (100%) showed their positive perceptions of the goals of learning CEG. Namely, improving speaking skills in diverse communication contexts and raising the consciousness of how to present words or sentences in

communicative situations with foreigners. Besides, they were more confident to speak English with foreigners and their communication would be easier and clearer than that if students used English grammar correctly in speaking situations. Therefore, many participants expressed their ideas as below:

I think learning CEG is to develop communicative competence. We can speak appropriately and fluently. (S3)

I believe that when learners own grammar knowledge, they can know how to use structures in different contexts freely and naturally. Learning grammar communicatively aims at speaking to other fluency and appropriateness. (S5)

I think that it is to upgrade the capability of speaking the English language accurately and fluently. I also feel confident when foreigners understand me, and they will not ask me again anything. (S11)

Perceptions of the activities for learning grammar communicatively

According to statistics for the data collected from the questionnaire in Table 4, a majority of the students showed their strong agreement toward some activities for learning CEG effectively. Specifically, it was vital to combine various learning activities (information gaps, role-plays, games, dialogues, and group work) for learning grammar communicatively since they were very helpful and necessary (A18, 20: M=3.91, SD=.83). These activities helped them focus on learning grammar communicatively better (A24: M=3.95, SD=.88, A25: M = 3.87, SD=.84, A26: M=4.18, SD=.76, A27: M=4.05, SD=.84,). In addition, the activities were the most effective techniques to practice speaking naturally and accurately (A19: M=3.85, SD=.88). Also, learners felt interested in learning EG to apply in speaking and they also satisfied with the different activities in the classroom (A23: M = 3.82, SD=.88, A30: M =3.82, SD=.91,). Besides, various activities brought many opportunities for learners to communicate with friends in pairs or groups (A21: M=4.03, SD=.71, A22: M=4.01, SD=.74, A28: M = 3.84, SD=.86, A29: M=4.00, SD=.82). The answers of the participants clustered around the mean and their perceptions were also nearly the same.

Table 4*English-majored students' perceptions of the activities for learning CEG*

No.	13 items	N=136	
		M	SD
A18	These activities (information gaps, role-plays, games, dialogues, and group work) are useful for learning CEG.	3.91	.83
A19	These activities are the most effective techniques to practice speaking.	3.85	.88
A20	These activities are essential for learning CEG.	3.91	.80
A21	These activities bring learners many opportunities to interact with each other in learning CEG.	4.03	.71
A22	These activities can bring learners some opportunities to work in pairs, groups, or individually.	4.01	.74
A23	There should be at least two activities in the classroom for learning CEG.	3.82	.88
A24	Applying different activities in learning CEG brings many advantages for learners.	3.95	.88
A25	"Information gap" activity brings the real purpose of learning CEG.	3.87	.84
A26	"Game" helps to relax in learning CEG.	4.18	.76
A27	"Dialogue" helps learners to interact with friends actively and enjoyable.	4.05	.84
A28	"Role-plays" helps learners perform their roles and play-acting to practice speaking in learning CEG.	3.84	.86
A29	"Group work" activity brings an opportunity for learners to communicate with friends in pairs or groups in learning CEG.	4.00	.82
A30	Learners are satisfied with the different activities teachers perform in the classroom.	3.82	.91

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Among 15 participants who attended the interview, 100% of them demonstrated strong expression that the activities as information gaps, role-plays, games, dialogues, and group work for learning CEG were very helpful and effective in communication. They helped learners comprehend the language faster and improved communicative competence better. A practical situation was rather better than analyzing only grammar patterns. Taken together, these activities played a practical role in learning English. A prominent idea from the participant's interview is:

I reckon that the most effective way to learn grammar communicatively is to combine different activities related to grammar points such as games, dialogues, and group work. It will help us to avoid boring and sleepy. It will be more interesting if the teacher gives a bonus for each activity. (S12)

In brief, these results indicated that most participants showed their positive and high agreements with the different activities for learning CEG.

4.1.2. Differences in English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG in terms of levels of academic study

According to descriptive statistics showed in Table 5, the first-year students (M=4.00; SD=.58) seemed to have higher perceptions of learning CEG than the second-year students (M=3.97; SD=.57). The overall mean figures were nearly around.

Table 5

The overall mean of differences in English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG

English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG	N = 136	
	M	S.D.
First-year students	4.00	.58
Second-year students	3.97	.57

Note: M: Mean; S.D: Standard Deviation

With respect to the dissimilarities in English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG in the EFL context, the results in Table 6

have shown that there was a very small remarkable difference in perceptions of learning CEG. Namely perceptions of the roles of learning CEG ($F=6.267$; $p=.422$), the goals of learning CEG ($F=3.197$; $p=.233$), and the activities for learning CEG ($F=1.735$; $p=.461$) between two different levels of a similar academic study. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference in English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG among freshmen and sophomores. This can be understood that the higher the level of academic year students was, the higher they perceived using the English language for communicating with foreigners in real situations.

Table 6

Differences in English-majored students' perceptions of learning CEG in terms of levels of academic study

	F	Sig.	1st Year (n=76) M(S.D.)	2nd Year (n=60) M(S.D.)
The roles of learning CEG	6.267	.422	3.98(.63)	3.99(.60)
The goals of learning CEG	3.197	.233	4.09(.64)	4.11(.92)
The activities for learning CEG	1.735	.461	3.97(.62)	3.89(.63)

*The mean difference is significant at the .05 level

DISCUSSION

The results showed that the participants had positive perceptions of learning CEG. There were similar perceptions of learning CEG between the first-year and the second-year, and their relationship among the components of perceptions of learning CEG was significant relatedness.

It was found out that most participants expressed their positive perceptions of the goals, the roles, and activities of learning CEG. It changed the awareness for better learning and they absolutely want to communicate through oral speech more than writing or just doing grammar exercises. As detailed explanations below: Firstly, the participants showed strong agreement with the goals of learning CEG which could improve communicative competence. Learners not only

were able to master grammar rules well but also were able to apply these rules in the speech well. This result is supported by Richards (1985) and Hymes (1971) who have stated that “communicative competence refers not only to the grammatical rules in theory and how to form grammatical sentences but also in practice; to know when, where and to whom to use these sentences in a speech community”. Secondly, this goal aims at improving speaking skills and other skills related to oral presentations. This can be explained that they should know how to apply grammar cleverly while speaking with foreigners in real-situations, such as when telling about a story in the past, which tenses should be used suitably to avoid misunderstanding about the content and meaning or leading to confusing to listeners. Furthermore, learning CEG could help learners to improve the capability of communication. They could use different structures appropriately and fluently to interact with foreigners.

The findings have shown some salient points of English-majored students’ perceptions of the roles of learning English grammar for communication. Almost all English-majored students at UPT strongly agreed the roles of learning CEG were important in learning English and oral communication. Likewise, most of the participants recognized and emphasized the necessary roles of learning EG for communication. Since they can meet many foreigners they need to use words to talk and to exchange business in their future working so far. The results can be interpreted that learning EG communicatively could improve communicative competence. Besides, they could get benefits from learning CEG such as confidence, interest, inspiration, awareness, and a good attitude. Furthermore, knowing grammar knowledge was agreed to be essential to master a foreign language and for communication. This result is in alignment with the statement of Pradeep (2013); he states that “Grammar is a very important part that cannot be neglected in teaching and studying English. Students can speak English more correctly if they are proficient in grammar and of course, understandable and acceptable sentences must have correct grammar” (Pradeep, 2013, p.484). “Grammar gives insights into the meaning and contents of the words. Understanding and responding will be appropriately and fluently” (ibid., p.486). Especially, learners have more conscious to study better. They will arrange a schedule for learning and find effective methods in order to attain the target language.

The current study further found that English-majored students had a strong agreement on the activities for learning CEG such as information gaps, role-plays, games, dialogues, and group works. They highly

appreciated those activities as helpful tools for learning grammar communicatively. According to Teat (2001), communicative activities played a crucial position in making opportunities for students to utilize the language for communicative purposes. Generally, communicative activities are “fluency based on activities”, which encourage students to use L2 in interactive learning. Also, activity speaking is repeated many times it will remain longer in the memory. Hence, learners can take full advantage of techniques to learn grammar communicatively by implementing several dialogue activities in the classroom such as storytelling, interview, role-playing, games, talking shows, quizzes, and play-acting. Each learner has different learning ways and has different strengths and abilities. This way, teachers should adjust classroom activities various student intelligence rather than force everyone into a single pattern. The diversity in methodology, written, and oral activities help learners to develop their learning strategies and self-confidence toward learning English. In the questionnaire result, the participants also agreed that these activities are the most effective techniques to practice speaking in learning CEG. Moreover, they made a great effort to achieve EG for communication.

Harmer (2001) has stated that information gap activity as “a key to enhance the communicative purposes and to inspire the desire to communicate” (p.85). Besides, “Game” helps to relax in learning grammar communicatively. Such a finding is supported by theories of Haldfield (1999) who has claimed: “games can be used at all stages of the progression from controlled to free practice, serving at one end of the range as a memory aid and repetition drill, at the other as a chance to use the language freely” (p.7) . Moreover, participants believed that dialogue could help them interact with friends actively and enjoyable, and Role-plays could help them perform their roles and play-acting to practice speaking in learning grammar communicatively. This finding is aligned with claims of Livingstone (1983) who hold the view that role-playing gives students’ opportunities to drill in language. The participants also agreed that Group work activity could bring an opportunity for them to communicate with friends in pairs or groups in learning grammar communicatively. This finding is in alignment with Nunan’s (1998) statement which indicated that group work is based on principles of experiential learning; it is essential to any classroom activity. Various assignments of speaking grammar patterns from teachers should be provided. The participants heightened highly exercise activities related to grammar structures that could help learners speak freely in the context, practicing grammar patterns in speaking activities helped to learn EG faster and to communicate better

with others. Therefore, the participants satisfied with the different activities which brought many helpful in practicing speaking and when they learned EG to communicate in any situation.

The results found out that the perceptions of learning CEG was not significant differences between the first-year and the second-year students. One of the possible explanations for this may be that students' English language proficiency in terms of speaking skills may be relatively low, and they may have enjoyed communicatively learning EG, which may be different from what they had learned at high school. Furthermore, the learning of CEG may be appropriate for them to improve their communication skills so that they could be prepared well for the following advanced speaking courses.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the study, it showed obviously that English-majored students at the University of Phan Thiet expressed positive attitudes and high perceptions of learning CEG, namely the roles of learning CEG, the goals of learning CEG, and the activities for learning CEG. Most of the students perceived the roles of learning CEG. It played an important role and an indispensable part of oral communication. It brought many benefits to learners. Also, there was not much difference in the rate of the perceptions among the English-majored students from the freshman to the sophomores. It can be understood that they are at a mature age and have nearly levels.

Some implications can be drawn from the findings. Learning CEG should be emphasized by the participation of students, co-operative completion of teaching tasks among teachers and students, and practical approaches "learn to do"; as a result, learners might acquire communicative grammar naturally and professionally. Learners should apply different activities in learning CEG because it brings many advantages to learners using EG for communication. Also, it will bring effective results when they focus on what interests them to study. It means that teachers should not focus a lot on students' demands when teaching grammar, but teachers should be aware of learning techniques that students are familiar to them and prefer communication skill to writing skill. It might bring many benefits for both students and teachers when doing dialogues in their real-life conversations. Besides, students are also aware of learning methods and strategies that other students have found efficiency, and also, opening dialogues can bring many effects in the class. The teachers need to help the learners know how to apply forms or structures in doing tasks, spoken languages, or written

texts. Teachers should design real contexts by using suitable model structures (Tran & Nguyen, 2019). In respect of learners, it is recommendable that practical types of activities for learning how to use grammar in real communication dialogues should be provided to improve the ability of oral words and widen using various grammar structures in the communication context. Therefore, these speaking activities are essential for learning communicative grammar. It marked a new change in the learning process and it helps learners with many opportunities to join pair works or team works in exchange for information together.

Further research should be implemented regarding the perceptions of educators in helping learners and lecturers learning and teaching English grammar communicatively that can bring the most effective expectations to foster the language ability.

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SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

LECTURERS' PERCEPTIONS AND PRACTICES OF EFL CLASSROOM WRITING ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

The study aims at exploring perceptions and practices of lecturers towards EFL classroom writing assessment in terms of how writing assessment tasks were designed and how students' writing papers were graded. This paper also aims to discover a correlation between lecturers' perceptions and their practices of writing assessment. A quantitative method using a questionnaire for data collection, was used in the study. Twenty-eight lecturers teaching academic writing for English majors in a university located in the Mekong Delta participated in this study. Major findings of the study indicated that the participants were aware of the necessity of basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks and an analytic scoring method. In addition, the study revealed the correlation between lecturers' perceptions and practices of the basic issues in designing tasks. Based on the findings, the study draws out some possible pedagogical implications which are lecturers' growing awareness of scrutinizing various aspects of writing task design and grading students' writing products with an analytic scoring method.

Keywords: *writing assessment tasks, perceptions, practices, analytic scoring method, correlation*

INTRODUCTION

Writing assessment both in ESL or EFL contexts has aroused much interest from numerous researchers because it is primarily useful not only as a way to assess students' writing proficiency but also as a way to promote teaching and learning process (Lee, 2017). Therefore, a writing assessment task should be successfully designed to develop students' critical thinking and creativity and help them achieve course objectives (Bean, 2011); otherwise, students may encounter difficulties in writing it (Wilhoit, 2008).

There have been numerous studies regarding different aspects of EFL writing assessment including writing prompts and marking scales

(Vardi, 2002; Baik, 2008; Mukundan & Ahour, 2009; Ghanbari, Barati & Moinzadeh, 2012; Khongput, 2014), fundamental issues in designing writing assessment tasks (Alenen, Huhta & Tarnanen, 2010), portfolio assessment (Nguyen, 2009), or teachers' practices of formative and summative assessment, the role of feedback (Ngo, 2018). As can be seen from these previous studies, marking writing papers and various types of writing assessment have been taken into account in both small and large scales. However, in the tertiary classroom context, how lecturers think about the necessity of basic issues in designing a writing assessment task to assess their students' writing performance in class needs more attention. Also, their perceptions and practices of using scoring scales in their classroom writing assessment could be another remarkable issue to be investigated to shed light on the general process of the assessment.

Taken together, the researcher would like to examine lecturers' perceptions towards writing assessment in terms of designing writing assessment tasks and scoring writing papers in accordance with their practices and the correlation between their perceptions and practices of these two dimensions of writing assessment. From the results of this study, the researcher expects to fill a gap in the field and offers some important insights into which issues are worth considering in designing writing assessment tasks and which scoring method is worth employing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing assessment

Koffler (1984) indicates that assessing students' writing ability involves the judgment of the idea organization into sentences and paragraphs, the organization of main ideas and supporting details, and the ability to use linguistic features. Meanwhile, Hamp-Lyons (2003, cited in Wiseman, 2012) points out that writing assessment is considered a performance-based test involving the participation of test constructors, writers, tasks, raters, and scoring procedures. Although their viewpoints of writing assessment might be different to some extent, they generally agree that students' writing skills should be assessed through their writing products. Students' level of writing performance may considerably vary depending on different types of writing tasks where their ability to draw and organize ideas in a logical sequence using words and grammatical structures is assessed (Hughes, 1989; Schwarz & Collins, 1995; Weigle, 2002). That is why teachers have to spend much time and effort on designing appropriate writing assessment tasks which are likely to be accessible to all students.

Weigle (2002) and Hyland (2003) also add that ESL/ EFL writing assessment includes three stages in the case of large-scale writing assessments, namely designing a writing assessment task, administering the task and scoring writing products. However, owing to the purposes of classroom assessment, the researcher only concentrates on two stages: designing a writing assessment task and scoring writing paper. In the current study context, it refers to formative class-based assessment using genre-based writing tasks written within a limited time frame to assess students' writing ability as well as evaluate students' writing learning progress. Lecturers give marks and feedback for each paper; then both lecturers and students can make appropriate adjustments in teaching and learning process by referring to the score and feedback given.

A writing assessment task

An assessment task has been differently defined. First, it refers to a timed impromptu writing test that requires students to produce papers of writing based on different characteristics such as topic, prompt, limited time frame, etc (Hamp-Lyons, 1991a; Weigle, 2002). According to Ruth and Murphy (1988), a writing assessment task can be seen as 'the topic, the task, the prompt, the test question, the writing stimulus, the writing instructions, the assignment' (p.7) that are given to students for producing writing papers. Moreover, the term 'writing assessment task' is entirely employed to refer to the timed unplanned writing task which asks students to use language to convey what they know to reach such an objective in their writing course (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001).

In this study, a writing assessment task refers to a writing test requiring students to use their language competence and background knowledge to write about a specific type of writing within a time limit. Students are given a writing topic or a situation to express their ideas without preparing in advance.

Basic issues in designing a writing assessment task

It is necessary to consider the basic issues in designing a writing assessment task which might be varied from different researchers' perspectives. According to Ruth and Murphy (1988), teachers must give students *subjects* and *instructions* - two common elements that elicit students' writing performance in a writing assessment task. A given subject for writing must be accompanied with clear instructions to fit with the assessing purpose. The subject is similar to the topic which can be a title, a word, a phrase or a sentence that requires students to

interpret in their writing carefully. For example, the subject can be like 'my home town', 'my favorite object' or 'the case for/ against dieting' (Koffler, 1984). Usually, if a writing assessment task is designed to assess students on a large scale, the subject is in favor of the personal experience of students. These subjects or topics are selected because they do not require much special knowledge on the part of students and they are easily accessible to a broad range of students. Clear instructions are virtually essential to students in understanding the subject, the requirements of the task, and helping them generate ideas. Indeed, instructions for a writing assessment task should be clear, simple, detailed, and comprehensible to students.

Cohen (1994) highlights the primary importance of prompts for writing which he refers to the whole writing assessment task instructions. The prompts must be written as friendly as possible to the students. Those prompts must be clear, adequate and efficient enough so that students can correctly interpret what they are going to write. Furthermore, Cohen agrees with Ruth and Murphy (1984) that content area or topic in the prompt should definitely not be ambiguous to avoid misinterpretation, which might result in students writing performance. White (1984) also states that clarity is one of the four basic requirements of a writing assessment task, together with validity, reliability, and interest. In the same way, Weigle (2002) generally agrees that task requirements must be carefully examined when constructing a writing assessment task. Beyond those requirements, Weigle outlines a number of issues that the teachers have to keep in mind when designing a writing assessment task. These issues are important, vary depending on different assessment contexts, and tend to be seen as guidelines that facilitate teachers in the process of writing assessment task design. They are composed of subject matter (topic or content area), stimulus material (cues), genre, time allotment, instructions, topic choice, transcription mode, and use of dictionaries or other reference materials while Hyland (2003) shows only four basic factors that constitute a good writing assessment task, including rubrics (instructions), prompts (input), expected responses (task accomplishment), and post-task evaluations (task usefulness).

Moreover, those researchers share the same view that assessment purposes should be taken into account before making a decision on designing tasks. Then, there should be a consideration of students' proficiency level as well as their socio-cultural backgrounds to have a good selection of topics, genres, etc. They widely believe that different purposes and contexts of assessment influence what involves in the tasks.

For the aims of the current study, basic issues in designing a writing assessment task generated mainly from Weigle (2002), Hyland (2003) and other previous researchers in the field will be purposely selected and discussed.

Scoring writing paper

It is also worth noting that scoring writing products is seen as another key component in writing assessment (Weigle, 2002). Therefore, it is highly necessary to have an appropriate scoring system that accurately measures students' responses and ensures the reliability and validity of students' scores.

This section discusses the two scoring procedures, which are holistic and analytic scoring methods. They probably are the frequently used methods in comparison with the primary trait method or multiple-trait method (Hughes, 1989; Cohen, 1994; Weigle, 2002; Hesse, Hauger & Harris, 2014).

Holistic scoring

When using holistic scoring, lecturers use their overall impression to grade students' writing papers to measure their writing proficiency level (Weigle, 2002; Hesse, Hauger & Harris, 2014). Each of the students' writing papers is marked quickly based on a scoring rubric, which is composed of scoring criteria; however, students' writing ability in various dimensions is less likely to be distinguished (Mukundan & Ahour, 2009). Holistic scoring rubrics generally include four to ten levels or scales. Each level matches a single score and has a set of descriptors representing the criteria.

Analytic scoring

In contrast to holistic scoring, the analytic scoring method concentrates on the separation of various components of a writing product. Based on assessment purposes, writing papers can be scored on such different components as 'content, organization, cohesion, style, register, vocabulary, grammar, spelling, mechanics' (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p. 209). However, the weight of each component of writing has been discussed so far, depending on the importance of each component over others as well as the assessment purposes (Weigle, 2002).

By implementing analytic scoring methods in writing assessment, students' writing performance is likely to be reliably measured. Weigle (2002) and Hyland (2003) state that students' strengths and

weaknesses in performing language accuracy and fluency might be fully diagnosed, which allows teachers to look back at the course and tailor the instructions to be more appropriate to students' proficiency levels and needs. Furthermore, students themselves might evaluate and improve their writing abilities in relation to different components recognized in their writing papers.

Related studies on lecturers' perceptions and practices of ESL/ EFL writing assessment

Several studies have contributed to the field of teachers and lecturers' attitudes, beliefs, or perceptions towards writing assessment.

Vardi (2002) conducted a study to examine lecturers' perceptions and practices of their writing instructions and assessment. The findings showed that lecturers tended to take prompts and a marking scale into consideration when teaching and assessing their students' writing ability. Unlike Vardi, Alanen, Huhta, and Tarnanen (2010) carried out literature review analysis, and the results revealed that proficiency level, topics together with genres, excluding prompts, were some fundamental issues frequently concerned when designing writing tasks.

Mukundan and Ahour (2009) employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to examine the difference between teachers' and lecturers' attitudes towards scoring methods used in writing assessment. The results demonstrated that lecturers tended to prefer impressionistic scoring or holistic scoring while schoolteachers preferred criterion-based scoring or analytic scale. Ghanbari, Barati, and Moinzadeh (2012) also showed in their study that an appropriate selection of the scoring scale was considerably important to assess writing papers because it made the scores more reliable and valid; therefore, the analytic scoring scale was more favorable.

Khongput (2014) explored lecturers' practices of assessing writing for English majors in some Thai public universities and their views on their actual writing assessment practices. The results showed that lecturers used various ways to score students' writing papers (e.g., giving a single score to the general quality of writing, comparing and ranking students' writing against each other, giving scores to distinct components of writing). Likewise, Baik (2008) also employed a questionnaire and an interview to investigate lecturers' beliefs and practices in assessing academic writing in relation to scoring and features of academic writing. The results revealed that lecturers assessed academic writing based on the five most important features, including logical idea presentation,

critical thinking, content interpretation, expressive language clarity, and argument quality. For their practices, some lecturers allocated the marks for each distinct feature, while some did not. Consequently, some of them remained the impressionistic method of scoring.

In Vietnam, Nguyen (2009) investigated EFL writing teaching and assessment from the applied linguistics discipline. In her study, a number of solutions to deal with three primary problems regarding raising students' awareness of ELF writing, teaching students how to write, and assessing students' EFL writing ability were discussed. Interestingly, using portfolios as a kind of formative assessment was recommended in the case of writing assessment. Thanks to regular feedback on writing products, teachers and students could gradually modify their teaching and learning strategies. Unlike Nguyen, Ngo (2018) looked at EFL writing assessment from the sociopolitical contexts with the impact of Project 2020 in Vietnam. Two interviewees participating in this study expressed their doubts about inappropriate writing topics to some test takers and showed their contrast views on using holistic and analytic scoring methods.

In summary, although EFL writing assessment has been investigated by many scholars in different contexts with small and large scales, there is still a gap in researching task design for assessing classroom writing in Vietnam. That is why the researcher would like to make a contribution to fill this gap when examining this respect.

Research questions

- 1. What are lecturers' perceptions towards designing EFL writing assessment tasks and scoring EFL writing papers?*
- 2. What are their practices of designing EFL writing assessment tasks and scoring EFL writing papers?*
- 3. Is there a correlation between their perceptions and their practices of EFL writing assessment?*

THE STUDY

Setting and participants

The participants involved in the current study were 28 Vietnamese lecturers of English from Tra Vinh University located in the Mekong Delta. For all the participants selected by purposive sampling, they have experience in teaching and assessing EFL writing skills for students who majored in English at their university. Their students' writing

proficiency levels started from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate. To develop students' EFL writing skills, the lecturers used various types of course books, starting from paragraphs to essays such as Academic Writing 1, 2, 3, and Complete IELTS. Participants' demographic information is given in the table below:

Table 1

Participants' demographic information

Categories	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
<i>Male</i>	9	32.1
<i>Female</i>	19	67.9
Age		
<i><30</i>	4	14.3
<i>31 - 40</i>	17	60.7
<i>> 41</i>	7	25.0
Educational status		
<i>Master's degree</i>	24	85.7
<i>Doctoral degree</i>	4	14.3
Writing teaching and assessing experience		
<i>1 - 5</i>	2	7.1
<i>6 - 10</i>	15	53.6
<i>10 - 15</i>	6	21.4
<i>15 - 20</i>	5	17.9

Data collection and analysis

To address the research questions, the researcher employed a quantitative method by using a researcher-developed questionnaire in English based on the theoretical framework of Weigle (2002) and Hyland (2003). It consisted of lecturers' demographic information, their

perceptions of designing writing assessment tasks (14 items), scoring writing papers (7 items), and their practices of writing task design (12 items) together with paper grading (7 items). The researcher used a five-point Likert scale to measure their perceptions and practices. Finally, an open-ended question was given to ask whether they use available marking scales or create their own ones.

Before officially administering, the questionnaire was piloted to check its validity and reliability. The result revealed that the piloted questionnaire's reliability was .717, which was acceptable to the research aims. Then, the questionnaire was delivered to the main participants.

FINDINGS

All the questionnaires were collected and analyzed using SPSS version 20. The result in Table 2 showed that the questionnaire employed in the present study was reliable with Alpha's coefficient of .726 for 40 items in total.

Table 2

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.726	40

Table 3 shows the overall mean score of lecturers' perceptions of the basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks. It is considerably higher than scale 3 on the five-degree scale (M=3.91). This indicated that the participants had been aware of the importance of basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks.

Particularly, lecturers seemed to think more about how to use language in the instruction of the task, how to determine an appropriate genre for the task, and topics related to writing course syllabus and students' personal experience than other issues (M= 4.42; M= 4.28; M= 4.21; M= 4.03 respectively) when designing the task. Meanwhile, providing controversial topics in the task received the least attention only at the beginning of the medium level (M₁₃= 3.25). Surprisingly, it seemed that lecturers also paid less attention to students' writing proficiency level (M₁₄= 3.78) and giving cues or prompts (M₂= 3.60). The remaining issues received considerably significant mean scores, which were nearly scale

4. These results indicated that they understand the basic issues well in designing writing assessment tasks, but the importance of each issue might differ.

Table 3

Lecturers' perceptions of basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks

Items	Mean	SD
1. determine relevant topics to the writing course	4.21	.73
2. help students generate ideas and language through a reading text, a picture, or a drawing	3.60	.87
3. determine the appropriate genre of writing (e.g. descriptive paragraph, informative letter, essay)	4.28	.46
4. determine relevant topics to students' personal experience	4.03	.79
5. give time allotted or deadline for submission	3.92	.81
6. consider students' socio-cultural knowledge to avoid bias, prejudice	3.92	.60
7. provide students with at least two topics to choose	3.92	.85
8. consider language used in task instruction	4.42	.50
9. help students understand the task better with highlighted key words	3.82	1.02
10. help students write better if the audience of the writing is provided.	3.82	.54
11. provide clear scoring criteria in the instruction	3.92	.71
12. allow students to write longer than expected length	3.85	.80
13. provide students with chance to express their ideas through controversial topics	3.25	1.17
14. consider writing proficiency level of students	3.78	.91
Overall mean score	3.91	.25

As can be seen from Table 4, a Paired Sample T-Test was run to compare the mean scores of participants' perceptions towards holistic scoring (M= 3.05) with analytic scoring (M= 3.60). The results demonstrated that there was a considerable difference between their attitudes towards holistic and analytic scoring methods (p=.003). As a result, participants thought it is better to employ the analytic scoring method, with the primary focus on assessing different writing components rather than holistic scoring. More interestingly, when scoring writing papers, lecturers tended to focus on rhetorical features like content and organization rather than linguistic features such as grammar and vocabulary.

Table 4

Lecturers' perceptions towards scoring methods

Methods	Mean	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
Holistic scoring method	3.05	.62	.003
Analytic scoring method	3.60	.41	

As showed in Table 5, the overall mean score of the participants' practices of selecting basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks was above the accepted level (M= 3.49). It is concluded that the participants sometimes used provided issues in their writing assessment task design. Most lecturers often designed their task instruction with simple and clear language (M=4.17), and provided them with the choice of topics and a limited amount of time to do the task (M=4.14; M=4.07, respectively), then followed by giving genres, the length of response, scoring criteria, stimulus materials, topics related to the course outline and their personal background. In contrast, they rarely highlighted the keywords in the direction and assigned controversial topics for their students, with M=2.85 for each.

Table 5

Lecturers' practices of designing writing assessment tasks

Items	Mean	SD
1. topic related to course outline	3.28	1.11
2. question words/ genres (e.g. describe, explain, compare and contrast)	3.85	.75

Items	Mean	SD
3. stimulus materials (i.e. cues such as some guided questions, a reading passage, a quotation, a picture)	3.35	.98
4. choice of topics (e.g. choose one of the following topics: a, b, c)	4.14	.84
5. time allotment/ submission deadline	4.07	.71
6. length of response (number of words)	3.78	1.16
7. intended audience	3.07	.97
8. highlighted key words	2.85	1.14
9. scoring criteria	3.57	1.37
10. personal topics	3.57	.69
11. controversial topics	2.85	.84
12. clear, simple language	4.17	.54
Overall mean score	3.55	.41

Table 6 illustrates the mean scores of lecturers' actual use of scoring writing papers. Then, a Paired Sample T-Test was performed to compare the mean scores of their practices of holistic scoring (M= 2.67) with analytic scoring (M= 3.61). A significant difference between their actual use of holistic and analytic scoring methods (p=.000) was witnessed. It is said that lecturers often graded their students' writing products by an analytic scoring method. Moreover, as reported in the open-ended question, they often created their own analytic marking scales based on some available scoring rubrics taken from books or the Internet to be appropriate to their classroom context.

Table 6

Lecturers' practices of scoring methods

Methods	Mean	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)
Holistic scoring method	2.67	.78	.000
Analytic scoring method	3.61	.23	

A Bivariate Pearson Correlation test was carried out to examine the match between participants' perceptions and practices regarding the basic issues in designing writing assessment tasks. The results of the correlation analysis showed in Table 7 revealed that a relationship between participants' perceptions and practices of basic issues in designing a writing assessment task was significant ($r = .69$, $p = .000$). This would mean that participants who viewed the basic issues importantly tended to involve these issues more frequently in their real task design. Moreover, there was no significant relationship between what they perceived and what they applied in scoring their students' writing papers ($p > .05$)

Table 7

Correlation between lecturers' perceptions and practices of writing assessment

Perception	Practice	Task design	Holistic scoring method	Analytic scoring method
Task design	Pearson Correlation	.690**	.343	-.014
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.074	.942
	N	28	28	28
Holistic scoring method	Pearson Correlation	-.052	.055	.144
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.791	.781	.465
	N	28	28	28
Analytic scoring method	Pearson Correlation	.350	.181	.209
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.068	.357	.285
	N	28	28	28

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

DISCUSSION

Lecturers' perceptions towards designing EFL writing assessment tasks and scoring EFL writing papers

The current study finds that lecturers tend to care more about language using or wording in task instructions. This finding is also compatible with Ruth and Murphy's (1988) study, which indicates that using language in task instructions is remarkably important because it can affect students' writing performance. Students may be easy to misinterpret if the instructions are not clear, sufficiently detailed enough. Moreover, lecturers' view on genre and topic selection in designing tasks is in accord with Alanen, Huhta, and Tarnanen (2010) indicating that genre and topic are two key issues of a successful writing task for assessment. Students learn how to write various genres and can be assessed based on their ideas, language use, and discourse mode, etc. according to each genre. The topic should be authentic, relevant, engaging, and worth writing to students.

What is surprising is that lecturers seem to pay little attention to identifying students' proficiency level as well as stimulus materials when they start to design the tasks, which is not in line with the previous ideas of Weigle (2002), Hyland (2003) and Hawkins (2005). They think that prompts like suggested questions or ideas are for low-level students and cannot help students improve their writing products since they only respond directly to the prompt suggested without much creativity. In a large class with over 30 students at different levels of EFL proficiency, scrutinizing their level appears to be hard and time-consuming; hence, they determine to assign students pleasant tasks.

Regarding their perceptions of scoring methods, the present study highlights the existence and benefits of the analytic scoring method while a holistic scoring method does not attract much attention. Analytic scoring is based on different components of writing, so it is easier, more reliable to score in comparison with giving an overall score to the whole writing. This study shares the same ideas with Ghanbari, Barati, and Moinzadeh (2012). This finding may be explained by the fact that lecturers can reduce their subjective judgment thanks to clear, detailed descriptors of criteria provided in the scoring rubric to ensure score reliability. Another reason is that analytic scales can provide lecturers with valuable information about their students' strengths and weaknesses to adjust their own writing instruction (Carr, 2000; Wiseman, 2012).

Lecturers' practices of designing EFL writing assessment tasks and scoring EFL writing papers

In terms of practices, using comprehensible language is of great value, which belongs to the three most issues they perceived. Without clear instruction, students cannot tackle the task and influence their writing results. The other issues, such as genres and topics seem to be consistent with what they perceived. Another noticeable finding is that lecturers often set up several tasks or topics and allow students to select one of them that they feel confident, interested in writing, and have prior knowledge. However, it is also problematic with reference to taking time to think which task they feel interested in and have enough linguistic and background knowledge to write. If there is only one task, some may encounter problems with generating ideas. Regarding grading writing papers, as stated in the open-ended question results, most lecturers often design their own analytic scoring rubrics measuring content, organization, language use, etc. because they think it is clearer and more appropriate to their assessing context.

Correlation between their perceptions and their practices of EFL writing assessment

The study shows a positive correlation between lecturers' perceptions and practices in terms of designing a writing assessment task. The convincing reason for this result might be that lecturers have taken part in the writing assessment training, workshop, or testing course at school because most of them are at a master's degree and have experience in teaching and assessing writing skills for many years.

The highly interesting finding from lecturers' perceptions and practices of scoring methods is that the relationship between what they perceived and practiced is not significant. It is difficult to explain this inconsistency, but it may be due to the inconvenience. Although they believe it is better to use an analytic scoring method, they genuinely are interfered with holistic scoring that can help them grade a great many scripts solely in a short time. Therefore, a holistic scoring method remains a position in lecturers' scoring practices although they think it is not as beneficial and reliable as an analytic one.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Based on the findings above, some major pedagogical implications in the areas of writing assessment and scoring practices are recommended. First, students should be assigned to practice a range of genres of writing with course-related and experience-based topics, or even the familiarly controversial ones. Second, lecturers should think about which issues

are essential to help all students access the task successfully. For example, there should be a thorough consideration of if suggested prompts or stimulus materials are given to suit students' different levels of language proficiency in each class. Lastly, analytic scoring is frequently recommended because it can provide beneficial backwash to not only lecturers but also students. Alternatively, they may design valid, reliable scoring rubrics to be appropriate to their writing classes. In summary, lecturers of English should consider different aspects of writing assessment, especially the task design and scoring stages, to ensure the assessment quality and evaluate their students' writing abilities accurately and meaningfully.

The questionnaire could not collect all the information about lecturers' practices. Thus, more research instruments should be used to support the questionnaire results. Additionally, the study did not aim at finding the factors (e.g., gender, age, disciplinary background) affecting lecturers' perceptions and practices. Therefore, this study accepted these limitations and suggested considering these factors for further research.

CONCLUSION

The results indicated that lecturers generally have positive views on the basic issues which need to be considered in designing writing assessment tasks to ensure the task usefulness. The lecturers highlighted the significantly important roles of language use in instructions and determining genres, topics for each task. Regarding scoring methods, they tended to employ an analytic scoring method thanks to its benefits of providing sufficient information on the quality of students' writing aligned with more consistency of students' scores. Their practices in designing tasks were not different from what they thought. They were also prone to an analytic scoring method although their practices of scoring differ from their perceptions due to some underlying factors that need to be investigated in further research.

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF E-PORTFOLIO AS A LEARNING TOOL IN AN EFL WRITING CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy is considered integral to contribute to the effectiveness of knowledge acquisition thanks to their involvement in self-study, self-preparation and exploration, especially in writing, the most complicated language skill. Writing required learners to be in possession of a huge volume of background knowledge, language competency, and critical analysis to produce a concise and concrete version of academic writing. In addition, the modern teaching methods are utilizing electronic portfolio (E-Portfolio) as the proof of learners' progression, self-assessment and accomplishment. This paper aims to apply E-portfolio to grade the level of autonomy in language acquisition among 20 teenage learners at a VUS Center in Vietnam. The data was collected through E-portfolio, classroom observation and researcher's critical analysis in the presence of mixed methods. The findings revealed E-portfolio showed its effectiveness in encouraging learners' autonomy in language learning. Learners' competency, assignment completion and classroom participations were indicated for assessment on the E-portfolio that was available for students to keep track.

Keywords: *autonomy, academic writing, e-portfolio, assessment*

INTRODUCTION

The current era has witnessed the transformation in language education from teacher-based approach to student-based approach due to the demand for world integration. Language learning is supposed to play a crucial role in equipping young students with the ability to master language proficiency to fulfil the market requirement. On the contrary to traditional teaching methods that mainly focus on teaching grammatical structures or lexical resource with passive acquisition from learners, the modern approach creates more opportunities for learners to actively lead the learning process. As a result, they are able

to profoundly comprehend lesson delivery in an effective and creative way to reach communicative levels in their foreign language learning. Writing is deemed to be the most difficult and complicated skill that most of learners are believed to spend a huge volume of time and effort to study. In particular, writing components consist of grammatical range and accuracy, chunks, phrasal verbs, idioms, vocabulary, and so on. They are to some extent challenging to learner to reach communicative level (Bello, 1997). Therefore, teaching writing is mandatory and complex because students do not deal with only sentences but also critical thinking, coherence, idea organization.

Along with the development of digital world, information exchange has grown in popularity in language education. It provides learners with innovative and effective methods to stimulate learning effectiveness. Electronic portfolio or E-portfolio is widely applied in English teaching as an alternative medium of assessment instead of traditional techniques. It is utilized to assess learners' progressive development within the learning process to exhibit their effort, achievements and limitations in English acquisition (Arter and Spandel, 1992). Hence, teachers can assess learners' performance and other untestable elements in their study of the course.

It is undeniable that learners are significantly the key factor to decide the success in language education; however, in the context of VUS center at the research site, the degree of learner autonomy is considered limited to some extent due to the limited amount of class time and the abundance of their school work of the high school. Learners have shown their tiredness and boredom when they attend the class on a frequent basis. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the application of E-portfolio as a learning tool an EFL writing class at VUS center.

In regards to the aforementioned situation, the study attempts to answer the following research question:

How effective is the application of E-portfolio as a learning tool in academic writing context of teenage learners?

This research question is specified into three sub-questions:

1. *What is the development in learner autonomy with the implementation of e-portfolio?*
2. *How effective is e-portfolio on enhancing learners' writing skill?*
3. *What are learners' attitude towards the use of e-portfolio in the writing class?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

The significance of E-portfolio

Traditional summative assessment has shown its limitations with the focus on the outcomes of learners in the absence of progressive analysis in learning process. The final examinations are influenced by several distractors of testing environments and internal factors of candidates, examiners or even invigilators. Therefore, they are incapable of indicating the strengths and weaknesses of students during the learning process. In contrast, the application of formative assessment thanks to portfolio is promising for teachers to observe and assess learners in a better way. E-portfolio or Electronic portfolio is a collection of data to show learners' efforts, achievements, and progress during learning process (Norton & Wiburg, 1998). In this method, students' performance, preparation, outcomes are presented in documents of papers and folders that are available for both teachers and learners to get access to. Every lesson and classroom activity are recorded as an evidence of teaching and learning effectiveness. After a certain period of time, both teachers and learners can look back their activities to reconsider the process of language acquisition. In addition, E-portfolio is a platform for teacher-student interactions via discussion, feedback, questions and responses regardless of geographical locations or time zones.

Lorenzo and Ittelson (2005) pointed out six key benefits of applying E-portfolio in language classrooms:

- To build the syllabus for the program
- To record learners' competency, comprehension, skills
- To keep track with learners' developmental process
- To find job opportunities or tasks that are suitable for their levels
- To assess the efficiency of the entire course
- To evaluate learners' performance during the course

From constructive perspective, learning process and outcomes are supposed to be arranged in a logical and systematic way for both teachers and learners to follow the course. Learners are able to compare their performance before and after the time along with the course, which encourages self-evaluation, independence and collaboration

(Baki, 1994). In other words, students can get access to the data or document of their performance on the internet platform to see their results and gain feedback from teachers for further improvement. This also helps reducing unnecessary time for giving comments in classroom. Learners actively follow the instruction and solutions that teachers propose for academic learning purposes. Moreover, the portfolio brings about a more personalized learning method that is suitable for each learner because they are given feedback and advice individually. Melek (2015) claimed that teachers are able to make use of the portfolio to identify and determine the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum to modify and adjust to adapt to modern learning environment. It also allows learners to express their viewpoints, to be in charge of their learning processes and to witness their performance of whether they have achieved the goal of the course or not via the collection of evidences.

The role of autonomy in productive learning

Learners are frequently expected to master four skills to balance their language proficiency in academic sector; however, it is not an ease. Productive skills, especially writing, require learners to get long-term exposure to its genres with a variety of grammatical structures ranging from subjunctives to inversion. Thus, learning writing is a time-taking process in demand for investment of energy, effort and time. Nunan (2000) stated that learners have to gain insights in several linguistic issues such as lexical resource, grammatical structures and the way they express their ideas in a logical way. Coherent expressions are beneficial to bring smooth connotation to readers and comprehensive versions of writing will be produced. In EFL, writing a well-organized paragraph is even not an easy task as it includes the flexibility in idea arrangement, the understanding of content, the naturalness in the target language, and metacognitive strategies.

Aygun, et al. (2016) claimed that writing consists of a volume of challenges from brainstorming, outlining, and during the writing process. Nonetheless, the limit of time in classroom does not allow teachers to keep track with individual performance or personal weaknesses. As a result, learning autonomy is highly compulsory to improve writing skill in current academic world. Learners are recommended to actively opt for their topics of interest and invest time and effort in practicing exercises and gaining empirical experience in their life. Dickinson (1994) considered autonomy as active responsibility in learning process and decide the success of learning and teaching activities.

Moreover, Holec (1981) argued that autonomous learners are not only those who learn the language but also the ones who try to learn the strategies to language acquisition. Therefore, classroom lessons only provide learners with basic linguistic components with no regard to practical or life-long experience. Learners dominate the success of acquisition via their independence and activeness in gaining knowledge. Writing is not an exception. The main reason is writing represents who the writers are and their intellectual competence in critical analysis.

In addition, Sabitha (2013) defined language learning autonomy with three key aspects of learner involvement, learner reflection and appropriate use of language. First, autonomous writing learning is shown through how much learners participate in learning process inside and outside the classroom. It is evaluated on a continuous basis during the course and after school time via other means of assessment. Formative assessment can be conducted in classroom activities, personal participation, group discussion, and presentation. Second, it is the way learners build their plan, set their goals and develop their ideas during writing process. The outline of the paper content and its procedures in analysis contribute to optimize the quality of an academic paper. Third, the naturalness and suitability of language use is important as well to indicate their proficiency in the target language. In particular, the appropriateness of language use is based on the extent of similarity in expressions between two languages. Intercultural communication competence plays a role in ensuring the understandability and acceptability of one paper in the target cultures (Nguyen Thi Hong Thu & Nguyen Minh Tri, 2019)

Why integrate E-portfolio in academic writing?

Writing as a productive skill is regularly assessed with subjective and qualitative criteria but a single final test cannot fully indicate the competency of language learners during the process. Therefore, E-portfolio is the most suitable instrument of assessment in the case. Blair and Takayoshi (1997) declared that the popularity of portfolios is justifiable due to the availability of formative observation and analysis. E-portfolio is engaged with the evolution of digital era, especially in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 with the assistance of artificial intelligence (AI).

In comparison with traditional methods of learning data storage, E-portfolio is much more convenient. It is uploaded and available on the internet, which allows both teachers and learners to use and share with each other in an easy way. According to Madden (2007) the platform for interactions is deemed a forum for teacher-learner and peer discussion

on academic topics and writing issue. Moreover, it eradicates unnecessary tasks for teachers such as writing notes, collecting papers manually and the time and effort from students are cut down irrespective of proximity and time zone. This is also helpful for distance learning in the era of globalization. Most importantly, learners are able to make use of creative and lively visual aids such as pictures, animation, videos, and graphics. That can stimulate learners' engagement in academic writing. It is worth pointing out that in academic writing process, learners are the key control of success, so using E-portfolio helps learners search for information, data, and statistics, which actively stimulates their academic development.

Several scientific studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of portfolios in academic learning and most of which have shown positive results. Bacabac (2012) found the improvement of his learners in logical writing and competitiveness after applying the use of E-portfolio aiming to explore the functions in literacy.

METHODOLOGY

Setting and participants

The study was conducted in a writing class of 20 fifteen-year-old students at VUS English Center of Ba Hom branch. The participants were chosen as convenience sampling and they were coded from A1 to A20 to reduce the subjectivity of the researchers in analyzing the data. The frequency of classroom participation was two days a week, and a day had three hours of studying. Learners' English proficiency ranged from A2 to B1 in Common European Framework for Reference. The course outcomes were to help learners understand the format and the strategies to write a short paragraph of 80-100 words about common topics in academic styles. In addition, the survey lasted for eight weeks. Every week, students were instructed and required to submit their paper onto an online platform for receiving teacher feedback and peer comments. The forum was accessible for all class members to upload and download materials and marked papers. Then, the results and specification of strengths and limitations in learners' papers were recorded. This helped learners to realize their weaknesses and improvements over the time during the course.

Instruments

The data were collected through qualitative and quantitative approaches including observation, test (pre-test and post-test) writing performance, and mainly E-portfolio, and interview.

E-portfolio: All course information and materials were uploaded onto Google classroom. Students would check up their performance in this forum. In addition, this also stored their results along with the course

Test: a pre-test was delivered to learners to assess their levels at the beginning of the course. After the course, a post-test was taken to determine learners' achievement. The adoption of the standardized test tasks of course resources was applied to ensure the validity and reliability of the test. The marking criteria were based on four key academic factors of task achievement, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy, and coherence and cohesion.

Observation: learners were assigned to prepare for the lesson following the course outline provided in the portfolio. They were expected to brainstorm, write an outline, and search for further information of the topic. Teacher assessed their preparation based on engagement, idea contribution and participation in classroom

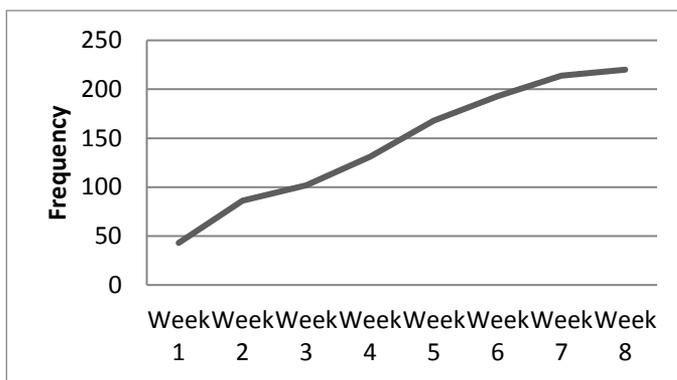
Interview: Open questions were given to investigate learners' attitudes to the new approach and their weaknesses during their study

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Interactions over the period

Figure 1

The frequency of online interactions



The line graph illustrates the frequency students interacted with their peers on the online platform during the course. It can be seen that the frequency experienced the considerable increase over the implementation of E-portfolio. In the first week, there were only 43 interactions recorded but in the next week the number doubled the

previous one at 86 times. Then, the figure went up slightly to 103 times in the third week. Subsequently, the trend was significantly upward to 214 times in the seventh week and then surged steadily to 220 at the end of the study. This means that when learners began the course, the level of interactions among learners was considerably low as they did not have chances and motivation to communicate with others outside the class. At the beginning of the course, learners were a little confused with the way to use E-portfolio, so they could not fully interact or get access to the platform as expected. However, the data showed positive change with the increase interactions after the very first trial in uploading, giving comments, receiving feedback on the classroom platform. As a result, the number of interactions increased over the time when learners got used to this new method. In other words, the degree of learner autonomy soared dramatically, which is represented by the fact that they invested more time into reading the papers of their peers to give feedback and they were willing to participate in discussion for further analysis and negotiation about the correctness and improvements of the papers. In comparison with 20 students, under 200 interactions were not really high. The case was caused by the distractions learners had to handle for public school time and the burden of school homework. Therefore, they could not totally concentrate on learning in this mode despite the considerable rise in interactions.

The comparison of learners' performance before and after the study

Table 1

The comparison of pre-test and post-test results

Paired Samples Statistics

		Statistic Bootstrap ^a				
			Bias	Std. Error	BCa 95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower	Upper
Pair 1 Pretest	Mean	5.28	.00	.00	.	.
	N	20				
	Std. Deviation	.939	.000	.000	.	.
	Std. Error Mean	.210				

	Mean	6.08	.00	.00	.	.
Posttest	N	20				
	Std. Deviation	.977	.000	.000	.	.
	Std. Error Mean	.218				

Paired Samples Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
				Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest - Posttest	-.800	.251	.056	-.918	-.682	14.236	19	.000

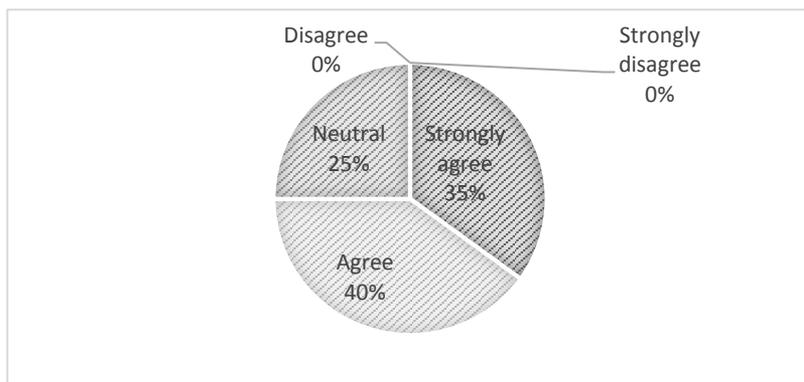
The chart represents the comparison of the scores learners achieved before and after the implementation of E-portfolio. It is obvious that the post-test's mean at 6.08 was higher than that of pre-test at 5.28, which indicates the improvement of learners during the course. Furthermore, sig. 000 was lower than 5% to show the significant disparity in statistics.

The improvement of learners' academic performance was noticeable over the period of time. The average score of the whole class increased by approximately one, which was considerable in eight weeks. The lack of the adequacy of time posed a number of difficulties for both teacher and learners to fully adapt and master the procedures to use E-portfolio. This means the application of e-portfolio was beneficial to enhance learners' competence in their writing skill. This is undeniable that the degree of discussions among learners contributed to the development of their writing performance.

Learners' attitudes towards the effectiveness of E-portfolio

Figure 2

Learners' attitudes towards the effectiveness of E-portfolio



The pie chart shows information on learners' belief to the effectiveness of applying E-portfolio in language learning. The majority of learners' expressed their agreement on the role of E-portfolio including 35% of *strongly agree* and 25% of *agree*. In addition, 40% of students chose neutral attitudes toward the question. In other words, the majority of learners considered E-portfolio as a useful instrument in their study with the flexibility of time and locations to get access and prepare for the lessons. It allowed them to read the papers of their classmates to learn from mistakes and review their papers for better academic writing. They did not have to struggle with the illegibility of their hand writing and carry a huge number of materials all the time.

The critical analysis of the interview and observation

In comparison with traditional teaching approaches, the application of E-portfolio encouraged learners to prepare for the lessons in a more careful way. In normal classrooms, learners do the preparation by themselves, but this method allowed them to discuss with their peers to figure out the issue and understand the topic in a more profound manner. Before classroom, learners could know the topic in the course outline and search for the information that they were interested in and brought them into classroom for discussion. As a result, they could analyze and comprehend the topics twice, which could strengthen their acquisition

In addition, learners expressed their excitement when they were allowed to read other peers' papers to collect ideas and check their

mistakes to avoid in the future. This was the ultimate convenience of E-portfolio instead of borrowing papers manually. Their papers were also commented with supportive and constructive feedback from both teacher and classmates. On the other hand, in classroom, they could easily understand the topic and confidently express their ideas which were meticulously prepared at home. It was shown in their active participation in classroom brainstorming or discussion.

Most importantly, learners could study at their pace. Every individual had their personal milestones, competency, and learning styles. E-portfolio helped them to keep track with their style which created the comfort and flexibility in language learning of linguistic components in academic writing. Therefore, it played an important role in maintaining learners' motivation even in difficult situations.

IMPLICATION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of the study have shown promising implications to apply E-portfolio widely in every classroom. First, this is a flexible and constructive platform for learners and teacher to discuss, prepare, and interact with each other in the absence of limitations of geographical locations or time. Learner autonomy is subsequently enhanced in a purposeful manner. Second, this method allows learners to be independent thinkers in academic writing. They are the key to control and decide the success of writing lessons via their autonomy.

Third, the data collection about learners' performance, achievement, and progress helped teachers to realize the weaknesses of learners to re-consider or justify the program to suit learners' demand and learning style. It also gives learners an opportunity to actively follow their performance throughout the course. Hence, they could minimize their limitations and optimize their strength.

In conclusion, the implementation of e-portfolio as a learning tool has shown its significant role in empowering learners' writing skill at VUS center. It is clear from the result that e-portfolio is applicable as the source of motivation to enhance learner autonomy to communicate and interact with other peers outside the class. Also, it acts as the evidence for learners' self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher's supervision during the course to provide appropriate instructions for learners' improvement. Hence, the average score of the class has noticeably increased. It is still recommended that further research should be conducted to investigate the intervention of personality in learning autonomy to maximize the effectiveness of writing classroom.

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USING TERMS OF BLOOM'S DIGITAL TAXONOMY IN REVISING THE PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS OF AN ONLINE PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

This paper is to propose a course syllabus (Paragraph Writing course used for students of online learning programs at Ho Chi Minh City Open University) rewritten using terms in Bloom's Digital Taxonomy. Firstly, the paper review the terms used in Bloom's Digital Taxonomy. Secondly, the revised Paragraph Writing course syllabus will be suggested.

Keywords: *Bloom's digital taxonomy*

INTRODUCTION

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, with the mission of facilitating and promoting an active learning society by offering the most flexible and obtainable methods of education to students in Vietnam ("The Decision 389/Ttg - at 26/7/1993 - signed by the Prime Minister on the foundation of Ho Chi Minh City Institute of Open Education established on June 15th, 1990 according to the Decision 451/Ttg signed by the Minister of Education and Training") has made a real effort to activate the e-learning network since 2004. However, the shortage of the application of the ICT in teaching and the stagnant of the staff and teaching staff, made the network sustained or just used as "learning forum". From 2010, the popular access of the Internet in Vietnam made e-learning an inevitable trend of learning and teaching in this period. As the result, E-learning Center was established in 2016. This center has now managed the training for 6 faculties with Bachelor degrees and has all the abilities to hold many e-learning courses for distance programs. ("Decision on the Management of training and assessment in Distance education - 1263 /QĐ-ĐHM", 10/08/2017). Online Bachelor's Degree of English Language is one of the first Bachelor training programmes and the preparation began in 2014. Paragraph Writing course was conducted from 2014 to 2016 and implemented in 2016. After four years, the course syllabuses should be revised with two main reasons. First, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) has a profound impact on education: teaching and learning has widely employed the application

of technological innovations in ICT to facilitate the students' studying (Haseeb, 2018). Therefore, the innovation of the programme in general and

each course in specific becomes urgent and challenging. Second, after 4 years of implementation, the course syllabus needs standardizing in the alignment with the plan of up-dated programme every five years.

In reality, we are not allowed to access to any sources of the course syllabus from other universities that run the online training programs in Vietnam as well as in other countries; therefore, the paper tries to initiate the revision of a course syllabus (Paragraph Writing course used for students of Online learning program at Ho Chi Minh City Open University) with the deployment of additional terms in Bloom's Digital Taxonomy.

BLOOM'S DIGITAL TAXONOMY

According to Bloom (1956), learning process fitted into one of the three psychological domains (cognitive: processing information, knowledge and mental skills, affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas, and psychomotor: manual or physical skills). The original Bloom's taxonomy follows the cognitive domain which was defined as:

It is the domain in which most of the work in curriculum development has taken place and where the clearest definitions of objectives are to be found phrased as descriptions of student behavior. For these reasons we started our work here, and this is the first of our work to be published. (p.7)

The original taxonomy was presented six major categories in the cognitive domain ranging from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills. In his review of the revision of Bloom's taxonomy, Krathwohl (2002) assumed that "The original Taxonomy represented a cumulative hierarchy; that is mastery of each simpler category was prerequisite to mastery of the next more complex one"(p.212), and its application in educational settings helps reduce teachers' burden in preparation for comprehensive tests.

In 2001, Bloom's former student L. W. Anderson and D. R. Krathwohl revised Bloom's original taxonomy under two dimensions: the Knowledge dimension and Cognitive process dimension. To describe the intended learning outcomes, the objectives should include the content (written in noun phrases) and the description of what is to be done with that content (written in verb phrases). Consider "Students will be able

to write a descriptive paragraph.” as an example of an objective in which “write” is the verb and “descriptive paragraph” is the noun phrase.

Bloom's Revised Taxonomy is also presented in six categories ranging from lower-order thinking skills to higher-order thinking skills. However, noun phrases in each category are substituted by verb phrases and there is the changes in the position of the fifth (analysis) and the highest order of thinking (evaluation).

With the technological advancement and the popular application of ICT in teaching, learning and daily life in the 21st century, the revisited taxonomy by Anderson and Krathwohl cannot address adequately the process as well as the digital activities and tools used in the teaching and learning process. Therefore, Churches (2008) revised it by added digital verbs (written in bold-face type) that associate with each level while the arrangement as well as the hierarchy of each category and the original verbs presented in Bloom Revised Taxonomy still remain. These digital verbs describe more activities and tools used to engage, facilitate educational online in the digital environment.

Table 1

Bloom's Digital Taxonomy (Churches, 2008)

Higher- Order Thinking Skills
CREATING: designing, constructing, planning, producing, inventing, devising, making, programming, filming, animating, blogging, video blogging, mixing, re-mixing, wikiing, directing, broadcasting
EVALUATING: checking, hypothesizing, critiquing, experimenting, judging, testing, detecting, monitoring, blog commenting, reviewing, posting, moderating, collaboration, networking, refactoring, testing
ANALYSING: comparing, organising, deconstructing, attributing, outlining, finding, structuring, integrating, mashing, linking, validating, reverse engineering, cracking, media clipping
APPLYING: carrying out, using, executing, implementing, showing, exhibiting, running, loading, playing, operating, hacking, uploading, sharing, editing
UNDERSTANDING: interpreting, summarising, inferring, paraphrasing, classifying, comparing, explaining, exemplifying,

advanced and Boolean searches, blog journaling, twittering, categorizing and tagging, commenting, annotating, subscribing

REMEMBERING: recognising, listing, describing, identifying, retrieving, naming, locating, finding, **bullet pointing, highlighting, bookmarking, social networking, social bookmarking, favouriting/local bookmarking, searching/googling**

Lower-Order Thinking Skills

In the lowest rank of thinking skills, remembering means “retrieving, recalling or recognizing knowledge from long-term memory” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.30). This means the learners are asked to present definitions, facts or lists, or recite or retrieve material. Some digital verbs are suggested with the aims of facilitating the growth of knowledge via the collection of material (Churches, 2008) such as bookmarking (marking for later use web sites, resources and files), social networking (developing networks of friends and associates), searching or “googling” (using search engines to research at the simplest level).

In understanding level, “constructing meaning from different types of function” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.30) is implied. In this level students are expected to interpret, paraphrase, summarise, classify, explain, exemplify and compare. Churches (2008) introduced Advanced and Boolean Searching (using search engines to research at the higher level), blog journaling (using a blog to note a daily or task specific journal), categorising and tagging (grouping files, web sites and materials using folders, or other similar tools, or tag the web pages), commenting and annotating (developing understanding by commenting on pages, discussion board). These help students maximize their understanding. For example, advanced searching requires students “a greater depth of understanding to be able to create, modify and refine searches to suit their search needs”, and blog journaling really “help develop higher level thinking when it is used for discussion and collaboration” (Churches, 2008, p.12)

Applying is in the third level of thinking skills. This refers to a procedure of making a product (models, presentations, interviews and so on) through executing or implementing the learned knowledge and skills. The digital additions such as running and operating a program, editing (using digital tool to edit a video, text, or sound tools) are introduced. Among these activities, uploading and sharing materials to websites is evaluated a form of collaboration (a higher level thinking skill) (Church, 2008, p.20).

Analysing level uses mental activities like differentiating, organizing and attributing to “break material or concepts into parts, determining how the parts relate or interrelate to one another or to an overall structure or purpose” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.30). Some digital additions such as mashing (making the integration of several data sources into a single resource), linking (establishing and building links within and outside of documents and web pages), cracking (understanding and operate the application or system being cracked, analysing its strengths and weaknesses and then exploit these) help facilitate the mental actions (Churches, 2008, p. 27).

“Evaluating is making judgments based on criteria and standards through checking and critiquing” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.30). According to Churches (2008) the levels of evaluation can be ranked from the simple forms such as using blog/vlog, discussion boards, threaded discussions to post comments and reflection to complicated forms such as moderating (evaluating a posting or comment from a variety of perspectives, assessing its worth, value and appropriateness), collaborating (evaluating the strengths and abilities of the participants and evaluating the contribution they make) and networking (contacting and communicating with relevant person via a network of associates).

The highest level of thinking skill is creating. In this stage students put “elements together to form a novel, coherent whole or to make an original product” (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001, p.30). In fact, the learners learn to put elements together, reorganise (through generating, planning or producing) to produce a result. The digital additions are as follows: programming (creating students’ own programs to suit their needs and goals) filming, animating, videocasting, podcasting, mixing and remixing to produce unique products, publishing in text, media or digital formats via the web or from home computers (Churches, 2008, p.36).

In real teaching contexts, Nicolic and Dabic (2016) stated that the digital application apparently helps students “activate higher level of thinking, learn to navigate in the digital world and individually and collaboratively apply theoretical knowledge, both in practice and digital world” (p.320). This research also addressed the specific benefits such as the developing of collaboration among students via Facebook, the chances to practice their self-directed manner as well as their creativity, their higher involvement in the performance under the pressure of being observed by other people, and the progress in their literacies and fluencies as a result.

Hina and Munawar (2109) revealed the reality of frequent use digital resource to improve academic outcomes as well as the performance of lower and higher thinking of teachers and students in Virtual University (Pakistan). Under the demand of open and distance learning (ODL) environment, all the teaching and learning process are conducted via the use of technology devices to maximize the academic outcomes in the respect to different level of thinking of Bloom's Digital Taxonomy.

However, the verbs list and tools associated with each level of thinking merely facilitate the teachers to conduct teaching process and students to actively engage in their learning process (Sneed, 2016). In additions, the accordance of the verbs list is not pertinent to the digital activities or tools. A number of tools can be used for different purposes i.e. Facebook is used for creating, sharing, interacting (Cardoso, 2019). Nikolic (2016) and Hina (2019) also marked the frequent change and the popularity of the tool in different context and time.

PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

Paragraph Writing course, which is the first course among the three courses that teach English Language writing skill, is conducted in the second semester in the curriculum of the Online Bachelor Degree in English Language at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. This course provides students knowledge and skills in writing five kinds of paragraphs: descriptive paragraphs, example paragraphs, process paragraphs, opinion paragraphs and narrative paragraphs. The syllabus was built with the objectives based on Benjamin S. Bloom's Original Taxonomy (The stipulation of building online courses at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, 2016).

This is the excerpt of the Paragraph Writing course syllabus, focusing on the description of course objectives, unit objectives (two first Units in the course) and assessments.

PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

I. Course Information

1. Course Title: PARAGRAPH WRITING
2. Faculty: Faculty of Foreign Languages
3. Number of Credits: 3
4. Duration: 10 weeks + 2 weeks of extension
5. Web base: www.lms.elo.edu.vn

II. Course Overview

1. Course Description

Paragraph Writing, which equips students majoring in English Language writing skill, is conducted in the second semester in the curriculum of the Online Bachelor Degree in English Language at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. This course provides students knowledge and skills in writing five kinds of paragraphs: descriptive paragraphs, example paragraphs, process paragraphs, opinion paragraphs and narrative paragraphs.

2. Course Objectives

After fulfilling the course, students will be able to:

Table 2

Paragraph Writing Course Objectives

Course Objectives	Description
1	- Recognizing the structure of a descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph, and language used in each kind of paragraphs.
2	- Evaluating the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used in each kind of paragraphs.
3	- Writing a descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph.
4	- Becoming highly aware of their responsibility for collaborating effectively with peers; avoid plagiarism.

3. Unit Objectives: (cited two among six Units)

Table 3*Unit objectives*

	Unit Objectives	Description
Unit 1: SENTENCES TO PARAGRAPHS	Recognize the structure of a paragraph.	Recognize the structure of a paragraph: topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence.
	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity.	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph: supporting points and details arranged in logical order, the coherence and unity.
	Write a topic sentence	Write a topic sentence
	Develop a paragraph	Develop a paragraph by using questions (guided questions).
	Correct errors in writing sentences	Correct sentence problems: fragments, comma splices and run-on sentences, choppy sentences and stringy sentences.
Unit 2: DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS	Recognize the structure of a descriptive paragraph on people, things or places	Recognize the structure of a descriptive paragraph: topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence.
	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph (space order) the coherence and unity	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph: topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence; supporting points arranged in space order; the coherence and unity

Write a descriptive paragraph	<p>Choose appropriate supporting points and details using questions what, how or why.</p> <p>Make an outline using the space order.</p> <p>Write the first draft and edit the paper with the <u>editor's checklist provided.</u></p> <p>Choose appropriate word and phrases (descriptive words, sequence connectors). Use descriptive adjectives, prepositional phrases in descriptions.</p>
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4. Course Assessment

Table 4

Course Assessment

Assessment Tools	Weighting (%)
Discussion board	10%
Peer review	10%
Exercises in LMS	10%
Assignment	20%
Final test	50%
Total score:	100%

5. Course Policies

While attending this course, online students must participate in all the Units in the course. If one Unit is skipped, the following Unit will not be opened. Students must watch the videos, slides, and scripts of the video. After these activities are marked completed, they are allowed to access

the following collective exercises, peer editing tasks, and assignments to practice and get marks. Students write comments on five discussion boards and participate in two video conferences during the course. They are encouraged to access the suggested Internet links to expand the knowledge taught in the course.

6. Textbook and References

Students learn via tutorial videos, slides, scripts, tasks and assignments provided on the Moodle base (LMS). The reference books are written versions of Longman English Grammar Practice, and books that instruct paragraph writing from Hogue (2008), Keith(2010), and Savage (2007).

ADJUSTED PARAGRAPH WRITING COURSE SYLLABUS

Krathwohl (2002) stated that:

The Taxonomy of Educational Objectives is a scheme for classifying educational goals, objectives, and, most recently, standards. It provides an organizational structure that gives a commonly understood meaning to objectives classified in one of its categories, thereby enhancing communication. (p. 218)

Therefore, the structure, which shows a clear, concise relationship of objectives, activities, and assessments in a course and within a Unit in a course, will help the teachers “examine relative emphasis, curriculum alignment, and missed educational opportunities” (Krathwohl, 2002). It also helps the teachers recognize the area in the syllabus to improve and plan how and when to adjust their delivery of instructions.

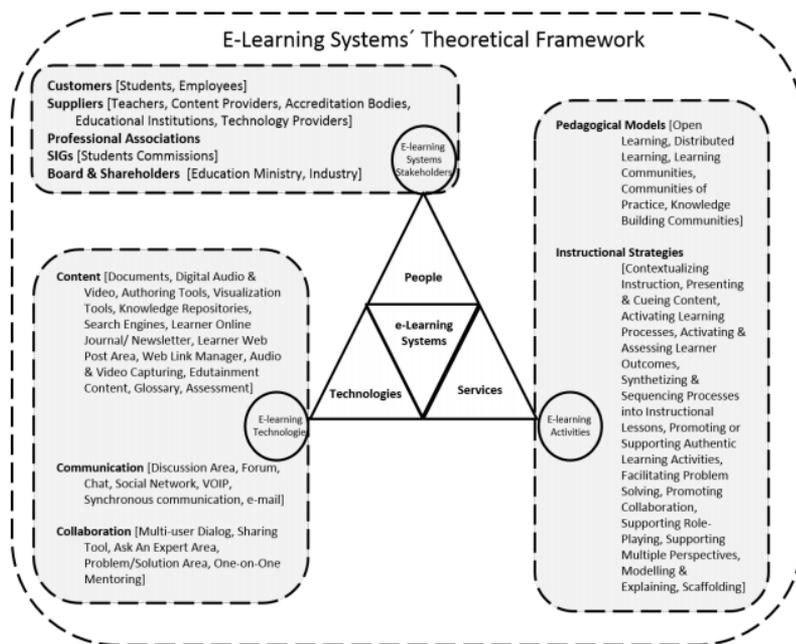
Apparently, the Syllabus of Paragraph Writing course does not show the relationships between what are taught (objectives) and the test items (discussion board, conference, peer editing) (see Table 2 and 4). Moreover, there are not any clear descriptions of the relationship of the course objectives and the learning outcomes in each Unit. Moreover, due to the use of Bloom’s Original Taxonomy, the syllabus does not include any digital verbs while the assessment tools (Table 4) and the course policies require several activities operated via digital tools such as video, audio, slides, conferencing, and forum.

Actually, the nature of the program is the e-learning framework (“The stipulation of building online courses at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, 2016”). This means that the framework consists of three components: people, technologies, and services (Apario, Bacao, & Oliveira, 2016).

Figure 1

E-learning systems theoretical framework

(Apario, et al., 2016)



This framework has three components. First, people (students, teachers, Educational institutions, Ministry of Education and Training and so on) interact with e-learning system. Second, technologies facilitate the integration of the content (documents, videos, audio, search engines and so on), enable communication with social network, forum, chat, discussion board, and provided tools (sharing tools) to help the users collaborate. Third, E-learning services are the activities aligned with the e-learning pedagogical models and the instructional strategies (Apario, et al.,2016).

Accordingly, Oliver and Herrigton stated that technologies support a learning environment of collaboration and in three areas in learning: resource, supports and activities (as cited in Apario, et.al.,2016). In fact, learning resources are introduced via tutorial videos, audios, graphics or animation while online database or search engines will help solving problem. Technologies assist effectively collaboration or scaffolding with forums, video conferencing, chat, sharing tools.

Table 5

Instructional strategies and the correspondent technologies' functionalities (Apario, et al.,2016)

Strategies Technologies	Authentic activities	Problem solving	Role playing	Articulation & reflection	Collaboration & negotiation	Multi-perspectives	Modeling & explaining	Scaffolding	Authors
Graphics	✓								(Dabbagh, 2005; Hannafin et al., 1997)
Digital audio & video components	✓								
Animation	✓								
Hypermedia	✓								
Authoring tools	✓								
Synchronous discussion area		✓							(Dabbagh, 2005; McLoughlin & Oliver, 1999)
Online databases/ knowledge repositories		✓							
Search engines		✓				✓			
Multi-user dialog			✓						(Dabbagh, 2005; McLoughlin & Oliver, 1999)
Virtual reality			✓						
Forums				✓		✓			
Learner web-post area				✓			✓		
Learner online journal				✓					
Sharing tool				✓					
Video conferencing				✓				✓	
Chat				✓			✓	✓	
Web links manager						✓		✓	
"Ask the expert" area/link						✓			
Solution/problems area							✓		(Dabbagh, 2005; Jonassen et al., 1997)
Digital area audio/video capturing							✓		
One-on-one mentoring								✓	(Dabbagh, 2005; McLoughlin & Oliver, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978)
Glossary								✓	
Assessment		✓	✓					✓	

Below are the **course objectives (1)** and **course outcomes (2)**, and **assessment (4)** rewritten with the implementation of Bloom’s digital Taxonomy. The illustration of the course objectives and outcomes in each Unit will be presented in the excerpt of Unit 2 (Descriptive Paragraphs) in the course **(3)**.

1. Course Objectives

This course aims to help students:

Table 6

Course Objectives (revised)

Course Objectives (CO)	Description
CO1	Recognize the structure of a descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph, and language used in each kind of paragraphs.
CO2	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence, unity and language used in each kind of paragraphs.
CO3	Write a descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph.
CO4	Search, select, and categorize the information/techniques from other sources to maximize the knowledge and skills.
CO5	Become highly aware of their responsibility for collaborating effectively with peers.

2. Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

Table 7

Course Learning Outcomes (revised)

Course Objectives (CO)	Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	Description
CO1	CLO1.1	Recognize the structure of a paragraph

		by watching the instructional videos, and reading slides and script which record the teacher's instructions. <i>(checked if finished in LMS)</i>
	CLO1.2	Demonstrate comprehensive and extensive knowledge of paragraph organization: topic sentence, supporting sentences (supporting points/details), concluding sentence. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>
	CLO1.3	Demonstrate comprehensive and extensive knowledge of language used in writing paragraphs. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>
CO2	CLO2.1	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used in each kind of paragraphs. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>
	CLO2.2	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used in Peer editing practice using Peer's checklist and annotated text. <i>(assessed in Peer editing section in LMS)</i>
	CLO2.3	Self-evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used. <i>(checked if finished in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
CO3	CLO3.1	Make outlines (controlling ideas, supporting points, supporting details) using appropriate organization and information collected. <i>(assessed in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
	CLO3.2	Write paragraphs (descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph). <i>(assessed in</i>

Assignments section in LMS)

CO4	CLO4.1	Select at least 25 items related to 5 kinds of paragraphs in the course and store in bookmarks students create in Firefox or Google Chrome. <i>(checked if finished in the Selection section in LMS)</i>
	CLO4.2	Search for information, vocabulary, structures to write a paragraph using search engines such as <i>Google</i> or <i>CốcCốc</i> and so on. <i>(checked in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
CO5	CLO5.1	Participate and contribute to the conferences designed for the course. <i>(assessed in Video Conference in LMS)</i>
	CLO5.2	Post comments on the threaded discussions. <i>(assessed in the Discussion Board in LMS)</i>
	CLO5.3	Post the revised paragraphs (descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph) on Exhibition section. <i>(assessed in Exhibition section in LMS)</i>
	CLO5.4	Post annotated text and Peer’s editing checklist in peer editing practice. <i>(checked if finished in Peer editing section in LMS)</i>

3. Unit Goals and Learning Outcomes (cited one out of six Units of the course)

Table 8

Unit Goals and Learning Outcomes (revised)

Unit	Course Description e Object	Course Description Learning Outcome
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	ives		s	
	(CO)		(CLO)	
Unit 2: DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPHS	CO1	Recognize the structure of a descriptive paragraph on people, things or places. Recognize language used in descriptive paragraphs	CLO1.1	Recognize the structure of a paragraph by watching the instructional videos, and reading slides and script which record the teacher's instructions. (checked if finished in LMS)
			CLO1.2	Demonstrate comprehensive and extensive knowledge of a descriptive paragraph structure: topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence. (assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)
			CLO1.3	Demonstrate comprehensive and extensive knowledge of language used in descriptive paragraphs. (assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)
	CO2	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph (space order) the coherence, unity, and language used in	CLO2.1	Evaluate the organization of descriptive paragraphs: topic sentence, supporting sentences, concluding sentence; supporting points arranged in space order; the coherence, unity, and language used in

	descriptive paragraphs		descriptive paragraphs. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>
		CLO2.2	Evaluate a descriptive paragraph from a peer. Evaluate the organization, coherence, unity, and language used using Peer's checklist and annotated text. <i>(assessed in Peer editing section in LMS)</i>
		CLO2.3	Self-evaluate the organization of the descriptive paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used. <i>(checked if finished in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
CO3	Write a descriptive paragraph.	CLO3.1	Make an outline (controlling ideas, supporting points, supporting details) using appropriate organization. <i>(assessed in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
		CLO3.2	Write a descriptive paragraph. <i>(assessed in Assignments section in LMS)</i>
CO4	Search, select, and categorize the information/techniques	CLO4.1	Select at least 5 models of descriptive paragraphs or descriptive writing. Add the list with structures or vocabulary building

	from other sources		used in description and store them in the bookmarks created from Firefox or Google Chrome. <i>(assessed in the Selection section in LMS)</i>
		CL04.2	Search for information, vocabulary, structures to write a descriptive paragraph using search engines such as Google or CốcCốc and so on. <i>(checked in Assignments in LMS)</i>
C05	Collaboration	CL05.1	Participate and contribute to the conference 1 (hosted by 3 volunteer students). <i>(assessed in Video Conference in LMS)</i>
		CL05.2	Post comments on the threaded discussions. Topics for the discussions: 1. <i>What factor is the most difficult factor when you write a descriptive paragraph, using the appropriate vocabulary & sentence structures, making a logical organization, or finding the way to make the paragraph flow smoothly?</i> 2. <i>If you are asked to describe a person/a thing, what do you</i>

	<i>mainly focus on your description?</i>
	<i>(assessed in the Discussion Board in LMS)</i>
CL05.3	Post the revised paragraph on Exhibition section. <i>(assessed in Exhibition section in LMS)</i>
CL05.4	Post annotated text and Peer’s editing checklist in peer editing practice. <i>(checked if finished on Peer editing section in LMS)</i>

4. Course Assessment

Table 9

Course Assessment (revised)

Assessment Tools	Course Learning Outcomes	Weighting (%)
Exercises in LMS	CL01.1; CL01.2; CL0 2.1	10%
Discussion board		
<i>Students’ responds to questions and comments in 6 Discussion Boards</i>	CL05.2	6%
Video Conference		
<i>Students’ questions and comments in 2 Conferences</i>	CL05.1	4%
Assignments		

<i>Write a paragraph</i>	CLO 3.2	10%
<i>Tasks in Assignment sections</i>	CLO 4.1	5%
<i>Making an outline</i>	CLO3.1	5%
Peer review	CLO2.2	5%
Exhibition	CLO5.3	5%
Final test	CLO 3.2	50%
<i>Write a paragraph</i>		
Total score:		100%

DISCUSSION

Table 11 illustrates the places of each course objectives and outcomes in the Taxonomy Table. The verbs used are ranged from **understand to create**. The supports of technology are also presented clearly in the syllabus.

Table 10

The placement of the course objectives and outcomes in the Taxonomy Table

Course Objectives	Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	remember	understand	apply	analyse	evaluate	create
C01	Recognize the structure of a paragraph by watching the instructional videos, and reading slides and script which record the teacher's instructions. <i>(checked if finished in LMS)</i>	X	X				
	Demonstrate comprehensive	X	X				

Objectives Course	Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	remember	understand	apply	analyse	evaluate	create
	and extensive knowledge of paragraph organization: topic sentence, supporting sentences (supporting points/details), concluding sentence. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>						
	Demonstrate comprehensive and extensive knowledge of language used in writing paragraphs. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>	X	X				
C02	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used in each kind of paragraphs. <i>(assessed in the exercises posted in LMS)</i>					X	
	Evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used in Peer editing practice using Peer's checklist and annotated text. <i>(assessed in Peer editing section in LMS)</i>					X	
	Self-evaluate the organization of the paragraph, the coherence and unity, and language used. <i>(checked if finished on Assignments section in LMS)</i>					X	

Objectives Course	Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	remember	understand	apply	analyse	evaluate	create
C03	Make outlines (controlling ideas, supporting points, supporting details) using appropriate organization. <i>(checked if finished in Assignments section in LMS)</i>			X			
	Write paragraphs (descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph). <i>(assessed in Assignments section in LMS)</i>						X
C04	Select at least 25 items related to 5 kinds of paragraphs in the course and store in bookmarks students create in Firefox or Google Chrome. <i>(assessed in the Assignments section in LMS)</i>	X	X				
	Search for information, vocabulary, structures to write a paragraph using search engines such as Google or CốcCốc and so on. <i>(checked in Assignments section in LMS)</i>	X	X				
C05	Participate and contribute to the conferences designed for the course. <i>(assessed in Video Conference in LMS)</i>					X	
	Post comments on the threaded discussions. <i>(assessed in the Discussion Board in LMS)</i>					X	

Objectives Course	Course Learning Outcomes (CLO)	remember	understand	apply	analyse	evaluate	create
	Post the revised paragraphs (descriptive paragraph, example paragraph, process paragraph, opinion paragraph and narrative paragraph) on Exhibition section. (<i>assessed in Exhibition section in LMS</i>)						X
	Post annotated text and Peer's editing checklist in peer editing practice. (<i>checked if finished on Peer editing section in LMS</i>)					X	

The learning and teaching process are all under the management of LMS. Activities for remember and understanding levels are facilitated with tutorial videos, slides, exercises. Other activities such as searching and collecting data for referencing using search engines and bookmarks created in Firefox or Google Chrome are in the lower level of thinking, but they help activate higher levels of thinking: analysing with outlining activity (Nikolic & Dabic, 2016). Editing activities are also assisted with technologies such as reviewing function in Microsoft Words or the helps from digital dictionaries or webs that checks plagiarism such as <https://www.duplichecker.com/>. These digital activities help learners manipulate and develop the ability to collaborate and moderate each other's work (Nikolic& Dabic, 2016, p.318-319).

Another digital activity *Post comments on the threaded discussions* is designed to facilitate the collaboration between learners and teachers, or between learners and learners (Churches, 2018). The learners often respond to questions or topics raised by their teacher, mostly to check their understanding the content of the Units. Students can share tips or problem solving in their writing. They can also leave comments or debate to their friends' responds. One more digital activity is conferencing. There are two conferences during the Paragraph Writing course. The first conference is planned and hosted by students on LMS (BigBlue) to share their learning tips, exchange learning difficulties and

ways to overcome, share their rich source of sites or learning resources, or present their contributions to the content and communication during the course. The other conference is hosted by the teacher respond to the learners' queries. This activity is assessed using the rubric built by Churches (2008).

Finally, the highest level of thinking, creating, is practiced with the exhibition of students' revised paragraphs (after self-editing and peer editing practice) in the Exhibition section where all the students in the course can visit and leave comments. (Churches, 2018; Nikolic & Dabic, 2016; Lee, 2016).

The clarity of the alignment of the course objectives, course outcomes, and assessments is reflected in the course assessment. The tasks and exercises that need grading (i.e. assessed in Assignment section in LMS) and those that need fulfilling to get the permission to access the next part of the Unit (i.e. checked if finished in Assignment section in LMS) are listed with the locations where students have to work on or submit their work.

CONCLUSION

Actually, the online course Paragraph Writing is conducted under the management of LMS with the aids of technologies such as forum, video conferencing, discussion board. However, the syllabus was built without the use of digital verbs, which indicate clearly the activities as well as the cognitive process in the digital context (Nikolic & Dabic, 2016). As the result, the syllabus cannot present the alignment of the course objectives, course outcomes, and assessments. This prevents the teachers and students to "determine the congruence of educational objectives, activities, and assessments in a unit, course, or curriculum" (Krathwohl, 2001). The objectives and outcomes of the revised syllabus improves the above defects and adds some other digital activities to help the learners maximize their level of thinking during the course such as creating the bookmarks to store, review, and revise the information found on the Internet, using tools in Words to edit the paragraph, using free sites to check plagiarism, and exhibiting students' writing on the local site.

However, the limitation of legal access to other course syllabuses of online programmes from other local and foreign universities prevents the writer from accumulating an overview as well as the experience of composing an online course syllabus. This leaves a further study to perfect the online Writing course syllabus and other subjects.

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TECHNOLOGY

ATTITUDES TOWARDS FACEBOOK-BASED ACTIVITIES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AMONG NON-ENGLISH MAJORS

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of Facebook, a type of social networking site, has great impacts on education in general and English language education in specific. Facebook enhanced language learning activities have been in widely used in many ESL/EFL contexts. In the context of Vietnam, however, Facebook-based activities (FBA) for English language learning (ELL) seem controversial. This paper, therefore, endeavors to explore the attitudes towards FBA for English language learning of non-English majors at Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport. This study involved 232 non-English majors in answering questionnaires. The results revealed that although research participants were aware of the benefits in learning English and showed positive affection for FBA, but they still faced a dilemma about FBA for English language learning. This study further found out that both male students and female counterparts shared similar positive attitudes towards FBA for English language learning. Such preliminary findings are hoped to contribute to a better understanding of the influence of FBA for English language learning and shed light on further research in the current context and other similar ones.

Keywords: *attitude, English language learning, Facebook, non-English major*

INTRODUCTION

With the rapid growth of Internet and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in the 21st century, the methods of teaching and learning in general and English language teaching and learning in particular have undergone numerous adjustments (e.g., Mazman & Uslue, 2010; Tran, 2018; Tran, Duong & Huynh, 2019). Therefore, the

incorporation of social networking sites (SNS) like Facebook into the English teaching classroom becomes a supplementary learning tool and is also related to a connectivist learning paradigm that recognizes the tectonic changes in society where learning is no longer an internal, and individualistic practice. Moreover, learning has evolved in three ways in which we learn, how we learn, and where we learn. In particular, for online learners who can learn with other people anywhere and whenever they want by using online resources to build their learning contents (Baker, 2011). Thanks to Facebook's presence, it is noticed that it has changed the way people interact and become a medium for bringing other people together. Besides, using Facebook aims at sharing and conducting online discussion. According to Monica-Ariana and Anamaria - Mirabela (2014), relying on textbooks and course books for increasing only the English level of proficiency and fluency will not yield immediate and proficient advantages. Instead of sitting in a typical class with boring traditional methods of teaching and learning, teachers and students can follow various types of active strategies of teaching and learning through the use of SNS, particularly Facebook. Facebook is undeniably a popular website which allows users to connect and collaborate together in a virtual world (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Furthermore, using Facebook as an alternative teaching and learning tool is one part in distance learning where students can improve their autonomy and enhance their interactions outside the classroom.

In terms of students' attitudes, several studies have been recently conducted to achieve in-depth insights into this topic. The research conducted by Gardner and Lambert (1972) on the role of attitude in language acquisition highlights that attitude is a very important motivational ingredient which actively contributes to learning a different language. Obviously, students with positive attitudes towards second/foreign language learning are found to become higher achievers in developing language proficiency than students with more negative attitudes. Specifically, positive attitudes, along with conscious awareness of educational benefits of Facebook-based activities are the key factors that help students to reinforce their learning ability, attain insightful comprehension on conceptual knowledge and promote more independent language. This means that when students have positive attitudes towards Facebook-based activities (FBA) that are correlated with their own lives, they have a tendency to acquire in-depth knowledge to resolve difficult situations in the real life more effectively.

According to Nham and Nguyen (2013), SNS, particularly Facebook, has grown tremendously in all aspects of life in general and has made

considerable impacts on the lives of the students in specific. In Viet Nam, due to its success and advantages, Facebook has been commonly used by students and teachers with educational purposes. Students can participate in online learning groups to communicate and discuss academic work with their peers and teachers. Moreover, they also share and access abundant online resources outside classrooms for enhancing their life-long learning (Le, 2018). In the age of Industry 4.0 (known as the fourth industrial revolution in manufacturing and industry), students at Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport have become familiar with using FBA to learn English. It is clear that they often use Facebook to serve their chief learning purposes which are interacting, sharing and discussing with their friends about knowledge, lessons, assignments, tasks, etc. To raise conscious awareness of the attitudes of the students towards FBA for English language learning, this study is only intended to examine attitudes towards the use of FBA among non-English majors at Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport. In the present study, the research question is formulated as follows:

What are the attitudes of non-English majors towards using FBA at Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport for English language learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The definition of attitude has been described in a number of ways, and numerous studies have been conducted on learners' attitudes to achieve profound insights into this topic and explore how attitudes have considerable influences on the achievement of language learning by psychologists and educational researchers. Rokeach (1968; as cited in Richardson (1996), defined attitude as "a relatively lasting arrangement of beliefs around an object or circumstance that predisposes one to react in a preferential way" (p.112). Another concept came from Allport (1967), who described his concept as "a mental and neural state of preparation, organized by experience, exercising guidance or dynamic control over the person's response to all the objects and circumstances associated with it" (p.8). Gardner (1980) also described attitude as "the sum total of a man's instincts and feelings, bias or partiality, preconceived ideas, fears, challenges, and convictions on any particular subject" (p.267).

Additionally, Baker (1992) defined attitude as "a conceptual concept used to describe human behavior's course and persistence" (p.10). Nonetheless, according to Wenden's (1991) broader concept of attitudes, there are three interrelated constituents of attitudes, namely cognitive, affective and behavioral factors. Firstly, the affective

components concern aspects related to the thoughts and emotions of a person towards objects of disposition, for example, “likes” or “dislikes”, “with” or “against”. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) defined the affective factors as the “thoughts, moods, emotions, and sympathetic behavior of the nervous system that people have encountered in relation to and subsequently associate with an object of attitude” (p.272). These authors claim that affective portion is primarily focused on subjective perceptions and desires. Regarding Facebook-based activities, when students have positive or negative attitudes towards using FBA for learning language, these factors can have obvious effects on their language learning strategies. Secondly, the behavioral component of an attitude includes tendencies, behaviors or measurable reactions of an individual to respond or behave towards the objects in particular ways. It requires the (favorable or unfavorable) response of the individual to do something concerning artifacts of the attitude (Jain, 2014). Thirdly, the cognitive components are those aspects related to views, thoughts or perceptions about the objects of attitude. The cognitive aspect involves many of mental activities and brain (Isti & Istikharoh, 2019). Schiffman and Kanuk (2004) indicates that the cognitive factor consists of knowledge and expectations which can be identified in different sources by combining interactions with the objects of attitude and relevant details. To conclude, the affective component is the emotional response (likes or dislikes) towards an object of attitude, whereas the component of behavior is related to actions or observable responses, and the cognitive component focuses on the perceptions and conceptions (belief or disbelief) about the objects.

The advent of social media, Facebook in particular, has changed how people connect and interact with their friends and peers. Facebook as an online social networking tool is also very crucial and popular for collaborative learning which constructivism theory of learning emphasises. It is undoubtedly that to learn a second language there must be sufficient interaction with the target language community (Tunde-Awe, 2015). Hence, Facebook provides students with great opportunities to connect with teachers and peers, and intensify their own language learning through academic activities.

Prior studies conducted by different researchers such as Bosch (2009), Wang and Chen (2013), Ríos and Campos (2015), Faryadi (2017), Polok and Haręzak (2018) and Doğan and Gulbahar (2018) have found that online social networking sites, more especially FBA had great impacts on students’ attitudes and their English language autonomous competence and proficiency. What is more, the results showed that the

use of FBA increases students' achievement in their learning process. In terms of the students' attitudes towards FBA, only a few studies have been conducted in the recent years. Kabilan, Ahmad & Abidin (2010) aimed at exploring whether Facebook is perceived by university students as a useful and meaningful learning platform that could help, improve and/or reinforce their English language learning. A survey was conducted at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Penang with 300 undergraduate students. The study results showed that participants assumed that Facebook could be utilized as an online forum to promote English learning. In another research conducted by Eren (2012) at a university in Gaziantep, Turkey with 48 undergraduate students enrolled in one year of compulsory English preparatory class to investigate the attitudes of students towards using SNS, especially Facebook in language classrooms. With the employment of the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and the five-point Likert-like scale was used. The findings of the study showed that students with optimistic attitudes tended to incorporate Facebook activities as a complement to language classrooms, while conventional classrooms still remained a cornerstone for language teaching and learning. In general, most of the recent studies have indicated that research participants expressed positive attitudes towards FBA for learning English.

In the context of Vietnam, little research on online social networking sites, especially Facebook, has been conducted recently to identify its effect on students' attitudes and learning process. A study was conducted by Le (2018) from The University of Canterbury to examine the use of and beliefs of high school students regarding technology, especially social media, in learning English. 204 the 10th grade students were chosen to do the research instruments, which were interviews, questionnaire, and tests before and after the online course. The findings of the study showed that many of the students used social media for social interaction as well as educational purposes. They shared information, joined online community groups for discussions, and accessed online resources outside the classroom for self-study, such as listening to videos, and taking part in free and commercial online courses. In a similar study, Nham and Nguyen (2013) conducted an online survey of questionnaires with over 130 students at University of Economics and Business (UEB), Vietnam National University, Hanoi to investigate students' views on the effect of an individual's relation to online social networking sites, especially Facebook. The survey results showed that the use of Facebook had significant impacts on students' learning process and outcome. What is more, the online social

networking sites, specifically Facebook affected immensely students' learning outcome of UEB, helped them adapt to the University's culture and have strong relationships with their friends. All of these factors have played a major role in enhancing their study results. Additionally, this study also suggested some activities that might help encourage lecturers and students of UEB to use Facebook as an important resource for teaching and learning. It is noticed that not many of the mentioned studies have focused on the attitudes of the learners towards FBA for English language learning. Therefore, this study aims at further examining the attitudes of non-English majors towards FBA for learning English language at a context of a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

METHODOLOGY

Research setting and participants

This quantitative study was carried out at Ho Chi Minh City University of Transport (UT-HCMC), which is under the Ministry of Transport and the largest multidisciplinary training university in transport sector in the South of Vietnam. UT-HCMC owns three campuses located in Ho Chi Minh City, specifically Binh Thanh District, District 2 and District 12 with nearly 15,000 students and trainees, 07 Faculties, 02 Departments and 06 Institutes in charge of training activities. UT-HCMC has the Department of English which is in charge of teaching the basic and specialized English for all non-English majors in all levels (graduate, post-graduate, inter-college, regular, in-service) per year. As a result of being responsible for training human resources for the transport sector, namely maritime, road, inland waterway and railway, non-English majored students learning their specialized English materials often encounter some difficulties at first. In order to learn specialized English well, they need to enrich their vocabulary and grammar proficiently.

As regards English learning, there are two levels: general English and specialized English. The former includes English 1 to English 6. The latter includes English for Management of Logistics and Multimodal Transport, English for Maritime, English for Mechanical Engineering, etc. As a compulsory rule of curriculum, freshmen will study from English 1 to English 6 which are equivalent to from Starter to Intermediate level with materials named *English Empower A1, A2, B1* (Cambridge University Press). For those who have an English language certificate such as TOEFL, IELTS, TOEIC, etc., they just take English 5 and English 6 including totally 4 credits for each module (equivalent to 60 periods). Sophomores and juniors will continue studying their

specialized English which is designed from 2 to 3 credits, for example, English for Management of Logistics and Multimodal Transport, English for Maritime, English for Mechanical Engineering, etc. When attending the English classes, students will have to enhance their self-studying by searching, reading material resources and completing tasks assigned by their teachers on E-learning system. Owing to useful educational activities of Facebook, different FBA such as chatting to friends, reading latest news or comments, giving messages, face-to-face video chatting, watching video clips in English, etc., are included in English courses in an attempt to improve their English language proficiency.

This study involved 232 non-English majors (134 males; 98 females) who were conveniently sampled. As seen in Table 1, as the age range of research participants was 18 (50%), 19 (21.1%), and over 19 (28.9%), 1st year students account for more than half of the sample (53.4%), followed by 2nd year students (21.6%), 4th year students (16.4%), and 3rd year students (8.6%). Additionally, 52.2% of the research participants have learned English for over seven years, while only 23.7% and 24.1% of them have learned English for 1-4 years and less than 4–7 years, respectively. What is more, the majority (62.5%) of the research participants allocated less than 30 minutes per day to English self-study, and the rest spent 1-1.5 hours (26.3%), 1.5-2 hours (6.9%) and more than 2 hours (4.3%) daily on their English self-study.

Table 1

Participants' general information

No.	Information	N=232		
		F	%	
1	Gender	Male	134	57.8
		Female	98	42.2
2	Age	18	116	50.0
		19	49	21.1
		Over 19	67	28.9
3	Year of study	1 st year	124	53.4
		2 nd year	50	21.6
		3 rd year	20	8.6

No.	Information	N=232		
		F	%	
	4 th year	38	16.4	
4	Number of years' learning English	1-4	55	23.7
		<4-7	56	24.1
		Over 7	121	52.2
		<30 minutes	145	62.5
5	Number of English self-study hours per day	1-1.5	61	26.3
		1.5-2	16	6.9
		>2	10	4.3

Note: F: Frequency; %: Percent

Research instrument

A closed-ended questionnaire which was designed based on the theoretical framework was employed to collect the data. It has two parts: Part A asking respondents' background information; Part B asking respondents' attitudes toward FBA for English language learning. The questionnaire content consists of 17 items divided into three groups: cognitive attitudes (5 items), affective attitudes (6 items), and behavioral attitudes (6 items), and the five-point Likert-like scale is from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*. The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese so that respondents did not face any language difficulties in answering the questionnaire. Regarding the reliability, the total Cronbach's Alpha of the whole questionnaire is .95, and that of components of attitudes is .91 for cognitive attitudes, .92 for affective attitudes, and .92 for behavioral attitudes. This means that the reliability of the questionnaire is very high.

Procedures for data collection and analysis

Regarding data collection, after the questionnaire had been piloted, 240 copies of the official questionnaire were administered to students in person; however, 232 copies were sent back. Prior to completing the questionnaire, respondents were informed about the research aims and

instructed how to complete it. Respondents spent approximately 15-20 minutes answering all the questionnaire items.

With respect of data analysis, the software SPSS 20.0 was employed for data analysis in terms of means and frequency and Independent T-test. The mean scores of interval scale were interpreted as 1-1.80: strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60: disagree; 2.61-3.40: neutral; 3.41- 4.20: agree; 4.21 – 5.00: strongly agree.

RESULTS

Non-English majors' attitudes towards the use of FBA

Table 2 indicates that the total mean score of non-English majors' attitudes towards the use of FBA is 3.54 (SD = .75). This can be understood that non-English majors had positive towards attitudes towards the use of FBA. Regarding the components of attitudes, the mean score of *cognitive attitudes* (M = 3.82; SD = .84) is the highest, followed by that of *affective attitudes* (M = 3.49; SD = .84) and that of *behavioral attitudes* (M = 3.34; SD = .83). Such results can be interpreted that non-English majors were knowledgeable about the roles of FBA in their English language learning, and they liked learning English with the assistance of FBA; however, some of them seemed to be indifferent to the use of FBA for their English study.

Table 2

Non-English majors' attitudes towards FBA

	N=232	
	M	SD
Cognitive attitudes	3.82	.84
Affective attitudes	3.49	.84
Behavioral attitudes	3.34	.83
Total	3.54	.75

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Specifically, in terms of *cognitive attitudes* towards FBA (Table 3), respondents realized that “Chatting to friends in English on Facebook helps [them] to enrich English vocabulary” (item 1: M = 3.74; SD =.98) and “Face-to-face video chatting in English on Facebook helps [them] to promote English speaking skills” (item 4: M = 3.79; SD =.94). Plus, they

were aware that “Reading English latest news or comments on Facebook newsfeed helps [them] to increase English reading comprehension skills” (item 2: M = 3.86; SD =.92), “Watching English video clips shared on Facebook enhances [their] English listening comprehension skills” (item 5: M = 3.93; SD =.93), and “Giving messages or comments in English on Facebook provides [them] more opportunities to improve English writing skills” (item 3: M = 3.77; SD =.95).

Table 3

Non-English majors’ cognitive attitudes towards FBA

5 items	N=232	
	M	SD
1 Chatting to friends in English on Facebook helps me to enrich English vocabulary.	3.74	.98
2. Reading English latest news or comments on Facebook newsfeed helps me to increase English reading comprehension skills.	3.86	.92
3. Giving messages or comments in English on Facebook provides me more opportunities to improve English writing skills.	3.77	.95
4. Face-to-face video chatting in English on Facebook helps me to promote English speaking skills.	3.79	.94
5. Watching English video clips shared on Facebook enhances my English listening comprehension skills.	3.93	.93

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

As for *affective attitudes* towards FBA, Table 5 reveals that respondents self-reported that learning with FBA, they felt “feel interested in learning English” (item 6: M = 3.55; SD =.89) and “delighted in greatly enriching [their] English vocabulary” (item 7: M = 3.55; SD =.97). Regarding their language skills, they also felt “inspired to increase [their] English listening comprehension skills” (item 11: M = 3.60; SD =.86), “courageous in English communication with overseas friends” (item 9: M = 3.40; SD =.93), “confident about [their] English reading

comprehension skills” (item 8: M = 3.43; SD =.98), and “positive about [their] English writing skills” (item 10: M = 3.41; SD =.95).

Table 4

Non-English majors’ affective attitudes towards FBA

6 items	N=232	
	M	SD
6. I feel interested in learning English through FBA.	3.55	.89
7. I feel delighted in greatly enriching my English vocabulary through FBA.	3.55	.97
8. I feel confident about my English reading comprehension skills through FBA.	3.43	.98
9. I feel courageous in English communication with overseas friends through FBA.	3.40	.93
10. I feel positive about my English writing skills though FBA.	3.41	9.5
11. I feel inspired to increase my English listening comprehension skills through FBA.	3.60	.86

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

In respect of *behavioral attitudes* towards FBA, as regards Table 5, respondents spent “more time improving my English listening comprehension skills through watching English video clips shared on Facebook” (item 17: M = 3.56; SD =.96) and “more attention to reading English latest news on Facebook to increase [their] English reading comprehension skills” (item 14: M = 3.44; SD =.96). Nevertheless, some of them seemed to be 'uninterested in spending more time “for [their] English learning autonomy through using FBA” (item 12: M = 3.26; SD =.95), “chatting to friends in English on Facebook to enrich English vocabulary” (item 13: M = 3.25; SD =.91), “practicing [their] English speaking skills through face-to-face video chatting on Facebook” (item 15: M = 3.32; SD =.82) and “practicing [their] English writing skills by giving messages or comments in English to overseas friends on Facebook” (item 16: M = 3.23; SD =.83).

Table 5*Non-English majors' behavioral attitudes towards FBA*

6 items	N=232	
	M	SD
12. I spend more time for my English learning autonomy through using FBA.	3.26	.95
13. I spend more time chatting to friends in English on Facebook to enrich English vocabulary.	3.25	.91
14. I pay more attention to reading English latest news on Facebook to increase my English reading comprehension skills.	3.44	.96
15. I spend more time practicing my English speaking skills through face-to-face video chatting on Facebook.	3.32	.82
16. I spend more time practicing my English writing skills by giving messages or comments in English to overseas friends on Facebook.	3.23	.83
17. I spend more time improving my English listening comprehension skills through watching English video clips shared on Facebook.	3.56	.96

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

Difference in non-English majors' attitudes towards FBA in terms of gender

The results in Table 6 show that there was no significant difference ($t = -.744$; $p = .458$) in non-English majors' attitudes towards FBA in terms of gender. Regarding components of attitudes, it is found that no significant differences in non-English majors' *cognitive attitudes* ($t = -.939$; $p = .349$), *affective attitudes* ($t = -.830$; $p = .408$) and *behavioral attitudes* ($t = -.552$; $p = .582$) towards FBA between males and females were found. Such results can refer that both male students and their female counterparts held similar attitudes towards FBA for English language learning.

Table 6

Difference in non-English majors' attitudes towards FBA in terms of gender

	t	Sig.	Male (n=134) M(SD)	Female (n=98) M(SD)
Attitudes	-.744	.458	3.85(.85)	3.77(.83)
Cognitive attitudes	-.939	.349	3.39(.85)	3.28(.83)
Affective attitudes	-.830	.408	3.57(.75)	3.49(.75)
Behavioral attitudes	-.552	.582	3.52(.85)	3.46(.83)

Note: M: mean; SD: Standard deviation

DISCUSSION

This study has revealed some significant points. Firstly, non-English majors had positive attitudes towards FBA for English language learning. One of the plausible explanations for this may be that the FBA for English language learning may be still new to them, so they may find it interesting enough to get engaged in using FBA for their English language learning. This finding is partially aligned with that of the studies conducted by Kabilan et al. (2010) and Eren (2012) who found that university students believed that FBA could be helpful for their English language learning. Regarding the *cognitive attitudes* towards FBA, non-English majors believed that FBA could help them improve their English vocabulary and language skills (listening, speaking, listening & writing). This finding may be from the fact that the Facebook has features which enable users to embed texts, images and sounds for different purposes. Consequently, Facebook users can take advantages of such features for different goals. Moreover, activities on Facebook are very user-friendly and easy enough to be used at anywhere and anytime.

In respect of *affective attitudes* towards FBA, research participants were found to have interest, inspiration, confidence, positive, and delight in learning English with the assistance of FBA, so they liked to learn English with FBA. This may be explained by the fact that they had positive *cognitive attitudes* towards FBA, which could entail their *affective attitudes* towards FBA. What is more, the benefits of FBA for English

language learning may be visible to them; therefore, that they felt like learning English may be understandable. This finding is supported by researchers (e.g., Chaiken & Baldwin, 1981; Maio, Esses, & Bell, 2000) who have claimed that there is a positive correlation between affective and cognitive elements of attitudes.

In terms of *behavioral attitudes*, it is interesting to find out that non-English majors were at a dilemma in doing FBA for English language learning, although their *cognitive* and *affective attitudes* towards FBA were positive. The mean score of *behavioral attitudes* towards FBA is 3.34 (SD =.83), so it is perhaps not all respondents were disinterested in doing FBA for English language learning. They consented that they still “spend time improving English listening skills through watching English video clips shared on Facebook” (item 17) and “pay more attention to reading English latest news on Facebook to increase my English reading comprehension skills” (item 14). Such a finding is contrary to that of Maio, et al. (2000) who asserted that cognitive – affective consistency can predict behaviors. The underlying reasons for such a finding may be due to the fact that most of research participants (53.4%) were in the 1st year, and 62.4% of them spent less than 30 minutes on a daily basis on independent learning. Therefore, they spared less time on FBA for English language learning. Besides, their English language proficiency may be still low, even though many (52.2%) of research participants had learned English more than seven years. That may be why they may not have focused on pay more times on FBA for English language learning, albeit their positive cognitive and *affective attitudes* towards FBA.

Secondly, non-English majors’ attitudes towards FBA for English language learning were not affected by their gender. To put it another way, both female and male students had positive attitudes towards FBA for English language learning in a similar way. This may be that Facebook is nowadays very common among people, so it is not restricted to anybody regardless of age, gender and so on.

CONCLUSION

This study has unraveled that non-English majors were knowledgeable of the benefits learning English on Facebook, and they had high affection towards FBA for English learning. Nonetheless, some of them were still unsure of whether they should pay more time on FBA for English language learning or not. Furthermore, both males and females did not have different attitudes towards the use of activities for English learning on Facebook.

From the findings, some implications are drawn. Firstly, as students recognized the benefits of FBA for English language learning, so it is imperative that EFL teachers should explore the features of Facebook and invest more time on FBA in order to enhance the quality of FBA for English language learning. Secondly, this study showed that students had neutral behavioral attitudes towards FBA for English language learning. It is suggested that teachers should pay attention to the features of texts, images and clips in English and select them in accordance with students' level of English language proficiency and sociocultural background. Thirdly, it is recommended that students should shift their learning mood to autonomous learning so that they can fit themselves to the learning platform of FBA.

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USING QUIZLET TO ENHANCE VOCABULARY ACQUISITION OF NON-ENGLISH MAJOR FRESHMEN

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ABSTRACT

Among numerous applications which have been developed to help students improve their vocabulary, Quizlet is a useful tool which students can use on their laptops or download freely on their phones. As many researches have found significant improvement in students who use Quizlet for their vocabulary training, this paper aims to find out whether Quizlet can also enhance the vocabulary acquisition of Vietnamese non-English major freshmen at Van Lang university, and what their attitudes towards this tool are. The study involved 60 students which were selected according to a Two-group Quasi-Experimental Design: experimental and control groups. A regular teaching approach was applied to both groups for the first 5 weeks, then Quizlet was presented to the experimental group while no change of teaching method was given to those in the control group for the next 5 weeks. A pretest and post-test were conducted to compare the students' performance in two groups before and after using Quizlet. At the end of the course, a survey was carried out to experimental students to learn their views of Quizlet. Some pedagogical recommendations for teaching vocabulary with Quizlet were also provided. After analyzing the results, it was found out that the students in the experimental groups made significantly more progress than those in the control group. Additionally, the survey also showed that the students were willing to use Quizlet to improve their vocabulary in the future.

Keywords: *vocabulary acquisition, Quizlet, digital flashcards, incidental, deliberate vocabulary training*

INTRODUCTION

Using flashcards for teaching and learning vocabulary is a deliberate training method which, as Hulstijin (1993, as cited by Abbasian & Ghorbanpour, 2016) stated, can be more beneficial than letting students acquire new words incidentally. According to Elgort (2011), with flashcards, students can learn outside of classrooms and personalize the learning process based on their own needs and goals. With the advancement of technology and the rapid growth of wireless and mobile devices, students can now create flashcards on their cell phones or laptops by using a variety of tools, such as Anki, Quizlet and Cram. Many studies have found that using digital flashcards is more effective than paper ones when students want to enhance their vocabulary (Altiner, 2011, Azabdaftari & Mozaheb, 2012, Hung, 2015, Lander, 2016). This research focuses on Quizlet and tries to find out whether non-English major freshmen likes using this tool for their vocabulary training and whether they make any progress when using it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Deliberate vs. incidental learning in vocabulary training

Incidental vocabulary training is the process of learning without intending to do so. In this approach, students do not do tasks that are directly related to vocabulary and try to guess the meaning of new words based on context (Ahmad, 2012). Deliberate training, on the other hand, focuses on the vocabulary itself and requires students to learn and remember new words consciously (Yali, 2010). This approach, according to Krashen (1989, as cited by Elgort, 2011) is not effective and does not facilitate “the acquisition of linguistic knowledge”. Incidental training, in contrast, is more useful because new words can retain in long-term memory and be used fluently (Ahmad, 2012). However, recent studies have shown that deliberate vocabulary tasks not only compliment short-term acquisition but also lead to greater retention in comparison with incidental learning (Laufer, 2005, as cited by Barr, 2016). Besides, students who have a low level of English proficiency will have difficulty guessing the meaning of new words from context (Yali, 2010). Additionally, incidental learning occurs very slowly, and is not suitable for limited-term university-level language training courses (Schmitt, 2000). Therefore, deliberate training such as learning from word lists or flashcards can be an efficient way of learning vocabulary (Elgort, 2011).

Digital vs. paper flashcards

Flashcards are a set of two-sided cards with form on one side and meaning on the other one. They are designed for deliberate learning of vocabulary in which students are expected to flip between the two sides of the cards until they can remember the words (Hung, 2015). While printed and digital flashcards have been used in many language classrooms, the use of digital flashcards, as Hung (2015) found out, can enhance student's vocabulary acquisition and create more positive experience of deliberate vocabulary training. Moreover, in the studies carried out by Basoglu & Akdemir (2010), Altiner (2011), Azabdaftari & Mozaheb (2012), students who studied with vocabulary learning program on mobile phone performed better than those who used paper flashcards.

Quizlet website and mobile application

Quizlet is a popular online education platform which “allows users to create and study sets of flashcards online using a suite of game-like study tools.” (Foster, 2009). It facilitates a rote learning environment which can be useful for many subjects, especially language and vocabulary training (Sanosi, 2018). Quizlet can be used both online on its website and on a mobile app, although there are some differences between the two platforms.

Table 1

Quizlet learning modes on website and mobile app

Learning mode	Website	Mobile app (Android & iOS)
Flashcards	✓	✓
Learn	✓	✓
Write	✓	✓
Spell	✓	✗
Test	✓	✓
Match	✓	✓
Gravity	✓	✗
Live	✓	✗

As a student user, the students can control the way they want to interact with Quizlet resources in five different modes:

1. **Flashcards:** a set of cards are shown with form and meaning on either side. Each card can be flipped by clicking or tapping on it until the learners are sure that they can remember the word and move on to the next one.
2. **Learn:** the students are expected to answer some multiple choice questions. Based on the results, the users will know which words they have already mastered, and which ones still need more practice.
3. **Write:** the students are asked to write the word based on the definition or L2 translation provided.
4. **Spell:** the students listen to the pronunciation of a word and type what they hear.
5. **Test:** based on the chosen set of flashcards, Quizlet will generate tests of different formats including writing the target words, matching, multiple choice and true/false questions.

Additionally, the students can choose to play games to practice learning new vocabulary. Quizlet provides users with two options: Match and Gravity. Match is a game in which the users match the target word with its correct definition. In Gravity, the users have to type in the correct word to match the definitions descending from top of the screen.

The teachers can also create a game to help students review vocabulary by using the Live function. In this game, students will be divided into groups and work together to find the correct answer to the questions appearing on the screens.

Previous studies

To investigate the students' attitudes towards Quizlet, Lander (2016) conducted a study involving 450 lower intermediate level students who were instructed to use Quizlet over the course of 15-weeks. The students were asked to answer two simple questions about what they thought of this tool. The majority of them agreed that Quizlet was useful for learning English vocabulary. This research, however, did not compare the students' performances before and after using Quizlet.

Another study by Barr (2016) divided 32 participants into three groups: non-users, visual, and kinesthetic users. Barr classified the students who

only used Quizlet to view the flashcards as the non-users, those who accessed the cards just to play the matching games as the visual group, and the group of users who accessed all of the Quizlet learning modes inside and outside classroom as kinesthetic. All students were required to take four tests during the semester to track their progress. The result showed that the scores of the users in visual and kinesthetic groups were higher than those of the non-users, which proved that Quizlet was an effective tool for improving vocabulary. This study, nevertheless, was not a controlled experiment. Some participants were not consistently in the same group for each test. Therefore, the differences between the groups were not statically supported.

Also aiming to find out the effect of Quizlet on students' performance, Dizon's study (2016) involved nine second-year high-level students over a 15-week spring semester. The post-test results revealed that students who used Quizlet achieved better results than those who did not, which led to the conclusion that Quizlet did enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. However, the sample size of the research was too small. Sanosi's research (2018) which was conducted with all 42 male students also witnessed a remarkable improvement on students who used Quizlet. Nevertheless, the study did not examine the students' attitudes towards this tool.

Research questions

- 1) To what extent did the use of Quizlet enhance non-English major first year students' vocabulary acquisition?
- 2) What were the students' attitudes towards using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary?

METHODOLOGY

Research goal

This study was motivated by the desire to examine (1) the effects of Quizlet on enhancing non-English major first year students' vocabulary acquisition; (2) the students' attitudes towards using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary.

Research design

The study employed quantitative methods by gathering student's scores via pre-test and post-test and a collection of data through a questionnaire. The compiled data then were analyzed with the support of the SPSS tool.

Participants

Participants in this study were from two classes, namely K25TC1 and K25TC2 with thirty students in each class. These two classes were randomly chosen as experimental and control groups. The students are about 18 -20 years old and are studying English at post-elementary level in the first semester of their first year at university. Furthermore, as the students were required to take a placement test at the beginning of the course, and then were assigned to each class based on their results, their levels of English are nearly the same.

Research instruments

To collect data in this study, two instruments comprised of pre/post tests and a questionnaire were used. The pretest and post-test were based on the university general English textbook for non-English major freshmen: American Jetstream- Elementary B by Revel, J. & Tomalin, M. (2016). The vocabulary from the first two units (unit 7 and unit 8) with the topics of food and people description were used to compose the pretest content. The total number of the new words taught in these lessons are 148. Then the next two units (unit 9 and unit 10) with the topics of weather, clothes and health were employed to design the content of the post-test. The total new words from these lessons totaled 152 words.

The pretest and post-test, which were administered to both experimental and control groups, consisted of 3 types of questions: multiple choice, gap-filling, and matching. A pre-test was given to the students to ensure comparability of the participant groups prior to their treatment. Additionally, to measure the effects of treatment, a post-test was carried out after the course. Along with the pretest and post-test, the study also employed a questionnaire to learn the students' views of Quizlet. The questionnaire was designed based on the technology acceptance model (TAM), a research framework by Davis (1989), which focuses to determine a user's behavioral intention (BI) for using a technology according to two primary factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU). All items are close-ended questions written in both English and Vietnamese to avoid misunderstanding and based on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Procedure

All participants were taught by the researchers in the 11-week course of General English 1, which met two times a week. After the first five weeks

of the course, students of both groups were taught the first two units as mentioned above; then, they were asked to take the pretest. The participants' scores on the test were recorded for comparison with the results of the post-test. In the next five weeks, there was difference in the treatment between the two groups. While the control group continued to learn the next two units via the same teaching approach from the beginning of the semester, members of the experimental group learned the same two units using Quizlet as inside and outside classroom activities. The experimental students were then instructed on how to use Quizlet on their laptops. For the activities in the classroom, the new vocabulary was delivered through Quizlet learning modes of Learn, Flashcards, and Live. Additionally, experimental students were also required to install the Quizlet application on their mobile phones, and to study the two assigned units outside the classroom through Write, Test, Match, and Gravity learning modes. Each lesson of the last two units was designed into a study set in which pictures, definitions and L1 annotation were used for explanation of the new vocabulary. Meanwhile, for the activities outside the classroom, the students in the control group were asked to memorize the new vocabulary do some assignments such as gap-filling and matching. After that, the post-test of the study was carried out to both of the two groups. The data collected from the two tests were then analyzed for the research findings.

The survey was conducted by distributing the printed questionnaire to the experimental students personally. Students were informed that their participation was voluntary and totally unrelated to their grades. The survey was conducted anonymously.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Research question 1: To what extent did the use of Quizlet enhance non-English-major first year students' vocabulary acquisition?

The results of an independent samples t-test of the control group and the experimental group before and after implementing the new treatment showed the participants' achievement in the table 2 below.

Table 2*Mean scores and Std Dev of the participants' scores at the two tests*

PRETEST SCORES	Test	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Control Group	Pretest	30	26.4000	5.09631
	Post-test	30	26.8000	3.59502
The Experimental Group	Pretest	30	25.9000	4.48253
	Post-test	30	29.5000	4.32116

Table 3*The T-test results of the scores*

		Mean	N	Std Dev	T.value	p.value
Pair 1	Exp_pre	25.9000	30	4.48253	.403	.688
	Cont_pre	26.4000	30	5.09631		
Pair 2	Exp_pre	25.9000	30	4.48253	-7.045	.000
	Exp_post	29.5000	30	4.32116		
Pair 3	Cont_pre	26.4000	30	5.09631	-1.085	.287
	Cont_post	26.9667	30	3.67173		
Pair 4	Exp_post	29.5000	30	4.32116	2.631	.011
	Cont_post	26.9667	30	3.67173		

In summary, the mean scores indicated that there was a clear improvement of the scores of the experimental group. The gains achieved by members of the group was (3.6). Control group members, in contrast, have hardly shown progress with a slight difference in mean scores of 0.4. Furthermore, the Std Dev of the scores of the experimental group at the post-test was only 4.3 which was relatively small and suggested that their scores were more homogenous after studying with

Quizlet. Thus, it is available to confirm that using new treatment in teaching vocabulary was effective.

The T-test results proved that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test of students in the experimental group. This finding is supported by the p-value of 0.000 which is below the alpha level of 0.05. The outcomes also showed a significant difference between the scores of the two groups in the post-test with the p-value of 0.011. This finding suggests that the progress attained by the experimental group members is not only comparable to their pretest scores but also to post-test scores of students from the control group. This fact minimizes the possibility of intervention of any potential factors that may cause this progress other than using Quizlet as a learning method.

The p-value of difference between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test of students in the control group shows that the performance of the group members was almost consistent. With a 0.287 value, the difference is greater than the alpha level and hence suggests an insignificant difference between the mean scores of the two tests. Moreover, the homogeneity of two group members can be proved by the insignificant difference of their scores in the pretest which was of 0.688 p-value. Given all these findings into account, the effect of using Quizlet in vocabulary acquisition can safely be assumed.

Research question 2: What were the students' attitudes towards using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary?

The results of the survey responded by the experimental students showed a high score which means the students showed their agreement to each item.

Table 4

Students' perceived usefulness towards Quizlet (PU)

Item	N	Mean	SD
Quizlet helped me learn English vocabulary more quickly.	30	4.367	0.718
My English vocabulary was improved by using Quizlet.	30	4.5	0.572
With Quizlet, learning English vocabulary was easier to me.	30	4.233	0.626

Item	N	Mean	SD
Quizlet was a useful tool for my English study.	30	4.7	0.4661

Table 5

Students' perceived ease of use of Quizlet (PEOU)

Item	N	Mean	SD
I didn't have many difficulties using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary.	30	4.233	0.568
I was able to easily become skillful at learning English vocabulary with Quizlet.	30	4.5667	0.5040
I find it easy to learn how to study English vocabulary with Quizlet.	30	4.8	4.4068
The Quizlet website and/or mobile app has friendly interface and clear design.	30	4.7333	0.4498

Table 6

Students' behavioral intention (BI)

Item	N	Mean	SD
I want to learn English vocabulary with Quizlet in the future.	30	4.8333	0.3790
If I am offered, I volunteer to learn English vocabulary with Quizlet.	30	4.7	0.4661

The number of participants answering the items, the mean and SD of the three TAM variables are displayed in table 4, table 5 and table 6. The means of all items belong to the three constructs (PU, PEOU, and BI) were higher than 4 which meant that members of the experimental class had positive attitudes towards using Quizlet for English vocabulary learning. Particularly, they found Quizlet tool very useful for their English study. Besides, they also perceived the Quizlet as a user-friendly tool for EFL students. Last but not least, the results revealed students' willingness to acquire English vocabulary with Quizlet in the future.

CONCLUSION

With the development of technology, new generations of learners are familiar with using smart devices with Internet access to do most of their daily tasks including learning. Through this study, Quizlet were proved to be an effective treatment to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, Quizlet was considered by EFL students as a helpful and easy-to-use tool to facilitate vocabulary learning. Accordingly, Quizlet can create a fascinating learning environment which provides active learning both inside and outside classroom. In terms of classroom activities, the Live learning mode establishes productively collaborative experience to learners of a group in which they must share information to answer the vocabulary questions with a sense of competition with the other groups. For autonomous learners, Quizlet, with its study sets, makes an ideal learning environment where they can perform different learning tasks, evaluate their vocabulary acquisition, and study the vocabulary through many learning modes.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Although the literature review shows that the efficacy of Quizlet has already been tested multiple times, this study is an investigation regarding the effect of the Quizlet platform with Vietnamese EFL learners. The results showed that the undergraduates highly appreciated the effectiveness of Quizlet for vocabulary acquisition. Therefore, the employment of this helpful tool is possible to enhance Vietnamese learners' vocabulary and good attitudes towards language learning.

Additionally, although learners can get access to Quizlet both on its website and on a mobile app, some interesting features are only available on the website and suitable for homework. As a result, teachers should consider designing and assigning reasonable activities for in-class and outside classroom activities.

This study is limited in size. Therefore, it couldn't be generalized. As Quizlet could be developed as one of the advantageous platform in education, it is recommended that future research on a larger size could be employed to explore the generalized viewpoints of Vietnamese learners on Quizlet in vocabulary acquisition, such as learners' motivation, interest, behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and achievement.

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APPENDIX

Survey: Using Quizlet for Vocabulary Acquisition

Please answer the following questions about your use of Quizlet to learn English vocabulary. Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire.

1. Please read each statement and tick on your most favorite answer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
Quizlet helped me learn English vocabulary more quickly.					
My English vocabulary was improved by using Quizlet.					
With Quizlet, learning English vocabulary was easier to me.					
Quizlet was a useful tool for my English study.					

2. Please read each statement and tick on your most favorite answer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I didn't have many difficulties using Quizlet to learn English vocabulary.					
I was able to easily become skillful at learning English					

vocabulary with Quizlet.					
I find it easy to learn how to study English vocabulary with Quizlet.					
The Quizlet website and/or mobile app has friendly interface and clear design.					

3. Please read each statement and tick on your most favorite answer.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Not sure (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)
I want to learn English vocabulary with Quizlet in the future.					
If I am offered, I volunteer to learn English vocabulary with Quizlet.					

IMPROVING PRONUNCIATION OF FRESHMEN THROUGH MOODLE-BASED ACTIVITIES

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ABSTRACT

Good pronunciation enhances both the intelligibility and the effectiveness of speech, so how to teach pronunciation has received great attention from teachers and researchers. Among a wide variety of methods, Moodle has emerged as an efficiently potential tool to assist students in acquiring an intelligible pronunciation. Pronunciation courses can be built on a Moodle site where teachers upload and share the designed materials with their students. Despite various advantages of Moodle courses, not many studies offered empirical evaluation of the effectiveness of Moodle projects on improving students' pronunciation in Vietnam's English as Foreign Language (EFL) context. Therefore, this study aimed to find out how using Moodle-based activity can improve freshmen's pronunciation. The project consisted of 62 Van Lang University freshmen (Vietnam), who were organized into two different groups: the control group and the experimental group. Mixed method was used in combination with various tools for data collection such as pre- and post-test, questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The data collected showed that there was a sharp improvement in the experimental group's pronunciation. In the hope of bettering students' pronunciation, some suggestions for optimizing Moodle-based activities are also mentioned at the end of this research paper.

Keywords: *Moodle courses, teaching pronunciation, e-learning, intelligible pronunciation, blended learning*

INTRODUCTION

In the trend of globalization and integration, English is a must that employers always require students to have. Therefore, universities

make great efforts to equip students with English communication skills, yet it is a hard task because of a large number of students and limited course duration.

According to Maniruzzaman (2008), pronunciation takes an integrated and integral role throughout second/foreign language learning process, as it significantly determined learners' communicative competence and performance. However, teaching pronunciation is not emphasized inside and outside the class for many reasons, for example, the lack of supporting tools, less chance of English practice (Fraser, 1999), very little chance in classrooms to teach pronunciation (Tahereen, 2015). Therefore, learners need computer-based pronunciation resources and teachers can use these resources as an important means of enhancing their teaching (Fraser, 2000).

In Vietnam context, due to the school syllabus, university students have limited time for pronunciation practice. Besides, multi-level learners with different learning pace and styles in large size classes also affect negatively the learners' performance. Therefore, Moodle -based activities are an ultimate solution to better students' pronunciation because Moodle has been proved to be useful for improving cooperation between Japanese students who use Praat and Ultrasound in the Pronunciation course (Brine, Wilson, & Roy, 2007), or support effectively Distant Learning System students in vocabulary and grammar as well as the 4 skills (Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić, 2014). The combination of Praat and the Choice activity in Moodle was also certified as efficient in providing measurements of the duration, pitch, and intensity of students' sound, pointing out each student's mistakes, and supporting the teacher to enhance the class time (Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, Moodle together with its diverse activities and resources is believed to support individual learning pathways (Pandey & Pandey, 2009) or cooperative learning (Wu, 2008, as cited in Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010). Moodle is even an open source, which means that the code is freely available and easily accessible.

LITERATURE REVIEW

What is pronunciation?

According to Nunan (2003), pronunciation is the manner in which certain sounds are made in their speech by speakers of a language and understood by the hearer in order to understand each other. Maniruzzaman (2008) also added that pronunciation is seen as an integrated and central part of second / foreign language learning, as it

affects the communicative skills and performance of learners. Yates and Zielinski (2009), as cited in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) reconfirmed the definition of pronunciation: “Pronunciation is the way of producing the sounds that are used to make meaning when speakers speak” (p.967).

Gottlieb (2006), as cited in Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016) agreed with Nunan (2003) that the speaking/pronunciation part has been limited to only the drill or situational responsive answers. Among new approaches was to do real-world speaking activities with regard to one particular segmental or spelling, phrasing, rhythm, or tone aspect of pronunciation. Cook (2013) recommended several techniques for teaching and learning English pronunciation such as phonetic transcript, imitation, discrimination of sounds, and communication. Schmitt (2002) mentioned other ways to learn English pronunciation such as elicited mechanical development, sound contrast ear training, and meaning contrast sounds.

The importance of intelligible pronunciation acquisition in EFL

Intelligibility is defined as “how much of the speech is understood by interlocutors” (Munro, 2011, p.9). Kirkpatrick (2014) stated that intelligibility is an ideal goal for most learners because EFL learners cannot completely pronounce English words exactly like native speakers. Jenkins (2002) claimed that learners need to be intelligible to both native and non-native speakers.

Greenwood (2002), as cited in Al-Azzawi., & Barany (2016), modifies the idea of Kirkpatrick (2014) that learners are very unlikely to acquire a native-like accent, but their intelligibility can be greatly enhanced by efficient pronunciation teaching. He also highlights that the lack of control over vowels and consonants may lead to total communication breakdown.

Greenwood (2002), as cited in Al-Azzawi., & Barany (2016) indicated that people need to use English for social, educational and professional reasons, locally and internationally. Thus, it is essential for them to have a high level of intelligibility to communicate. This leads to revived urgency to the teaching of pronunciation.

Moreover, according to Thompson and Gaddes (2005), as cited in Al-Azzawi and Mohamed (2016), improving pronunciation can improve learners’ confidence and motivation. It is important to handle both sound and meaning in pursuing the students’ linguistic goals. By teaching phonological rules, teachers can facilitate students’

pronunciation learning by listening to their own speech and recognizing their own mistakes.

Problems in teaching pronunciation

In Vietnam context, the interference of the first language (L1), or Vietnamese, is considered the common problem of Vietnamese EFL students. For instance, Vietnamese language does not have consonant clusters or a glide from one consonant to another as in English affricates (Huynh Trang Nguyen & Dutta, 2017) and Vietnamese EFL students do not pronounce English final consonants clearly enough (Duong Thi Nu, 2009). Moreover, Vietnamese EFL students tend to mispronounce affricates (/tʃ/ and /dʒ/) or nasal (/ŋ/) (Do, 2017). Do's paper contributes significantly to raising the awareness of the importance of good pronunciation on learners' confidence, speaking competence, and sense of achievement (2017).

Likewise, Bangladesh teachers also deal with students' L1 interference in pronunciation teaching. The main difficulty that Bangla speakers face is to pronounce and differentiate between /ə/ and /ɜ:/ (Kenworthy, 1991, as cited in Tahereen, 2015). Besides, Bangladesh students also cope with another challenges in learning pronunciation, that is, little exposure to English. Only at tertiary level can students have access to lectures in English. As a result, perfect pronunciation at this time is rather hard to achieve. Lack of concern and awareness for pronunciation and influence of local accent are also main factors that cause difficulties for students in acquiring perfect pronunciation (Tahereen, 2015).

Hassan (2014) agreed with Tahereen (2015) that mother tongue interference is the challenge that face students in learning pronunciation. In addition, Hassan (2014) added several other problems such as the disparity between L1 and L2 and the sound systems between L1 and L2, English Vowels ambiguity.

What is Moodle and its prominence compared with previous traditional tools to teach pronunciation?

According to Suppasetserree & Dennis (2010), Moodle is one of the technology facilitators which is commonly used to transfer language teaching and learning. Moodle is an open-source software framework free of licensing, which includes e-learning. In the area of ESL and EFL, Moodle has gained much attention from a great number of teachers and professionals in their second and foreign language classes.

Moodle is a strong and diverse Learning Management System (LMS) in the context of course management in which administrators can completely monitor its functions. Student activities can be recorded in logs so teachers can check what students did on Moodle and teachers can accurately monitor the timelines for assignments, quizzes, forums, chatting. It also allows to choose various types of tests, such as fill-in, multiple choice, matching, true false, short answers (Cole, 2005).

Moodle promotes cooperation in learning with many useful resources such as wikis, forums, chats, blogs, and workshop, so teachers should complement their teaching with various forms of social networking and collaboration to communicate with each other (Wu, 2008).

With above functions, teachers can use Moodle as a tool for students to practice pronunciation. They can record their voice and upload in the forums, then the teachers and partners can give feedback. Besides, some pronunciation test can be designed and automatically marked with Moodle that helps to save time.

The benefits and challenges of Moodle-based activities, particularly on pronunciation

The benefits of Moodle-based activities in teaching and learning

Suppatsereee and Dennis (2010) reports that advantages of Moodle were categorized into four groups. Firstly, Moodle facilitates student-centered learning because the students will use the online resources to train themselves. Second, Moodle encourages learning wherever possible, which means students can study online based on their times of convenience. Thirdly, Moodle makes management of the courses simpler. In certain cases, Moodle is useful for teachers due to this feature. Teachers are provided with valuable functions for easy running of the course. Lastly, Moodle helps to reduce the expense and time of teaching, print paper because these resources are online and students can access websites without printing their work out (Suppatsereee & Dennis, 2010).

Along the same thread, Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić (2014) emphasized that Moodle offers a lot of benefits for online communication since its mobility, the extra time it takes to find potential answers, anonymity, no time zone limits, and cost -effectiveness. Benefiting from multimedia tools and applications like pictures, sounds, animations is also another strength of Moodle system to help students practice four language skills.

Challenges of using Moodle-based activities in teaching and learning

Technology problems, instructor problems and the effectiveness of Moodle are three key disadvantages of Moodle. For the first problem, the stability of the network was announced as the main obstacle of the Moodle system. The problem with instructor is seen as Moodle's next difficulty among teachers because they need things such as training and time to master Moodle's functions. Moodle's features and choices make it impossible for teachers to use Moodle in terms of its effectiveness. Some functions of Moodle are claimed to be inappropriate for students (Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010).

Beside the technical difficulties, confirmation of identity of students during online learning and the topic of error checking, providing appropriate feedback on errors made, are both on the Moodle disadvantages list. Additionally, online English language instruction for teachers lacks instructional content. When it comes to students' difficulties in using Moodle, fuzziness, limited chat, difficult -to - understand tasks, log-in problems or uninteresting contents are main challenges that students have to encounter (Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić, 2014).

Findings about the benefits of Moodle-based activities in teaching and learning pronunciation as well as in bettering students' pronunciation

In Thai context, Moodle encourages learning in a learner-centered way and anytime-anywhere learning. In addition, it simplifies course management and helps to reduce the expense and time of instruction delivery. Additionally, students were asked questions about using Moodle, and the results showed that they had optimistic views on learning English through Moodle (Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010).

Moodle is used for coordinating individual as well as group activities at a Japanese computer science university. Examples of freeware and open-source software tools, such as CmapTools for concept mapping and Praat for acoustic analysis that can be used within Moodle to improve EFL reading, writing, and pronunciation courses, are presented. Moodle can be combined with software to create shared documents, such as Google Docs and Spreadsheets. Moodle can also be used as an action analysis tool, allowing the teacher / researcher to monitor the content of the course in two separate courses while testing theories about language learning in various aspects of the curriculum. (Wilson, 2008).

“Practice makes perfect”, goes an old saying. As opposed to traditional methods of teaching pronunciation, Moodle may give more activities and practice for students at home, which will sharpen students’ pronunciation better. In an offline classroom, there may be fewer opportunities for students to practice their pronunciation due to classroom sizes, time limit or students’ anxiety of public performance. Therefore, Moodle - based pronunciation activities may offer more time for student to rehearse online their pronunciation in less pressure conditions.

Despite a great number of advantages of Moodle in EFL classroom, little evidence has been found about the influence of using Moodle on students’ pronunciation. In order to bridge this gap, this research was conducted at Van Lang University, Vietnam. It aimed at answering the following specific research questions:

1. Is there a homogeneity in the pronunciation level between the control group and experimental group before Moodle -based activities are used?
2. Is there any progress in pronunciation in both experimental class and control class after the application of Moodle -based activities? What is the difference in the progress of both groups?
3. What aspects of pronunciation are improved after the application of Moodle -based activities?
4. How to optimize the pronunciation study through Moodle -based activities?

METHODOLOGY

The research method

The mixed method was used in this study because it is useful when either the quantitative or qualitative approach itself is insufficient to better understand the research problem (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In this paper, pre-posttests, questionnaire, and semi-structured interview were used to collect data. The purpose of pre- and posttests is to see how students made progress through each pronunciation lesson with Moodle. In addition, the questionnaire showed their attitudes towards pronunciation improvement with Moodle. In order to make the results more persuasive, a semi - structured interview (six students) was conducted. In the interview, students could freely share their opinions.

Setting and participants

In this research, a total of 62 EFL undergraduate university students in different majors were selected to participate in the study. The participants were enrolled in two (2) different English classes in accordance with their scores from the English placement test from the university, which is a multiple-choice test including skills of mainly listening, grammar, vocabulary and reading comprehension. The experimental group consisted of 32 students and the control group was comprised of 30 students.

Research Instruments

Three instruments were utilized in order to carry out this study: (1) pronunciation pre-test and pronunciation post-test, (2) questionnaire and (3) an interview guide.

1. The pronunciation pre-test and post-test were designed to measure the change of the students' pronunciation before and after applying the blended lessons. The students' pronunciation in the two tests was evaluated according to the V-step speaking scale. In order to ensure the reliability of the test scores, two markers, who discussed the rating issues and did the norming scoring beforehand, would grade a student's pronunciation test.
2. A questionnaire was given out to the students aiming to investigate the student's opinions on the Moodle-based pronunciation course. The questionnaire included 6 questions in a five-point scale (Likert Scale). 5 is strongly agree and 1 is strongly disagree. Moreover, it also contained 03 open-ended questions so that the students could express their viewpoints in detail.
3. Furthermore, an interview with 05 students was carried out in the final week. From the students' answer, the researchers would have a deeper understanding of the students' points of view.

Data analysis techniques

After the data were collected, they were analyzed to present the results of this study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative data consist of the students' scores from the pronunciation pre-test, pronunciation post-test and questionnaire. With

the aid of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis software, Mann-Whitney U test was employed to compare the pre-test result of the experiment class and control class. After that, Wilcoxon test was also used to check if there is any progress in pronunciation in both experimental class and control class. Next, the usage of Mann-Whitney U test was to compare the posttest scores of the experimental class and the control class. Finally, the Cohen's d and the effect-size correlation r were looked up to point out how much progress the experimental class has made in pronunciation in comparison with the control class.

In terms of questionnaire, the percentage of students for each statement was calculated to illustrate students' level of advancement in pronunciation.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The data collected by the interview would be analyzed by classifying them into themes. Besides, students' answers to open - ended questions (in the Questionnaire) were also categorized into themes to clarify the benefits students received after learning with Moodle activities.

The study design

In this study, the blended lessons on vowels and consonants were designed and based on the pronunciation book "Ship or Sheep" (Baker, 2006) for the duration of 12 weeks. The experimental group were instructed and guided the pronunciation lessons for 45 minutes in their weekly English class. And every week, students had to post their practice recording on the online forum in Moodle, where they can download the handouts and audio files as well as some pronunciation training videos for their further practice.

After posting their recording, the students had to listen and give comments on their two friends' recordings. The teacher would join the discussion on the forum as well as randomly give corrections for some students' recordings in class.

RESULTS

The result from Pre-test and Post-test: SPSS Analysis

After considering the normal distribution of Pre-test scores and Post-test scores of both classes, it is observed from Shapiro-Wilk table ($N < 50$) that neither pre -test sores nor post - score (of both experimental class and control class) has a normal distribution because all Sig.(2-tailed) < 0.05 as in the following table:

Table 1*Tests of Normality*

	Class	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Pretest	Experiment	.233	32	.000	.876	32	.002
	Control	.190	30	.007	.873	30	.002
Posttest	Experiment	.205	32	.002	.886	32	.003
	Control	.224	30	.000	.867	30	.001

Therefore, non-parametric test should be employed to measure the to measure the level of improvement in pronunciation between the two classes.

Table 2*Mann-Whitney U test to compare the pre-test result of the experiment class and control class*

		Ranks		
	Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Pretest	Experiment	32	33.25	1064.00
	Control	30	29.63	889.00
Total		62		

Test Statistics ^a	Pretest
Mann-Whitney U	424.000
Wilcoxon W	889.000
Z	-.821
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.411

To ensure the homogeneity of the two groups, the students did the pre-test. The result of the pre-test is illustrated as the above table. According to the result from the table, Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.411 > 0.05, H_0 fails to be rejected. It means that there had been a homogeneity in the pronunciation level between the control group and experimental group before Moodle -based activities were used.

Table 3

Wilcoxon test to check whether there is any progress in pronunciation in both experimental class and control class

Experimental class				
Ranks				
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest Pretest	- Negative Ranks	1 ^a	12.50	12.50
	Positive Ranks	26 ^b	14.06	365.50
	Ties	5 ^c		
	Total	32		

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

Test Statistics	
Posttest - Pretest	
Z	-4.289 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

Class	
Experiment	Control

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pretest	5.75	.92	5.53	1.07
Posttest	6.73	.76	5.94	.96

Control class

		Ranks		
		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest - Pretest	Negative Ranks	5 ^a	9.90	49.50
	Positive Ranks	15 ^b	10.70	160.50
	Ties	10 ^c		
	Total	30		

a. Posttest < Pretest

b. Posttest > Pretest

c. Posttest = Pretest

Test Statistics^a

Post test - Pre test	
Z	-2.182 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.029

a. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

b. Based on negative ranks.

These following tables indicate that there is a median difference between pairs of observations in experimental class since the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < 0.05 (H₀ is rejected). In addition, the mean score of posttest is higher than that of pre-test (6.73 > 5.75), which is inferred that the pronunciation of the experiment class has been better after

learning with Moodle activities.

Similarly, these tables above show that there is a median difference between pairs of observations in control class because the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.029 < 0.05 (Ho is rejected). Besides, the mean score of pre-test is lower than that of post-test (5.53 < 5.94), which is inferred that the pronunciation of the control class has improved after learning pronunciation in traditional approach.

Table 4

Mann-Whitney U test to compare the posttest scores of the experimental class and the control class

		Ranks			
		Class	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Posttest	Experiment		32	37.83	1210.50
	Control		30	24.75	742.50
	Total		62		

Test Statistics ^a	
	Posttest
Mann-Whitney U	277.500
Wilcoxon W	742.500
Z	-2.929
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.003

a. Grouping Variable: Class

To prove that there is a discrepancy between the post test scores of the experimental class and the control class, the Mann-Whitney U test is used as in the following table. It is obviously displayed that the null hypothesis is rejected because the Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.003 < 0.05, or there is a difference in the mean rank of post-test scores between 2 classes. However, to know how much progress the experimental class

has made in pronunciation in comparison with the control class, the Cohen's d and the effect-size correlation r should be calculated.

Table 5

The Cohen's d and the effect-size correlation r : how much progress the experimental class has made in pronunciation in comparison with the control class.

Lop				
Experiment			Control	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Posttest	6.73	.76	5.94	.96

$$\text{Cohen's } d = M_1 - M_2 / \sigma_{\text{pooled}}$$

$$\text{where } \sigma_{\text{pooled}} = \sqrt{[(\sigma_1^2 + \sigma_2^2) / 2]}$$

$$r_{Y\lambda} = d / \sqrt{(d^2 + 4)}$$

As a result, the Cohen's d is 0.9124567795790585 and the effect-size r is 0.4150714806192597. If these numbers are looked up in the Cohen's Standard table, it can be pointed out that an Effect size of 0.4 indicates that the mean of the experiment group is at the 66th percentile of the control group, nearly at medium level, or the experimental mean score is 66 % higher than the control mean score.

Table 6*The Cohen's Standard table**(adapted from <https://www.uccs.edu/lbecker/effect-size>)*

Cohen's Standard	Effect Size	Percentile Standing	Percent of Nonoverlap
	2	97.7	81.10%
	1.9	97.1	79.40%
	1.8	96.4	77.40%
	1.7	95.5	75.40%
	1.6	94.5	73.10%
	1.5	93.3	70.70%
	1.4	91.9	68.10%
	1.3	90	65.30%
	1.2	88	62.20%
	1.1	86	58.90%
	1	84	55.40%
	0.9	82	51.60%
LARGE	0.8	79	47.40%
	0.7	76	43.00%
	0.6	73	38.20%
MEDIUM	0.5	69	33.00%
	0.4	66	27.40%
	0.3	62	21.30%
SMALL	0.2	58	14.70%
	0.1	54	7.70%
	0	50	0%

Therefore, it is concluded that Moodle-based activities have a nearly medium impact on improving freshmen' pronunciation. The experimental class has improved their pronunciation and is 66 % better than the control class.

The results from Questionnaire

The table indicates that whether there were any progress students could make after the course with Moodle, from the students' viewpoints. What stood out in the table was most of participants agreed and strongly agreed with the given statements. Surprising, only a minority of respondents disagreed, and no ratings was for strongly disagree.

Table 7*Pronunciation improvement after the Moodle course*

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Generally, my pronunciation was improved.	32.50%	62.50%	5.00%	0.00%	0.00%
2. I made fewer mistakes in pronunciation.	50.00%	47.50%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%
3. I could realize my own pronunciation mistakes.	22.50%	75.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%
4. I could pronounce English consonants.	45.00%	55.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
5. I felt easier to speak English after this course.	50.00%	50.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
6. I felt easier to listen to English after this course.	52.50%	45.00%	0.00%	2.50%	0.00%

In response to Statement 1, most of those surveyed indicated that their pronunciation was improved (62.5 % agree and 32.5 % strongly agree). When the participants were asked if they could make fewer mistakes in pronunciation, half of them strongly agreed (50%) and nearly the same agree (47.5%). More than two-thirds of the participants (75%) agreed that they could realize their own pronunciation mistakes, 25% strongly agreed and only 2.5% disagreed. There was a similar rate, almost participants agreed and strongly agreed that they felt easier to speak English and listen to English after the course (more than 50% for agree and nearly 50% for strongly agree). In contrast, only 2.5% participants disagreed with statement 2,3, 6 while there was definitely 0 % percentage of strongly disagree for all statements. Overall, these results indicated that taking part in Moodle activities could help students better their English pronunciation.

The data from open-ended questions also reveal interesting facts.

Students' experience when attending Moodle -based activities

First, the students felt interested while learning pronunciation on Moodle system. With the support of Moodle activities, students find pronunciation learning more effective, helpful and satisfactory. They are now no longer under the pressure of face-to-face with classmates and teachers. It also gave them more confidence and increased comfort in pronouncing words. In the students' opinion, Moodle forum helps students to recognize their mistake by receiving peer feedback and teacher feedback. As a result, it brings awesome benefits: improve teamwork skills, gain the efficient pronunciation modification, gain more knowledge of IPA phonetics. Most importantly, students' confidence on pronouncing words or on their gradual improvement increase day by day.

Benefits of Moodle-based activities in learning pronunciation

When it comes to the benefits, the recording activities help students be more confident as well as more fluent and more well-prepared. As the activities increase the excitement of students, that's why it motivates students in searching for more phonetics knowledge which is related to the target sounds. In general, it enhances students' self-study.

In fact, thanks to self-correction, peer-correction, teacher correction, IPA guidance materials and links, the Moodle activities help a lot to improve pronunciation competence (uploaded on Moodle space). Students not only realized how to pronounce sounds appropriately, but they also knew about their mistakes in pronunciation by looking back at comments in forum.

Students' pronunciation improvements after applying Moodle course

There are some achievements the students gained after 12 weeks. First, they are becoming more confident and pronounce fluently difficult sounds. Secondly, Moodle forums together with feedbacks allow them to correct their own pronunciation's mistakes. Students can pronounce clearer and distinguish minimal pairs better. Thirdly, students can speak English sentences more fluently with less anxiety. Next, they have more time for preparation and improve groupwork skill. Last but not least, students have better performance of reading a text because of rehearsing many times before submitting the final version of their recordings.

The results from Interview

During the last week of the class, the researcher interviewed six volunteer students to obtain in-depth feedback on the Moodle-based class. The interview questions followed by the students' responses are listed as follows.

1. *Do you think that your English pronunciation was generally improved by doing Moodle-based pronunciation activities? If YES, give some specific improvement examples.*

All 6 participants admitted that their pronunciation was improve, from slightly to considerably. Students were more confident because they can pronounce words correctly, including word endings or can make themselves understood by their peers or the teacher. It is no longer too difficult for them to differentiate minimal pairs, or they have more interest in acquiring new knowledge of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) or more motivation in learning pronunciation. Here are the statements from three students:

"I have never learnt any pronunciation classes before. I had no ideas about pronunciation. For this class, I was very excited and found it very useful. I know how to correct my pronunciation and how to control as well as pronounce a word properly. My pronunciation is getting significantly better now. As a result, my English learning is becoming easier and more motivating. For instance, I can get better control over pronouncing sounds at the ends of words. I can figure out how to say the new word correctly by myself after looking it up in the dictionary." (S4-F)

"My pronunciation was improved remarkably thanks to learning in class and practicing at home through the pronunciation activities online. I can distinguish the similar sounds in minimal pairs, such as /s/ and /ʃ/ in *sip* and *ship*.(S5-F)

Combining what the teacher explained in class and listening to audio files and peers' recording, I could recognize and correct my own pronunciation mistakes. Therefore, my pronunciation was improved to some extent. (S6 - M)"

2. *What are your difficulties in improving your pronunciation through Moodle system?*

Four students had no difficulties learning pronunciation with

Moodle. In contrast, one student pointed out some problems with log-in or upload activities while the other students complained about limited time for pronunciation practice due to the hectic school schedule. Here are two opinions from the interviewees:

“At first, we had some problems with getting used to this course, such as: how to log into the course or upload my recordings to the forum. However, after 1 or 2 weeks, everyone became accustomed to it.” (S1 – M)

“I didn’t have much time for practicing online after class due to my hectic school schedule, that’s why my pronunciation was improved as much as I expected.” (S6 – M)

3. *What do you suggest that the teacher improve upon Moodle course?*

Overall, all interviewees hoped more games to be included in pronunciation course, smaller study groups, more focus on word stress, sentence stress and word endings as well as further practice. Here are four typical answers:

“I would like to carry on with this type of learning, so my pronunciation can be improved more in word stress, sentence stress and word endings. I prefer working with smaller groups in class in order to facilitate my pronunciation practice in class.” (S3-F)

“I appreciate this type of learning a lot and I hope to continue this class for the next course. I had no further suggestions.” (S4-F)

“In my opinion, I want to have more listening exercises and more time in class to practice and improve my pronunciation as well as my speaking.” (S5-F)

“I hope that we will have more games to learn the new pronunciation lessons in class.” (S6 – M)

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Pre – post tests

Based on the results from the pre – post test analysis, the data reveal that both groups have improved after 12 weeks of English learning. However, comparing the mean scores of the pronunciation pre-test and

post-test, the control group and experimental group have made progress in the different degree although they were at the same level of pronunciation before the course. The experimental class has improved their pronunciation and is 66 % better than the control class.

Questionnaire

The result of the questionnaire as presented in Table 7 in term of pronunciation enhancement indicated that the students in the experimental class improved their pronunciation in general, which is consistent with the results of the pronunciation tests. The results demonstrated that the majority of the participants thought that they made less pronunciation mistakes and became more confident in pronouncing words clearly and correctly. Additionally, they generally agreed that their listening and speaking in class were getting better once their pronunciation was improved.

Students' interview

Students' self-reflection of their enhancement of their pronunciation

According to the results of qualitative data above, all six students expressed positive feedback on their self-improvement after taking the blended learning using Moodle for pronunciation, which is consistent with the result of the quantitative data obtained from the pronunciation tests. It could help them to better pronunciation and speaking that led to communication skill improvement. Firstly, they were knowledgeable of pronunciation terms, final sound, phonetic transcripts, and difficult sounds. Then the pronunciation was clearer, become more correct and fluent. Noticeably, one of the interviewee pointed out that she could be self-aware enough to realize her incorrect words that she has made for a long time and known how to correct all. Interestingly, some interviewees felt more self-confident to practice online compared with offline class where they were often shy and afraid of making mistakes. To sum up, the majority of participants agreed on the enhancement of their pronunciation with Moodle system.

These findings reconfirm Marcais (2002), as cited in Suppasetsee and Dennis (2010) and Boškovic, Gajic, & Tomic (2014) that speaking and pronunciation should be learnt by integrating “real” and “useful” activities. In this case, Moodle with its interactive activities can meet this demand, or motivate students in pronunciation classes. Moreover, this result consolidates Wilson (2008) about using Moodle to boost students' pronunciation and enjoyment or to reinforce the interaction between teacher and students or among students. Moreover, the findings of this

study contribute significantly to Moodle' worthiness in pronunciation improvement in Vietnam context, which has not been exploited so far. However, because the sample in this study is quite small (n=62), the findings needs reconfirming by other future researches with a bigger sample.

The Moodle application for the pronunciation course has the advantage of offering students a range of opportunities and ways to improve their pronunciation which was not focused much in class. The participants were motivated in learning English when they figured out how to say a new word properly in term of vowels, consonants and final sounds. On the other hand, before implementing this type of blended learning for EFL students, the following issues should be considered:

1. The participants need more time to get used to the online class like joining the forum, uploading the recording files and giving comments on their peers' recording.
2. Instructors should be considered about the proper timing for implementing the blended learning model to their English classes. Therefore, they can balance and optimise course instruction and class activities.

There are some limitations that students and the lecturer have to face with while teaching and learning pronunciation by using Moodle. Technology problem is the first issue, relating logging-in, uploading, recording, using forum, etc. When students could not experience the system smoothly, they became irritated and impatient. It leads to the second challenge: time consuming for teacher consultancy and students' familiarity with the system. Besides, appropriate feedback for students also needs taking into consideration because there were too many students' recordings for the teacher to give feedback and correction to all, which may lead to wrong peer correction cases. Last but not least, the preparation for Moodle activities is also a time-consuming process.

To deal with those challenges, teachers should take time for thorough Moodle training for students before applying the system into the pronunciation course. Good preparation from the scratch reduces time loss. Secondly, teachers should select some recordings with typical mistakes in pronunciation and demonstrate the right rules in class so that students will have a standard model to follow. Finally, preparation or designing for Moodle activities should be shared among teachers with the same interests. By this way, Moodle-based activities will be diverse, innovative and beneficial for learners. The teacher's burden is lessened

as well as their time is saved.

CONCLUSION

Within blended learning where there is a thoughtful combination between the best components of face-to-face instruction and online learning, it has been asserted that the objectives, content, and organization of this Moodle teaching/learning course design contribute to a certain degree in satisfying learners' learning needs. This research that sought to determine the freshmen students' enhancement in Moodle environment provides strong evidence certifying that blended learning pronunciation course with Moodle contributes in enhancing their pronunciation. Since this new learning environment empowered university students with more learning autonomy and freedom, more and more blended learning courses where the learning conditions characterizing face-to-face learning and e-learning are effectively combined to satisfy learners' needs is becoming a necessity. Setting the ground for this innovative learning environment will meet the aspiration and exigencies of the 21st generation university students.

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A COLLABORATIVE TEACHING MODEL FOR HETEROGENEOUS CLASS IN A COMPUTER-ASSISTED LISTENING COURSE

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative teaching (CT) has long been considered as an effective teaching paradigm in English language teaching (ELT) domain. However, few studies showed how co-teachers could provide additional support for lower-level students in heterogeneous CALL classes. This study aims at proposing a co-teaching model in the computer-assisted listening course, in which lower level students received a 15-minute intervention every teaching session to help them catch up with the pace of the class. The quasi-experimental research design was employed with control and experimental groups. Thirty-nine Vietnamese English-major freshmen, from two intact classes at Van Lang University, and two EFL lecturers participated in the study. The 10-week listening course was implemented with similar procedures for both groups except the fact that only deficient students in the experimental group received additional support with 15-minute interventions. The collected data from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed by t-test using SPSS software. The yielded result of the experimental group outweighed that of the control group which confirmed the effectiveness of the investigated CT model for supporting lower-level students of a diverse level class in the computer-assisted environment.

Keywords: *computer-assisted language learning (CALL), collaborative teaching, heterogeneous class*

INTRODUCTION

At the age of globalization, English language plays a pivotal role in any education system; thus, students need to be well-prepared for English communication purposes. Dudeney and Hockly (2007) pointed out that the application of ICT in classrooms could not only make students well-equipped in later working life but also help themselves be familiar with

the fast-changing of globalization. In some recent years, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) has been widely employed in the ELT domain mainly due to its efficiency in serving three aspects of language teaching: easy access and navigation, teacher workload reduction, mixed-level and large-sized class.

Concerning teaching heterogeneous classes, Vietnam's education system, in general, and ELT domain, in particular, have been confronted with mixed-level classes mainly due to the large number of students arranged in a class. This leads to the fact that teachers have been struggling with students ranging from different educational backgrounds. Reflecting on the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, there are two challenges for teaching freshman students. The former is students' educational and geographical background which means that there exists a growing disparity in prior English knowledge of those who come from remote areas and those who are from urban areas; the latter is freshman students, particularly those from rural regions, are more unlikely to adapt themselves with the tertiary learning environment which attributes to their lack of motivation. In searching for an optimal solution, the Faculty has proactively employed CALL in listening courses for nearly 6 years which has brought some certain improvement to low-level students. However, the aforementioned solution has not effectively shortened the gap between the high and the low-level students which leads to the fact that the *collaborative teaching* (CT) model in CALL listening course might be considered as a radical solution which is worth taking further to narrow down the gap.

In terms of supporting deficient students in mixed-level class, apart from the previous methodology which has been employed in teaching for years, CT model is likely to be a novel and effective method to resolve the current (Friend, 2013; Fenty & McDuffie-Landrum, 2011; Scruggs, Mastropieri, & McDuffie, 2007). That is to say, this teaching model has been helping teachers to share their teaching workload, namely syllabus, material, and to make use of their quality time in class to assist lower-level students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of this literature focuses on two main sections: issues related to heterogeneous classroom and collaborative teaching models for this mixed-level teaching context.

Heterogeneous classroom

Teaching heterogeneous classes, a common issue for teachers and

educators, is a complex endeavor as it requires a great deal of effort to facilitate students at most in their learning process. Skehan (1998) defined a heterogeneous class as a learning environment consisting of successful and unsuccessful learners. In ELT domain, Ur (2012) generalized the definition of a mixed-ability class based on 06 aspects: language knowledge, language learning ability, motivation, learning experience, learning style, and social or cultural background. Also, several obstacles faced by teachers are listed by Ur, including classroom discipline, students' learning interest, the level of difficulty of tasks, suitable learning material, and classroom participation

Regarding these challenges, Shulman, Lotan, and Whitcomb, (1998) promoted group work as a radical teaching strategy for this educational issue. These researchers commented that group work could help enhance academic, cognitive, social and attitudinal outcomes for students which quite correspond to Ur's list of gaps between proficient and less proficient students in a class in 2012. Indeed, through group work activities, both higher-level and lower-level students could be assigned adequate tasks at the same time, creating a meaningful learning climax for mixed-ability learners. Also, as successful students are also empowered to help other less-proficient levels during group work activities, students get chances to learn from their peers.

Another solution presented is collaborative teaching. This teaching model creates much more effective teaching sessions for the heterogeneous class in comparison to the traditional classroom with one teacher (Murawski, 2009). Actually, co-teachers could share heavy workloads from a mixed-level class. Scruggs, Mastropieri, and McDuffie (2007), Fenty and McDuffie-Landrum (2011) claimed that co-teaching provides opportunities for students with difficulties to catch up with other students in the same class since these students could receive support from the instructors every time they need in the course of learning.

Regarding the current teaching context, collaborative teaching models seemed to outweigh group work activities, when it comes to the practicality of choosing an appropriate solution. The investigated listening course was implemented in computer labs which are originally designed for computer-delivered tests with desk dividers and a fairly rigid room layout so as to maximize the privacy and confidentiality during the test. As a result, the available facilities are not ready to lend themselves to a lively and dynamic class with group work activity. Meanwhile, as two teachers collaborate in one class, they are able to maximize individuals' learning with respect to difficulty deriving from

the existing facilities.

Collaborative teaching models

The following table summarizes six models in a CT classroom of Friend (2013).

Table 1

The collaborative teaching models

Model	Description
Teaming	Both teachers equally deliver the learning content to students at the same time.
Parallel Teaching	The class is split up and each teacher is in charge of half of the class
Station Teaching	The class is divided into three groups. The first two groups are taught by two teachers, and students in the third group do the revision activities or complete a project with their peers. Students should move among groups to learn needed skills and knowledge to finish the tasks or projects assigned
One Teach- One Observe	One teacher carries out the lesson when the other drifts through the class to collect data on students, making predictions for further help or intervention to struggled students.
One Teach-One Assist	One teacher is leading the lesson, while the other teacher is playing the role of an assistant to the main teacher.
Alternative Teaching	One teacher presents the lesson to most of the class and another teacher works with a small group of students with learning difficulties.

Of all co-teaching models, alternative teaching could be an appropriate alternative to the traditional classroom as it satisfies the need for supporting lower-level students in a small, intensive group. Also, other co-teaching models require quite reasonable learning space to conduct

the collaborative teaching activities, i.e. grouping, regrouping and moving between groups, whereas in alternative teaching, there are solely two groups: one small group and the rest of the class. More importantly, the amount of time for alternative teaching has to be carefully considered due to the fact that teacher-participants' teaching schedules sometimes overlap with each other; thus, it would be a time management challenge to conduct a whole session with both teachers in class.

Although collaborative teaching has gained its popularity across the language teaching domain for a while, researchers tend to focus on different models, and have yet to carry out many studies on alternative teaching. In 2015, Keeley (2015) conducted a study about student and teacher perceptions of 06 co-teaching models. The setting was in an English Language Arts classroom with 2 co-teachers and 37 students with disabilities in a junior school in America. Within 10 days, all co-teaching models were conveniently applied and the data was collected by two rubrics for the teachers and students. The data was then analyzed using ANOVA. The result confirmed the generally positive perception of both teachers and students towards co-teaching strategies despite some slight differences across models. For alternative teaching, the participants assumed that this model could generate an unbalanced classroom and deficient students could suffer long, separated sessions.

Also, Boland, Alkhalifa, and Al-Mutairi (2019) completed a study on applying co-teaching models to enhance students' overall academic English language skills. The quasi-experiment was employed as the study design with the participation of 24 female students and 02 teachers in a tertiary institution in Kuwait. After a 6-week experiment with all co-teaching models, 2 groups, control and experimental ones, sit a test to measure their improvement in 4 skills. The yielded data was analyzed by independent t-test. The result confirmed the effectiveness of co-teaching models in improving students' language performance. Despite the fact that the two studies investigated the effect of co-teaching models, yet alternative teaching model was not the prominent model of study. Also, the aims of the research did not solely concentrate on listening skill as in the current teaching context.

As discussed earlier, it is a need to conduct another research to explore the effect of alternative teaching model on assisting lower-level students and the whole class in the computer-assisted listening course. More importantly, due to the mismatching of the co-teachers' schedules, the alternative teaching model was implemented within the initial 15 minutes of each session, namely the intervention. Friend and Bursuck

(2012) suggested that the remedial grouping in alternative teaching is not necessarily carried out the entire session, but occasionally due to the needs of the students. Thus, the 15-minute intervention is an appropriate treatment for the context of research.

Research question

Does the alternative teaching model with 15-min interventions improve EFL students' listening performance?

METHODOLOGY

Settings and participants

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University. The Faculty officially launched the Listening course on Moodle system in 2017 for Listening 1 and Listening 2 for first-year English major students. The research course was Listening 1, consisting of 10 sessions, 2.5 hours per session. "Tactics for Listening Expanding (3rd Edition) Student Book", by Jack C. Richards published in 2012, was employed as the teaching material. The English Listening 1 course, carried out on Moodle, aims to equip students with essential listening skills that enable them to be well-prepared for level B1 –CEFR examination.

With regard to the participants, there were 39 first-year students in 2 intact classes invited to take part in the research. The two available classes were named the Control Group with 18 students and the Experimental Group with 21 students. Two co-lecturers were also engaged in this research. Two groups, control and experimental, attended two intact classes one day per week, each session lasted for two hours and a half. Students in two groups were required to do homework and to review taught lectures at home after every lesson. The syllabus and the teaching material which have been applied for two classes are the same. Regarding participants' demographic, they were freshman students aged from 18-20 years old including 26 females and 13 males from two intact English classes which were conveniently drawn from the population of 900 freshmen taking in the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020. Since CT model is technically conducted by two teachers, the two intact classes must be chosen based on the flexibility of the teachers' schedule. Turning into students' English background knowledge, most students studied English from primary school to high school for nearly 12 years, whereas some of them has learned English since secondary school, around 6 years until now. They all passed the English test in National High School Graduation

Examination which was administered by Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training; however, there is one deficient point in this test in which listening skill was not directly tested. Thus, the students' listening proficiency were not drawn from the test.

Co-teaching model

Two teacher-participants collaborated in lesson planning and teaching process and professional discussion. In the course of the research, two co-teachers prepared the lesson plans, teaching materials and created the activities, namely quizzes, in the Moodle system together. The in-class teaching process was also conducted together within the initial 15 minutes for each session. After every session, two teachers spend time on self-reflection and discussion about students, especially deficient ones, the teaching and learning process for the upcoming sessions.

The 15-minute intervention was implemented in the following sequence. For each lesson, the teachers assigned an e-learning video content derived from the course book, which is a sub-skill in listening, accompanied by a quiz to assess students' level of comprehension. Students who watched the video and scored under 5 points over 10, the cut-score point, would be grouped and be applied to the treatment. In the following in-class session, while one teacher helped the rest of the class either revise the lesson or do some listening activities, one teacher would assemble deficient students, based on the result of the quiz. Within 15 minutes, the teacher retaught the content from the video and assigned an interventional quiz in Moodle to reevaluate the students' performance. After the intervention, the teacher working with lower-level students collected the data from the interventional quiz, ungrouped and left the classroom.

Research design

In the context of the research, random assignment was impractical as the researcher was able to approach two intact classes. Therefore, the present study employed quasi-experimental research, with the experimental group and the control group, as the main study design so as to endure with the limitation in choosing participants (Creswell, 2012; Griffiee, 2012). A pre-test and post-test were administered at the beginning and the end of the course to assess any discrepancies between the two groups, in terms of listening proficiency.

The application of Co-teaching model

The research procedure lasted for approximately 8 weeks from week 3

to week 10.

1 Stage 1: week 1 and week 2

In this stage, the freshman students were instructed on how to get themselves familiar with utilizing the Moodle system in the Listening 1 course. Within two first weeks, two lecturers also observed 39 participants in serving the purpose of identifying students' levels through daily conversation or student's in-class exercises. At the end of week 2, all participants were required to conduct a pre-test, employed from test 1 of the Cambridge English Preliminary 8 (Cambridge English, 2014), on the Moodle system.

2 Stage 2: from week 3 to week 10

Once the participants were accustomed to learning listening on the Moodle system, the initial 15-minute intervention was employed exclusively for the Experimental Group to collect data for research findings. On the contrary, Control Group was taught normally without any intervention.

3 Stage 3: week 10

At the end of the last session of the course, a post-test was conducted on two groups to collect final data for analysis.

Data collection and analysis

According to the Listening 1 course' objective, students finished the course are expected to obtain level B1 (CEFR) in listening skill; thus, the pre-test and post-test employed the listening sections of test 1 and test 2 from the Cambridge English Preliminary 8 of Cambridge University Press respectively.

Data collected from the pre-test and post-test were then analyzed using SPSS (version 23). Initially, an independent sample T-test was carried out to analyze the difference between the two groups on the pre-test score. After the treatment period, another independent sample T-test was conducted to measure the mean difference between the two groups' post-test data.

FINDINGS

Before applying treatment, Independent Sample T-test was run to analyze the pre-test data of the two groups. In case there was a significant discrepancy between the two groups' proficiency, the study could be deferred; otherwise the researcher could take steps further to

apply the 15-min intervention with the alternative-teaching model to the experimental group.

Table 2

Pre-test Independent Samples Test

Group	N	M	SD	MD	t	df	p
Control	18	4.196	1.111	-0.252	-0.523	37	0.604
Experimental	21	4.448	1.761				

Table 2 shows the results of the independent T-test of the pre-test stage. The Mean score of the control group (M=4.1961; SD= 1.111) is lower than that of the experimental group (M= 4.448; SD= 1.761). However, the independent samples t-test shows that this difference is not statistically significant (t (37)=-.523, P=0.604 >0.05). Hence, it can be concluded that the gap between the two groups' pre-test performance was not significant, albeit minor discrepancy. In other words, the context is qualified to conduct quasi-experimental research.

Table 3

Post-test Independent Samples Test

Group	N	M	SD	MD	t	df	p
Control	18	5.219	1.618	-1.438	-2.482	37	0.018
Experimental	21	6.657	1.946				

Table 2 and Table 3 give information about the pre-test and posttest groups statistic. The average post-test scores of the control group (M=5.219) and experimental group (M=6.657) are higher than those of pre-test, M=4.196 and M= 4.448 respectively. This means both groups show certain improvements after the course. To be more specific, in both traditional CALL classroom and Alternative teaching CALL classroom, students are able to take chances to improve their listening skills.

To be more specific, Table 3 shows the results of the independent T-test of the post-test stage. It can be seen that the average post-test score of the experimental group (M=6.657; SD=1.946) was higher than that of the control group (M=5.219; SD=1.618). The independent samples T-test of the post-test shows that the difference in the post-test of the two groups is statistically significant (t (37)=-2.482, P=0.018<0.05). Thus,

the analyzed data indicates that applying the alternative teaching model, with 15-min intervention, in CALL is more effective than the traditional CALL when it comes to the issue of enhancing student's listening proficiency.

Looking at the standard deviation data of two groups in table 2 and table 3, the increase of the data between pre-test and post-test of the experimental group is less than that of the control group. Indeed, the experimental group has the pre-test standard deviation of 1.761 and that of the post-test is 1.946, a gain of 0.185; whereas the control group's pre-test standard deviation is 1.111 and the figure of post-test is 1.618, an increase of 0.507. This could be interpreted that after the course, although the deviation among students' listening ability of the experimental group was higher than the data of the control group, indicating a much more mixed-level class, these gaps seem to be lessened within the group. Thus, the treatment shows its effectiveness in supporting lower-level students during the course.

DISCUSSION

For the research question of the study regarding whether co-teaching model improves EFL students' listening performance, the researchers ran Independent Sample T-test to determine whether there was any significant difference in the post-test scores between the control and the experimental group after the treatment. Based on data analysis and findings, it can be inferred that alternative teaching on the Moodle system with 15-minute interventions significantly improves students' listening performance in comparison with only employing Moodle on the Listening 1 course as usual. The results of the current study were in agreement with previous researchers Keeley (2015) and Boland, Alkhalifa and Al-Mutairi (2019) who concluded that co-teaching, including alternative teaching, is an effective teaching model for the heterogeneous class as it could greatly support deficient learners to keep pace with the rest of the class.

Look on another side of this study, even there could be initial evidence confirming that CT help to lessen the gaps amongst students in a mixed-level class, further studies need to be taken to justify the long-term effects of this model. Needless to say, this finding could be considered as a pivotal factor in shedding light on the application of CT model with CALL for heterogeneous class.

IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research's findings have pedagogical implications for applying CT in

teaching listening on the Moodle system to support weak students and reduce teachers' workload. Moreover, this study could be a useful starting point for future research for the following aspects of teaching listening. First and foremost, further research needs to be conducted to examine the effects of CT on the Moodle system in narrowing the gaps among students' competency in a heterogeneous class so that no students will be left behind in learning progress. Second, online teaching programs could be utilized as a tool to conduct the 15-min CT intervention in order to maximize the effect of ICT in language learning. Besides, these distance-learning applications could be taken as an effective tool to deal with teachers' schedules overlapping and time conflicts. Third, to improve the effectiveness of CT, there could be a combination of alternative teaching with 15-minutes interventions and the so-called model "One Teach- One Observe". Last but not least, this 15-minute intervention could be a practical model for building up teachers' internship programs in which the teacher trainees would be in charge of the intervention section. This could not only grant opportunities for students of TESOL practice their teaching skill, under the observation of the lecturer, but also effectively reduce lecturers' workload.

Although pre-test data showed no significant difference between the two groups, the results of the study could not be generalized to different contexts, yet a source of reference. It is because this research was conducted by using quasi-experimental research and applied in small-size samples. One more limitation of this study is that students' attitude toward the application of using Moodle system in collaborative teaching listening has not been researched which leads the fact that further study regarding this matter needs to be conducted in future. Finally, with in the scope of the research, the interventions were not comprehensively support lower-level learners as some less proficient students had not been fully identified. This is due to the fact that 8 quizzes from 8 weeks are not enough to fully identify all lower-level students as some students may get 5 , the cutting score, or just above it. There may be some aspects in listening that they would not perform well if there are some more time to further investigate.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the research was to investigate how CT model could be applied in CALL Listening 1 course, using the Moodle system, at the tertiary level. It was concluded from the findings that this teaching model improved students' listening performance during the 8-week experiment. More importantly, the students' gaps were narrowed down

in the experimental group, which confirmed the effectiveness of the CT model in teaching the heterogeneous class. Also, the results of the current research reconfirmed the efficacy of employing Moodle activities on the students' listening performance. However, the positive results of this study also depend on the teachers' professional teamwork, available facilities, students' comfort of using technology, and students' ICT knowledge. Besides, the current study also contributes to the literature in terms of creating learning opportunities for every student in the heterogeneous class, especially for lower-level students and reducing teachers' workload. It is essential to conclude that collaboration in teaching and taking advantage of technology in teaching English are likely on the trend of solving the problem of mixed-level and large size classes. At the age of 21st century, in searching for an ultimate solution to deal with students' gap in learning and teachers' workload burden, collaboration in CALL climate could open a door that leads to the success of teaching and learning English.

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HOW READY ARE STUDENTS FOR LEARNING ENGLISH ONLINE? A PRELIMINARY CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Understanding students' technological knowledge and their e-readiness plays key roles in designing suitable online English learning courses, and aids in the development of their computer skills for participating in those courses. This study, therefore, aims at investigating students' online needs and technical skills as well as their perceptions of taking a full or blended English online course in the Vietnamese context. A hundred and ninety-two English and non-English major students at HCMC Open University participated in the study by completing the adapted version of the Technology Survey developed by Winkle and Goertler (2008a). Participants' ownership of technological tools and their access to these tools, their performance on using basic to advanced computer tasks, as well as their willingness to take a full or blended English course at HCMC Open University are assessed by the questionnaire. The results of the study show that the participants personally own or have adequate conditions to access technological devices or the Internet at home or at the university. Their typing skills are also reported to be at a decent level. However, while the informants are confident in applying basic computer-based tasks such as formatting and delivering documents through Internet, their performance on more advanced tasks (e.g., making multimedia files using editing software and transferring these files to the computer) is found to be relatively low. Almost half of the surveyed students show their willingness to take online English courses, either fully online or blended. The study offers useful implications for teachers and course designers in preparing students for online English learning courses.

Keywords: *online learning, technology survey*

INTRODUCTION

Online learning has been considered useful in that it can be accessed at any time and any places with the Internet, can be reached by many learners at the same time, can support students with a variety of exercises, and can supply instant feedback for specific learners. Butler-

Pascoe and Wiburg (2003) stated that online English learning courses can enhance learners' cognitive abilities, problem-solving skills as well as promoting learner autonomy. Bracher (2013), McCarty (2007), and Shudong et al. (2005) also indicated that the online learning courses can help anxious or shy learners shape their learning in their own ways with their own pace. Therefore, it is reasonable that more and more learners choose online language learning as one of the main pathways to acquiring knowledge.

Despite the aforementioned advantages and popularity, whether students can achieve success in online learning depends on numerous factors, of which their readiness for online learning plays crucial roles. However, this area of research received little attention in the literature (Burrows & Stepanczuk, 2013), and therefore needs more empirical evidence from the specific contexts in which learning takes place. This study was situated in Vietnam, a developing country where online learning is gaining increasing popularity. More specifically, the context in which this study was conducted was a large open university in Ho Chi Minh city that offers online courses to more than 30000 undergraduate students across the country, thereby having the potential to offer implications for the development, renovation, and delivery of online courses to students. The following research questions, therefore, are formulated for the current study:

1. How ready are students at HCMC Open University for learning English online?

2. Are students willing to take part in either a full or blended English online course at HCMC Open University?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The growth of online language learning: The Vietnamese context

According to Hockly (2015), there are five main current delivery models for learning a language online ranging from formal to informal approaches. These include formal online language courses, virtual worlds; Language Massive Open Online Courses (LMOOC), online language learning communities, and mobile assisted language learning. In the next section, I will briefly explain and exemplify each of the online modes in the context of Vietnam, particularly at HCMC Open University (hereafter HCMC OU) where the current study was conducted.

Formal online courses

According to Hockly (2015), formal online courses are learning modes delivered by educational institutions through Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Learning Management System (LMS). When enrolled in formal online courses, students are expected to work fully online and to have discussion with the lecturers through video conferences. The learning resources for these formal online courses can be materials designed by the schools or universities, or produced by the commercial publishers.

These formal online learning courses have been offered at OU for quite a long time. The learners of these courses are full-time working people who cannot arrange time to enroll in day-time, face-to-face classes. Classes are offered online only. The lessons are delivered through instructional videos and PowerPoint slides. The variety of exercises and quizzes are also provided in each unit so that the learners can consolidate what they have learnt through the video lessons and the books. Every two weeks, students post their responses to a discussion topic initiated by the lecturers. Each month learners also join a video conference with the course instructor where they can directly ask questions and share their learning difficulties throughout the course. There are no differences in the content of the syllabus between this online course and formal face-to-face classes.

The LMS is also applied in most of the courses for students with different academic disciplines at OU. This is a useful platform for maintaining and enhancing communication between the lecturers and students. The lecturers are encouraged to upload the materials onto the system before the course start. Students are expected to join the discussion board and upload their assignment onto the LMS as per the course requirements. Based on the report of the Department of Training at OU, up to 80% of the courses use LMS either as a sole learning platform or a supplementary module.

Virtual worlds

Hockly (2015) believed that Virtual worlds are “computer-based online environments, such as Second Life, or three-dimensional Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Games (MMORPG), such as World of Warcraft”.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) for English learning is quite a

new phenomenon. Hockly (2015) posited that this learning platform boosts enrolment, but at the same time, drop-out rate is also at a high level.

Regarding Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), OU is planning to establish Macro Online Courses (MaOCs) and Micro Online Courses (MiOCs). These courses are carried out not only for English language courses but also for other courses like accounting, law, and finance. These programs are designed with the purpose of supporting public learning, offering learning opportunities for people who do not have chance to join the formal classes. OU intends to introduce Massive Open Online Courses in April, 2020.

Online language learning communities

Hockly (2015) stated that Online language learning communities where freelance teachers offer live language lessons for a large number of learners using some marketplace websites, are a product of Web 2.0 development. Hockly (2015) accepted the convenience of this kind of online learning in providing an open space for communication among teachers and learners, especially for the less common languages. According to Hockly (2015), with adaptive learning content, mobile apps can support learners in acquiring particular language aspects such as grammar or vocabulary. This kind of online tool helps students learn by doing various types of exercises such as multiple choice, translation, or dictation. Even though it can quickly identify students' needs and weaknesses, the biggest limitation of mobile apps might be its focus on memorization and decontextualization characteristics.

With regard to the application of online learning programs for language learning, the Department of Foreign languages at OU has used commercially pre-packaged instructional materials that accompany the lessons in the books in order to enhance students' learning autonomy. Particularly, English-major students have to finish the online exercises that are attached with the books. By owning the books, students have access to the online learning resources which include the audio files and exercises for practicing different language skills. This activity is a compulsory one and occupies twenty percent of the total credits. This kind of blended learning is also applied to the general English courses for the non-English majors. The book LIFE published by Cengage Learning is used for all the general English courses at OU. At the beginning of the course, students are provided with the course code and class code from the instructors to enroll in the MyELT-online learning modules. Students, therefore, can enhance the knowledge and skills that

they acquire not only in class but also via the books by taking these online exercises. Students' online practice is also supervised by the lecturers and the online learning outcome accounts for 20% of the total credits.

Learners' preparedness for online learning

Empirical evidence suggests various factors that might affect students' learning effectiveness in an online learning environment. These include, but are not limited to, learner readiness, learner autonomy, students' attitude, and learning motivation. The following sections briefly discuss these factors in light of previous studies.

Warner et al. (1998) defined learner readiness for online learning as a "measure of students' inclination toward online delivery modes versus face-to-face instruction, their competence and tendency to utilize electronic communication, and their ability to undertake autonomous learning" (p.253). Learner readiness for online learning has been extensively researched in previous studies (see, for example, Barrette 2001; Burrows and Stepanczuk 2013; Fageeh 2011; Murray and Blyth 2011; and a series of studies by Winke, Goertler, and their colleagues, Goertler 2009; Goertler, Bollen, and Gaff 2012; Winke and Goertler 2008b; Winke et al. 2010). The common finding among these studies were that students' readiness for online learning was an important factor that contributed to online learning success.

With regards to learner autonomy, Smith (2005) stated that there is a tight connection between autonomous learning and online learning success. Time management is often cited as a significant predictor of learners' preparation for online learning. Research on computer self-efficacy effects on engagement in virtual learning is also carried out by some scholars. In particular, Hung et al. (2010) believed that computer and Internet navigation can be regarded as significant determinants of online learning success. In a study carried out by Winkle and Goertler (2008) at Michigan State University, the participants were found to lack the computer literacy. In addition, Winkle and Goertler (2008) also reported that there was a noticeable absence of research on learners' preparedness, pointing out that "with the exception of Barrette (2001), CALL researchers and pedagogues have not directly asked students about their preparedness for CALL before implementation" (2008, p. 483).

Learners' attitude towards online learning also draws traction from numerous researchers (Liaw, Huang, & Chen, 2007; Sun et al., 2008; Yee

et al., 2009; Pillay, Irving, & Tones, 2007). For example, Pillay, Irving, and Tones (2007) investigated participants' perception about online learning by using different questions tapping learners' opinion about different aspects of online learning in their survey, such as "I would rather listen to a lecture than read the material from a computer screen," "I would rather find out information using a computer than from a teacher or lecturer," and "I can't learn using only computers, I need the teacher-student contact".

Motivation is also highlighted as one of the factors affecting the online learning success of the learners (Davis, Bagozzi & Warshaw, 1989; Shih & Gamon, 2001; Hung et al., 2010). In most of the research on the connection between motivation and online learning result, the findings have suggested that the more students feel motivated, the more successful they are in completing online courses. However, as stated by Burrows and Stepanczuk (2013), even though these studies indicated the correlation between motivation and success, the researchers still needed clearer demonstration and evidence to prove direct relationship.

In addition, logistic factors, such as students' access to computer-supported learning facilities as well as skills and knowledge required for online learning have also been explored by Mehran et al. (2017) who found that Japanese students at Osaka University had sufficient access to technological devices and Internet at their homes or campuses. The findings also indicated that the participants could comfortably utilize Web 2.0 tools in their daily activities but not for educational purposes. Most of the participants also did not show their interests in taking online courses, either delivered fully online or in blended modes.

Although research on the different factors that affect the effectiveness of online learning, such as learner autonomy, perception, and motivation, has contributed significantly to promoting this learning platform, the gap remains as to whether students are ready for online learning and what factors may hinder or enable students' readiness, particularly in the context of a developing country like Vietnam. The current study, therefore, was conducted in an attempt to fill this gap by digging deeper into students' readiness for online learning, with a particular focus on language learners at OU.

THE STUDY

Participants

One hundred and ninety-two Vietnamese students at Open University participated in this study. 68,8 % participants are sophomores, 8.3% third-year students, 1% fourth-year students, and 15.6% freshmen. All of the participants are non-English majors. They are undergraduates majoring in accounting, international business, Asian studies, Economic laws, finance, and banking. One hundred and fifty-one students (78.6%) are females and forty-one (21.4%) are males. The age of the participants ranges from 19 to 22. The non-English major students were studying English as a compulsory object. One hundred and seventy-four participants (90.6%) admitted that they were studying English since it was useful for their future jobs. 60.9% believed that English was a necessary tool to communicate with native speakers. 56.8% and 34.9% shared that interest in English countries and culture and the need to have a good command of a foreign language were two of the main reasons inspiring them to learn English.

Data collection and analysis

Survey instrument

The Technology Survey developed by Winke and Goertler (2008a) was adapted and used to collect data. In order to reduce the language barrier for the respondents, the survey was translated into Vietnamese. The questionnaire asked about the personal ownership of technological items such as desktop, laptop, computer speakers, headphones, microphone, printer, internet access, webcam, digital camera, video camera, smartphome and tablet. The ability to perform computer-based tasks from basic ones such as typing English and non-English characters, cutting, copying and pasting, inserting pictures and graphs into documents to advanced tasks such as developing and maintaining a website, making a sound recording using audio editing software and saving it to a disc or hard drive. Students' willingness to take part in a fully online English class at Open university where all the instructions are done online or a blended English class where learning time is split between face-to-face and online modes is also examined in the survey. The last section of the questionnaire is the examination of the students' use of Web 2.0 tools, such as websites, blogs, Wikis, email, chat, SMS, discussion boards, online materials, and social networking websites in their personal lives or for educational purposes. The survey is distributed to students via the Google form platform. Students are

invited to respond to the survey by accessing the survey link.

Data analysis

The link to the questionnaire was made open for one month after which data were collected and processed. Descriptive statistics were generated via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software and were reported using Pie and Bar charts.

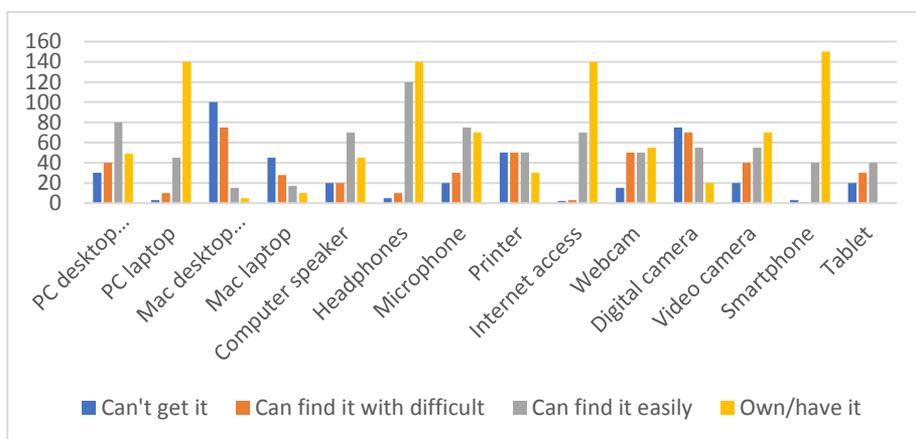
RESULTS

Ownership of and accessibility to technology tools

Firstly, students' accessibility to PC desktop computer, PC laptop, Mac desktop computer, Mac laptop, Computer speakers, headphones, microphone, printer, internet access, webcam, digital camera, video camera, smartphone, and tablet was examined. Nearly 70% students reported that they owned laptops and headphones and up to 150 students (80%) had smartphones. The findings showed that all of the students had access to the internet and up to 70% (130) admitted that they could easily use the Internet. However, only a few participants had convenient access to other technical facilities for online learning such as webcam, microphone, and printer with 30%, 32% and 11% respectively. Figure 1 presents participants' reported ownership and accessibility to technical tools that support online learning.

Figure 1

Learners' reported ownership of and accessibility to technical tools

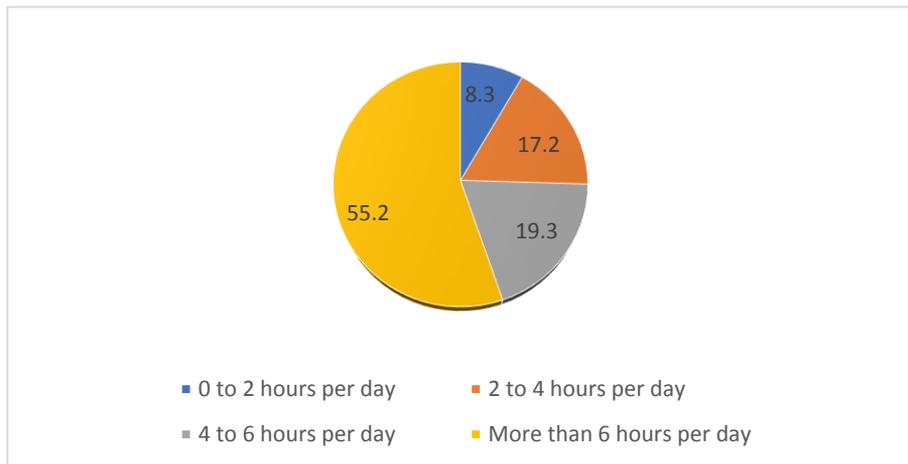


Computer use

The majority of students stated that they often spent more than 6 hours per day for the computer-based tasks (55.2%). Only 16 students (8.3%) reported that their computer use was less than two hours per day. Nevertheless, only four percent of the respondents frequently used PC desktops in the university labs. Nearly forty percent of students never used on-campus computers. Figure 2 presents participants' reported frequency of using computers

Figure 2

Participants' reported frequency of using computers



Students' performance on computer-based tasks

Keyboarding and formatting documents

Nearly a half of respondents (49%) rated their English typing ability as pretty well. Only three respondents (1.6%) shared that they could not type in English.

Over ninety percent of the participants confidently admitted that they could easily handle simple tasks on computers like cutting, copying and pasting in documents (91%), changing font size and color saving (93%), inserting pictures and graphs (74%). However, most of students indicated that they had difficulties in typing non-English language characters (76%).

Internet know-how

The majority of students believed that they could confidently navigate the Internet. Respondents were also confident in the use of other

Internet-based activities such as saving and downloading files from the Internet (94%), playing audio files from the web and from computer (87%), posting messages on an online bulletin board (e.g. Facebook, Twitter) (82%), and downloading and unzipping a ZIP file (65%).

Emailing

The finding showed that the participants felt comfortable with most of the email-related activities. Over ninety percent of participants believed that they could easily create a new, free email account online as well as open, send or forward emails with attachments. However, the aforementioned email-related tasks become more challenging when the recipients are groups rather than an individual, only 69% shown comfort when emailing to groups, including using the reply-to-all function.

DVD or CD tasks

Regarding tasks working with DVD or CD, the participants feel more confident in playing a video on a website, on computers, or stored on DVD (56%), copying files or tracks from a computer's hard drive to CD or DVD or vice versa (36%), and creating an audio CD from a set of MP3 files stored on a computer's hard drive (38%) than installing a program directly from a DVD or CD (24%). Only 35% and 29% of participants were able to transfer a video recording from a camcorder to computer and open it in a video editing software package and edit video respectively.

Multimedia tools familiarity

The familiarity of the students with multimedia tools such as websites, course websites, blogs, wikis, email, chat, SMS, video chat, discussion board, video or audio was also examined in the last section of the questionnaire. The respondents are expected to mark their use of these tools on a five-level scale: (1) do not know, (2) use this for my personal life, (3) use this in non-language classes, (4) use this in language class, (5) think this is or would be useful for language learning.

According to students' reports, emails (53%), chat (59%), website (48%) SMS (60%), Video chat (52%), video games (46%), and social-networking sites (56%) are often used by the participants in their everyday life. The findings showed that not many students were acquainted with some tools like blogs, wikis, discussion board, podcasts or videocasts, CD-DVD, CD-ROMs/DVD, iPad, iPod. Among these tools, the most favorable in both English and non-English major classes

include online exercises or questions, video and audio material, social networking sites, discussion boards, and general websites.

Regarding the question “Which multimedia tool you believe they are or could be useful for language learning”, online and offline video or audio material, podcasts or videocasts, computer games, CD • DVD CD-ROMs/DVDs, Online exercises/quizzes, Social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, LINE), Discussion boards, Websites, Course websites received the highest rank.

Willingness to take part in online English courses

According to the self-reports of the students, 44.3% and 45.3% expressed their interest in taking a fully online or a blended English class at Open University respectively. Less than 7% stated that they did not want to join a pure or blended online English class. Up to 50% of the participants shared that they were doubtful of joining an English online course. Figure 3 presents participants’ interest in taking a fully online English class at OU where all the instruction is done online and Figure 4 presents participants’ interest in taking a blended English class at OU where half of the instruction is in class, that is face-to-face with the teacher and other students, and half is independent study online.

Figure 3

Participants’ interest in taking a fully online English class at OU

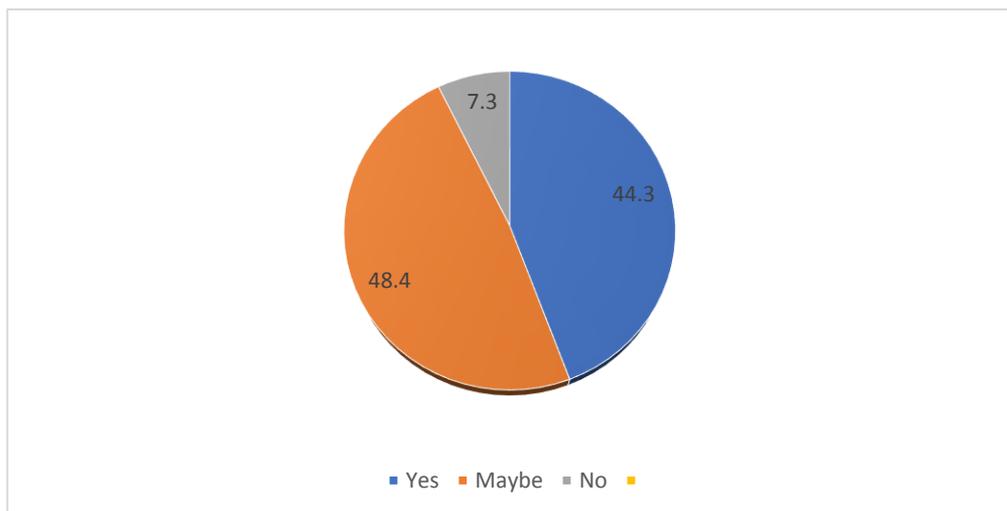
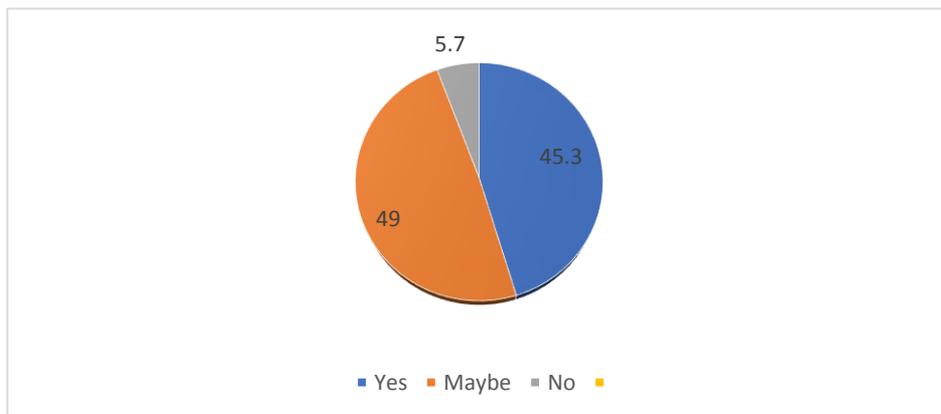


Figure 4

Participants' interest in taking a blended English class at OU



DISCUSSION

Digital ownership

With regard to digital ownership, except for Mac devices which might be financially out of reach for students in the context under investigation, the majority of students have easy access to their own laptops, smartphones or Internet. The limited access to other necessary tools for online-learning such as webcam, microphone is also reported by students. This might be because these technical features are incorporated into most of the modern generations of laptops, thus rendering their ownership unnecessary. This issue, therefore, does not pose a huge challenge for the online learners.

The majority of students spent more than six hours a day on general computer use. This suggested that learners are logistically prepared for online learning. They have computers at their own disposal, they have the time needed for learning, and they are likely to be familiar with basic computer and information searching skills which might be useful for them when they are engaged in learning activities. That said, they need the right guidance as to the appropriate learning resources and time management strategies. However, many students never use the desktops at university campuses. This might be explained by the insufficient facilities at university campuses, the inconvenience to travel from home to the campus, and the uncomfortable conditions for learning activities at the campus.

Digital literacy and competence

Most of the students believed that their typing skills are pretty good. The similarity in alphabetical input method between English and Vietnamese might be one of the reasons that makes English typing not a big challenge for Vietnamese students. However, students still experience difficulties in typing non-English language characters (like ë, æ). According to the findings, the participants can adequately perform basic computer-based activities like formatting, inserting diagrams, pictures into documents. With Internet-based tasks, the students also have confidence in tackling popular activities like downloading files, playing audio files on websites, using social-networking sites. Most of students were unable to handle more advanced tasks such as installing a program from a DVD or CD to computers and vice versa or editing video/audio files. This might present an obstacle for students' autonomous language learning where they need to incorporate different software and learning materials from VCD and DVD into their computers, materials that usually come with commercial books available on the market or offered by liaison publishers.

Regarding the familiarity with using multimedia tools, the findings showed that most of the participants use emails, chat, websites, SMS, Video chat, video games and social-networking sites for their personal purposes rather than for educational activities. Only a few of the participants were acquainted with educational tools such as blogs, wikis, discussion board, podcasts or videocasts, CD-DVD, CD-ROMs/DVD although they still realize the benefits of these tools in both English and non-English major classes. A plausible explanation can be that students do not have enough motivations to use ICT for educational purposes or they do not receive enough instructions from their lecturers to effectively use these tools. In fact, the Learning Management System (LMS), which provides students at OU with a lot of learning resources like assignment submission, chat, database, forum, glossary, lesson, quiz, survey, workshop, and Wiki has been used for both English and non-English majors. Nonetheless, the fact is that not many students care about learning through these tools. And the findings are in line with this reality. The findings reported that the number of students using general or course websites, blogs, wikis, email and video chat for educational purposes was significantly lower than those using these tools for personal activities.

Willingness to take part in online English courses

Almost half of the surveyed students showed their interest in

undertaking either a full online class or a blended learning mode, while more than half of them still cast doubt on the English online courses. This finding differs from the study of Mehran et al. (2017) who found that the majority of the non-English major students were reluctant to take online courses.

This finding suggests that much work remains to be done to raise students' awareness of the effectiveness and feasibility of an online learning approach. While learners are well prepared in terms of technical and logistical aspects, their reluctance in endorsing an online learning mode could be attributed to their uncertainty about the effectiveness of such a learning approach, and about the guidance they might receive from the institution. Therefore, in order to smoothly induce learners into the online learning environment, appropriate orientation as well as training courses must be offered to potential learners as a prerequisite.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings of the study indicate that the students can comfortably access technological devices or Internet sources at home or at the university campuses. The results also recorded the decent level of students' typing skills. Nonetheless, students do not feel confident in doing some advanced tasks such as creating multimedia files. Most of the surveyed students showed their interests in taking part in a fully of blended online learning course at OU.

Results of the study provided some implications for the designing and implementing of online learning course for Non-English majors at OU. First, regarding digital ownership, since most of students own smartphones and laptops, the course content should be made available on both computers and mobile devices. Second, with regard to students' digital competence, lack of motivations to use ICT for educational purposes and instructions from the lecturers have been pointed out as one of the reasons hindering students' readiness for online learning. Therefore, it is suggested that gamification and edutainment elements should be inserted into the online courses as motivating components for the learners. Furthermore, in order to facilitate students with necessary advanced ICT tasks, prior specific training on CALL tools and applications should be carried out for the students.

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, although quite a lot of blended courses are being carried out at OU, no earlier survey has been conducted at OU to examine the preparedness of Vietnamese students for

online courses. It is, therefore, suggested that further replication research should investigate the effect of age, gender, socio-economic status, majors on students e-readiness with a larger sample size. Potential research questions are as follow: Are there any differences between males and females in their computer literacy levels? Do students majoring in humanities and finances differ in their e-readiness? Does the number of years spent at the univeristy affect learners' e-readiness levels? Does the socio-economic status of the learners create any difference in their willingness to take online or blended courses?

The study is not without its limitations. First, questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument in the study to elicit students' self-report of their learning experience, which might yield unreliable data due to students' temptation to present themselves in socially desirable ways. More reliable methods for data collection should be used in future studies, such as the use of learning analytics. Second, this study was confined to a specific context of a university, thus limiting its generalizability. More replication attempts are needed in different contexts to shed light on students' readiness for online learning.

THE AUTHOR

Le Hang Ho is currently working as an English instructor at HCMC Open Univeristy. Her research interests include online teaching and learning, second language acquisition and language testing.

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APPENDIX

Appendix 1: The Technology Survey Instrument

1. age: _____		2. gender: <input type="checkbox"/> male <input type="checkbox"/> female <input type="checkbox"/> other	
3. _____ grade _____ year		field of study: <input type="checkbox"/> science and engineering <input type="checkbox"/> humanities	
4. I am studying English because it is ... (check all that apply)			
<input type="checkbox"/> my primary major		<input type="checkbox"/> my minor	
<input type="checkbox"/> my required subject		<input type="checkbox"/> my elective subject	
<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____			

5.
Why are you learning English? / Why do you want to learn English? (check all that apply)
<input type="checkbox"/> Interested in English and culture/travel
<input type="checkbox"/> Future job marketing/future employment
<input type="checkbox"/> To be a teacher of English
<input type="checkbox"/> To communicate with native speakers
<input type="checkbox"/> My family/relatives speak English
<input type="checkbox"/> Foreign language requirement

6.
Mark if you personally own or have the items below. If you don't have one, mark if you can get it (by borrowing it or by using it in a lab) easily, with difficulty, or not at all.

	Can't get it	Can find it with difficulty	Can find it easily	Own/ha ve it
PC desktop computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PC laptop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mac desktop computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mac laptop	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer speakers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Headphones	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Microphone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Printer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Internet access	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Webcam	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital camera	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Video camera	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Smartphone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tablet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Do you use the computer labs on campus for computer work?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often
8. Do you use the computer labs on campus for printing?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Never	<input type="checkbox"/> Almost never	<input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/> Often

9. Can you type in English?			
<input type="checkbox"/> Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/> Not very well	<input type="checkbox"/> Pretty well	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes, very well

10. How often do you use the computer on an average day?

<input type="checkbox"/> 0 to 2 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 4 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 6 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> More than 6 hours
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11. Mark your level of ability to do the following tasks on your computer.

	Not at all	With difficulty	With very little difficulty	Easily
1) cut, copy and paste in my documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) change font size and color save	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) type non-English language characters (like ð, æ) in my documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) insert pictures and graphs in my documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) insert audio and video files in my documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) develop and maintain a website	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) navigate the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) save and download files from the Internet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) create tables in my documents	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) play audio files from the web and from my computer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11) play a video on a website, on my computer, or stored on DVD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12) download and unzip a ZIP file	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13)) post messages on an online bulletin board (e.g., Facebook, Twitter)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14) email to individuals and groups, including using the reply and reply-to-all functions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15) access email from a computer other than my own	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16) forward email messages	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17) send emails with attachments and open emails with attachments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18) create a new, free email account online	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19) start/install a program directly from a DVD or CD	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20) copy files from my computer's hard drive to CD or DVD or vice versa	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21) copy a track from an audio CD onto my computer's hard drive and store it in MP3 format	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22) create an audio CD from a set of MP3 files stored on my computer's hard drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23) make a sound recording using audio editing software and save it to a disc or hard drive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24) transfer a video recording from a camcorder to my computer and open it in a video editing software package	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25) edit video	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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12. Would you be interested in taking a fully online English class at Osaka University where all the instruction is done online?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Maybe	<input type="checkbox"/> No

13. Would you be interested in taking a blended English class at Osaka University where half of the instruction is in class, that is face-to-face with the teacher and other students, and half is independent study online?		
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> Maybe	<input type="checkbox"/> No

14 On average, how many hours per week is technology used during your English classes?					
<input type="checkbox"/> less than 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5	<input type="checkbox"/> more than 5

15. How many hours per week do you use technology for your language class homework?					
<input type="checkbox"/> less than 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-2	<input type="checkbox"/> 2-3	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-4	<input type="checkbox"/> 4-5	<input type="checkbox"/> more than 5

16. Mark if you use the following items in your personal life, in your non-language classes, in your language class, and if you believe they are or could be useful for language learning.					
	I do not know.	I use this for my personal life.	We use this in my non-language classes.	We use this in my language class.	I think this is/would be useful for language

					e learning
1)Websites	<input type="checkbox"/>				
2) Course websites	<input type="checkbox"/>				
3) CLE (KOAN)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
4)Blogs	<input type="checkbox"/>				
5)Wikis	<input type="checkbox"/>				
6) Email	<input type="checkbox"/>				
7) Chat	<input type="checkbox"/>				
8) SMS	<input type="checkbox"/>				
9)Video chat	<input type="checkbox"/>				
10) Discussion boards	<input type="checkbox"/>				
11) Mailing lists	<input type="checkbox"/>				
12)Video/audio materials	<input type="checkbox"/>				
13) Online digital video/audio	<input type="checkbox"/>				
14) Podcasts/ videocasts	<input type="checkbox"/>				
15) Computer games	<input type="checkbox"/>				
16) CD · DVD CD-ROMs/DVDs	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17) Online exercises/quizzes	<input type="checkbox"/>				
18) Social networking websites (e.g., Facebook, LINE)	<input type="checkbox"/>				
19) Second Life	<input type="checkbox"/>				
20) iPad	<input type="checkbox"/>				
21) iPod	<input type="checkbox"/>				

17. Do you have any comments about anything on this survey? If so, please write them in the box below.

Thank you for your assistance.

RESHAPING THE ROLES OF TEACHERS IN THE DIGITAL ERA FROM STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Ms. LE DO NGOC HANG

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ABSTRACT

The roles of English teachers have undergone extensive modifications for the last few decades. Advanced technology, undeniably, even dramatically accelerates the transformation of teachers' roles in a far more rapid manner than expected. The focus of this study is (1) to explore how Ho Chi Minh City Open University students have been utilizing technology in their learning English, and (2) to reconfirm English teachers' decisive roles in the technological era based on perspectives of the students, and a few principal recommendations will be produced at the end of the study. The data were collected from questionnaires delivered to 100 non-English major students and 50 English major ones of Ho Chi Minh Open University. The questionnaire for students were conducted in Vietnamese to ensure that all the questions are thoroughly understood and accurately responded.

The data analysis revealed that technology has been widely utilized as a brilliantly effective source to enthusiastically support their English language acquisition by students. Regarding the roles of the teachers in the era of technology, classroom organizers, facilitators, inspirers are three prominent roles recommended by students.

Keywords: *teachers' roles, perspectives, technology*

INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the increasing needs of international communication for a myriad of distinguished purposes comprising of commercial, educational ones, English has played a pivotal role in effective communications between traders or educators. As Grabe & Stoller, 2002 stated, English language skills including listening, speaking, reading and writing are utilized for brilliantly effective communications. Thanks to its effectiveness, English is regarded a medium of instruction in a plethora of major fields by far. It is also a crucial condition for going through the university entrance exam successfully and ensuring a well-paid job in the labor market. As the number of English learners is increasing, facilitating them to master English skills for the purpose of

communication is the prime focus of those who are working in educational settings.

Lankshear & Knobel (2011), Labbas & Shaban (2013) insisted that thanks to the availability of online learning resources and modern technological tools, the process of learning can be motivated and facilitated not only inside but also outside the classroom. Technology is believed to be the heart of the globalization process, affecting work, education and culture” by Bolton & Graddol (2012). The invasion of advanced technology to all aspects of life is undeniable; education is not an exception, which leads to the revolutionary transformation of teachers’ roles in teaching English. Reshaping the roles of English teachers can be considered as an obvious reference for teachers to have an in-depth understanding about English language teaching methodology and techniques most appropriate in diversified settings and to master what and how to improve to successfully become a more qualified language instructor.

The primary aim of this study, therefore, is to identify how students have been applying technology into their improving English skills as well as to examine students’ perspectives on EFL lecturers’ roles in the technological advancement era. Here are the two research questions considered as the foundation of this study:

1. *How have Ho Chi Minh City Open University students been utilizing technology to support their learning English?*
2. *What are the students’ perspectives of the teachers’ roles in teaching English in the digital era?*

LITERATURE REVIEW

English language learning and technology

The tradition of English language learning has been substantially changed since the advent of technology, followed by a transformation of the teachers’ roles in accordance with the advancement of technology over time. According to Bull and Ma (2001), unlimited resources for improving English skills can be unlimitedly accessed by language learners. Technology is well able to satisfy almost all kinds of multiple intelligence such as visual, auditory, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, musical and kinesthetic sorts of learners. In addition, Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011) supported the view that technology provides learners with not only authentic materials intimately related to enhancing their English proficiency but also a wealth of enjoyable

experience throughout this mastery process. To be more specific, adolescents are quite sensitive to the use of technology and usually find it intriguing to make full use of it especially in learning languages, making the whole learning an exhilarating experience. Students with high motivation generated during this learning process might be more outstandingly successful at the end of the learning race.

Nevertheless, in conformity with the overwhelming information accessible online, students might fail to reach a scientific and pragmatic approach to master English entirely. Here comes the significance of teachers' existence and their essential roles.

Teachers' roles in the past

In the conventional classroom, teachers used to play the roles of the primary source of knowledge or so-called the dispenser of knowledge and learners were obviously the passive receivers.

This is not appropriate in the technology-enriched classroom at the present time when learners are supposed to meet high requirements so-called 21st century skills from the recruiters in the authentic working environment.

Teachers' roles in the era of advanced technology

Technology has shed light for English language teaching, leading to the modifications of teachers' roles in the teaching and learning process. According to Jeremy Harmer (2007), in order to become an effective English teacher, one needs to be able to fulfill various roles comprising of a controller, a prompter, an assessor, a resource, and a tutor. A facilitator was not mentioned in his book as the role of a language teacher. In the same year, Cummins (2007) mentioned that teachers should work towards a facilitator rather than a knowledge provider. Soon after that, Churches (2009) suggested the following roles: an adaptor, a visionary, a collaborator, a risk-taker, a learner, a communicator, a model, a leader for a qualified teacher to meet students' needs. In 2012, Antony reemphasized that the roles of the current teacher should "neither teaching nor transferring knowledge, but he/she is a facilitator/ a guide or a mentor. In addition, Kroger (2000), Reeves (2017), and Richards (2017) not only reconfirm the roles of teachers as a facilitator, not a knowledge dispenser in the context of the technology boom but also mention the role of the teachers as inspirers. Teachers are supposed to adopt new roles including a facilitator, counsellor, and professional (Lowes & Target, 1999, Nunan, 2003, Farrell, 2018) so as to help students acquire 21st century skills.

Therefore, teachers should be well-adapted and well-equipped with the new teaching environment to meet the needs and expectations of both learners and the society by fulfilling various teaching roles, as Zur & Zur (2011) stated.

METHODOLOGY

The data were collected from questionnaires adapted from Uyen (2019) delivered to 100 non-English major students ranging from engineering, business laws, social studies, accounting and 50 English major students of Ho Chi Minh City Open University. The questionnaire for students was conducted in Vietnamese to ensure that all the questions are thoroughly comprehensible and accurately responded. Likert scale was implemented in the questionnaire to measure students' attitude towards learning English with technology inside and outside classrooms.

The questionnaire was neatly divided into three distinguished categories: students' personal information, how students have been making use of technology in learning English, and students' perspectives on teachers' roles in the technology boom era.

FINDINGS

The data were analyzed in three distinctive parts based on the division in the questionnaire.

1. Personal Information (Question 1 and 2)

Figure 1

Age range of students

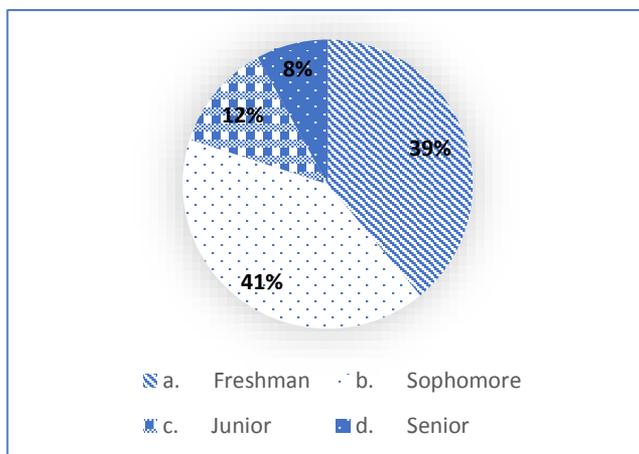
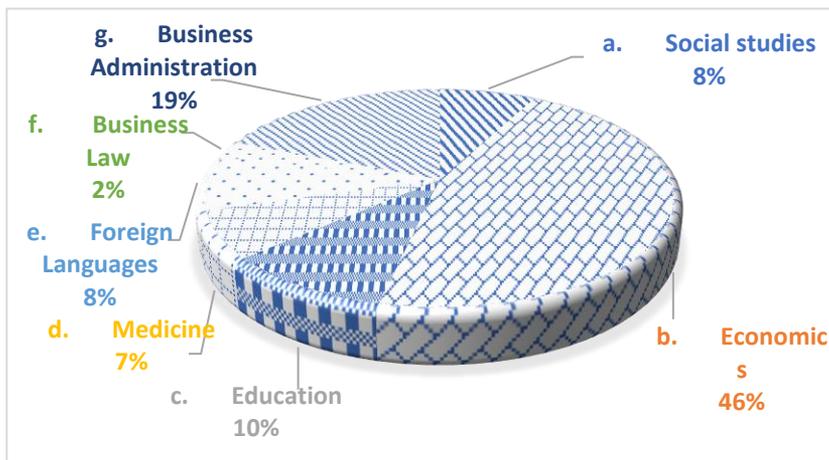


Figure 2

Students' majors

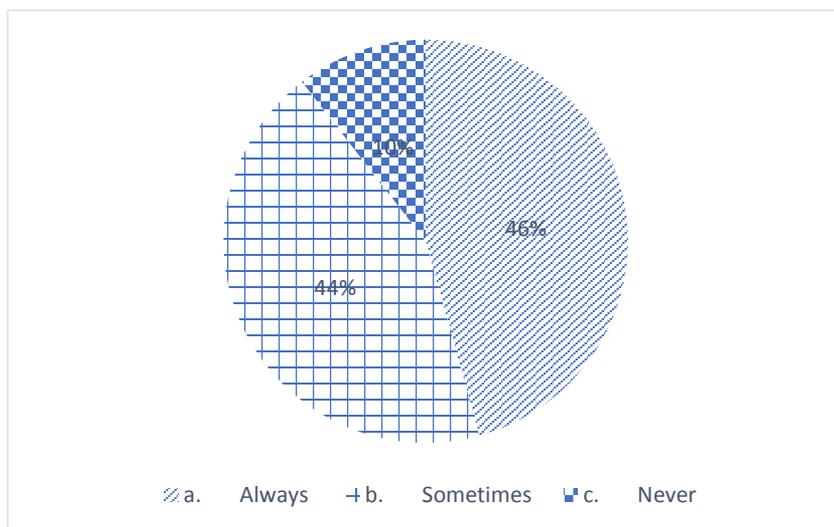


It can be obviously seen from the first pie chart that most of the subjects investigated are first- and second-year students with approximately 40%. Other 20% are juniors and seniors. In the second pie chart, the majority of the population major in Economics, accounting for nearly half of them.

2. Research Question 1 (Question 3 to 7)

Figure 3

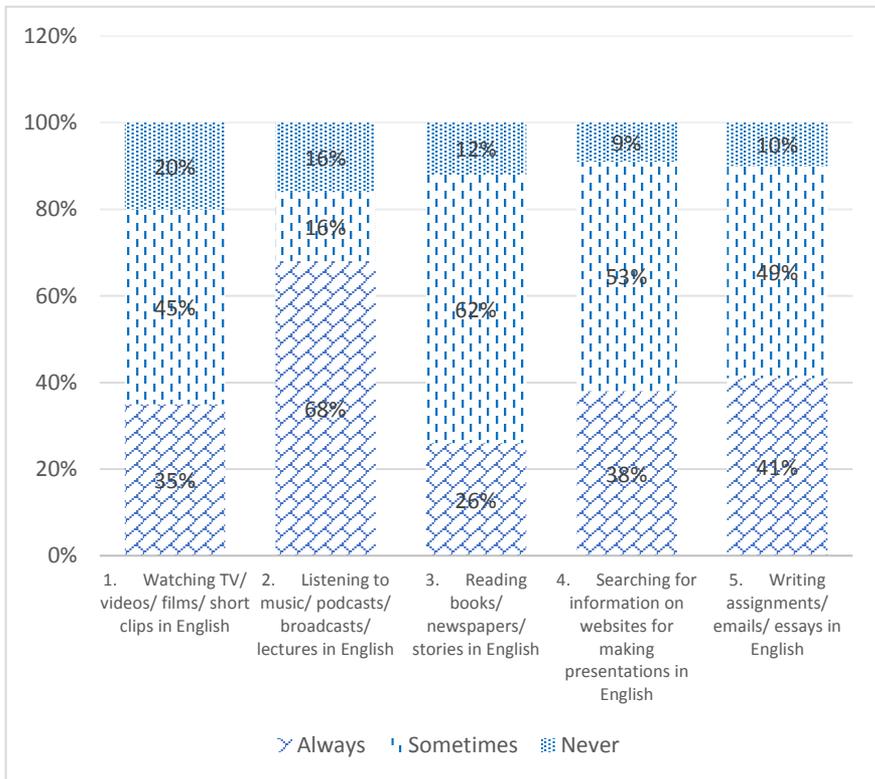
Frequency of using technology in learning English



When students were asked how often they used technology in their learning English (question three), nine in ten answered that they were utilizing technology in language learning, and nearly half of the population made use of technology in learning languages on a daily basis.

Figure 4

The frequency students do the following tasks to improve their English

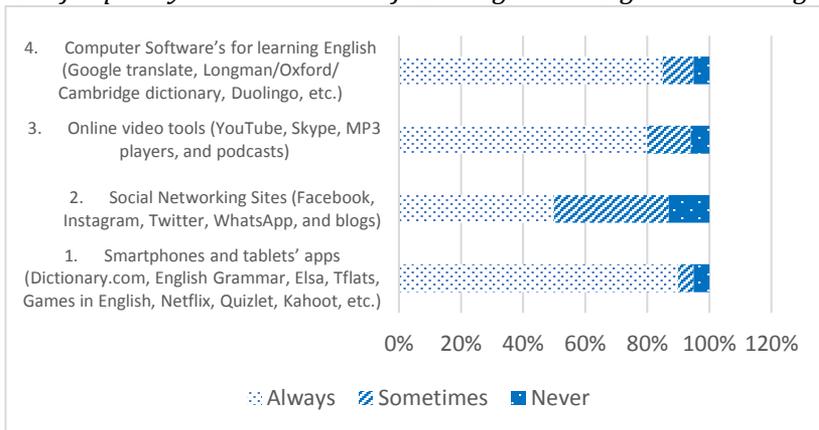


A wide variety of tasks have been undertaken by students with the aim of improving English containing (1) watching TV, videos, films, short clips in English, (2) listening to music, podcasts, broadcasts, lectures in English, (3) reading textbooks books, newspaper, stories in English, (4) searching for information on websites for making presentations in English, and (5) writing assignments, emails, essays in English. Although the percentage of tasks fulfilled is quite different at first sight, it is still apparent that the utilization of technology in enhancing English skills among students occupied approximately 80 percent over 150 students. It can be concluded that the majority of students are implementing

technology in language learning.

Figure 5

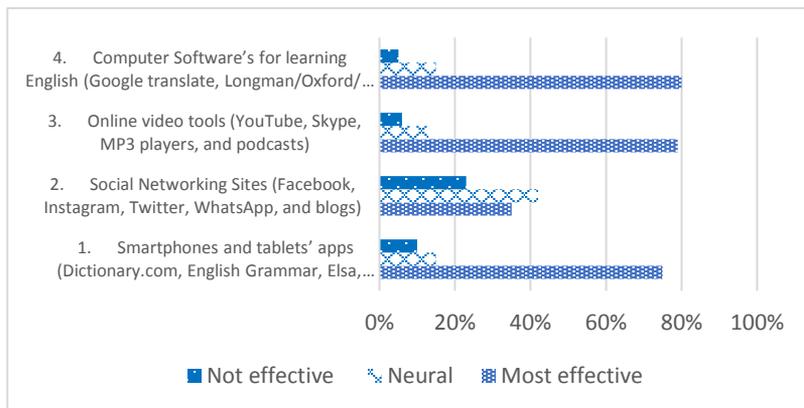
The frequency students use the following technologies in learning English



In question four, smartphones and tablets' applications including dictionaries, English grammar, Elsa, Tflats, Games in English, Netflix, Quizlet, Kahoot, etc. were reported to be their most favorite ones with nine in ten votes. Computer's software and online video tools were slightly less popular than gadgets' apps, but it still took up more than 80% of the total. Social networking sites, which are usually considered an effective tool for keeping contact, appear to be less used with the purpose of learning English.

Figure 6

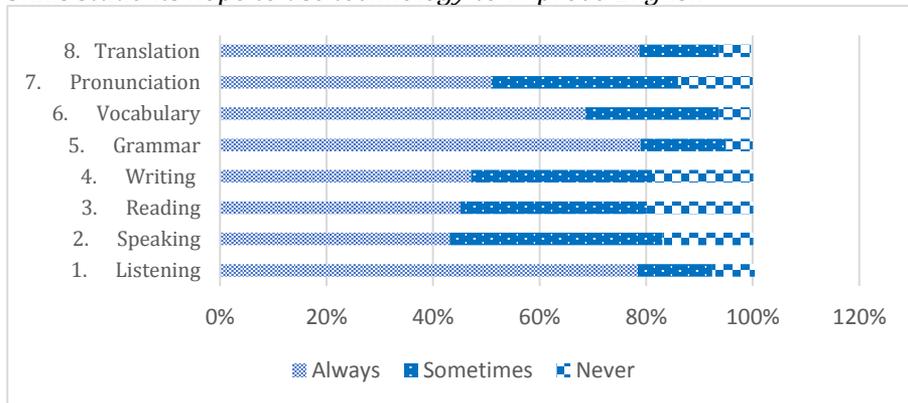
Useful applications in enhancing students' English level



In order to evaluate the educational effectiveness of the applications and tools described above, question five was delivered. As a result, the more they used the applications or tools, the more effective they were in their learning process.

Figure 7

Skills students hope to use technology to improve English

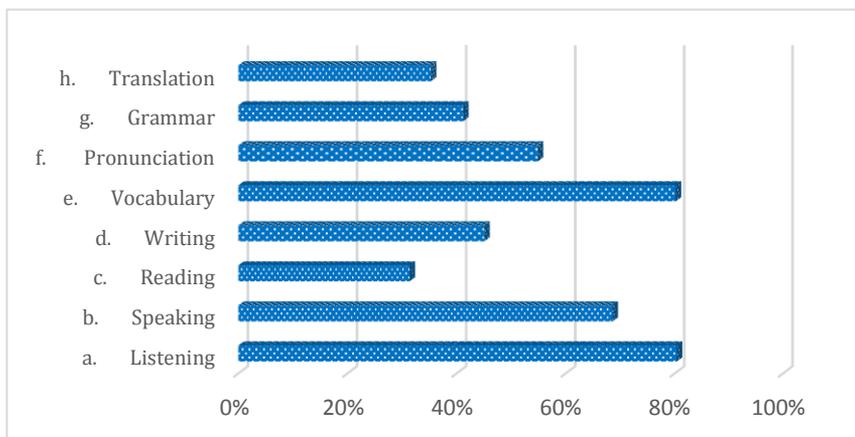


The three skills and/or areas that students would like to improve through the assistance of technology are listening, vocabulary, grammar and translation purposes.

3. Research Question 2 (Question 8 to 12)

Figure 8

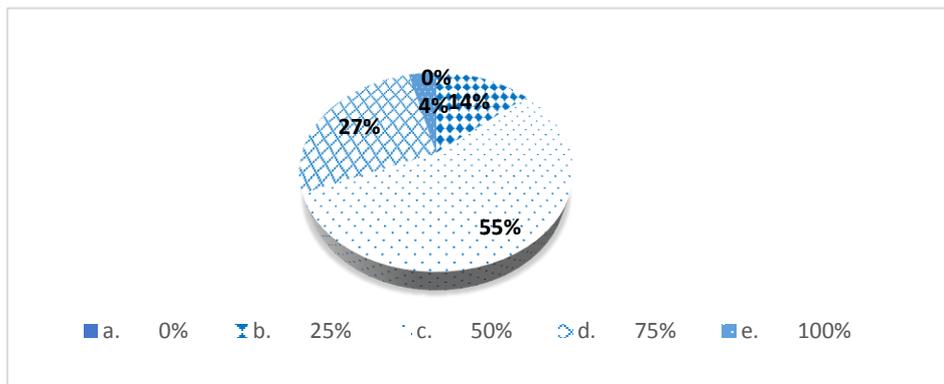
Skills students hope teachers to implement technology into teaching



Students expect teachers to implement technology in teaching listening, vocabulary, speaking and pronunciation.

Figure 9

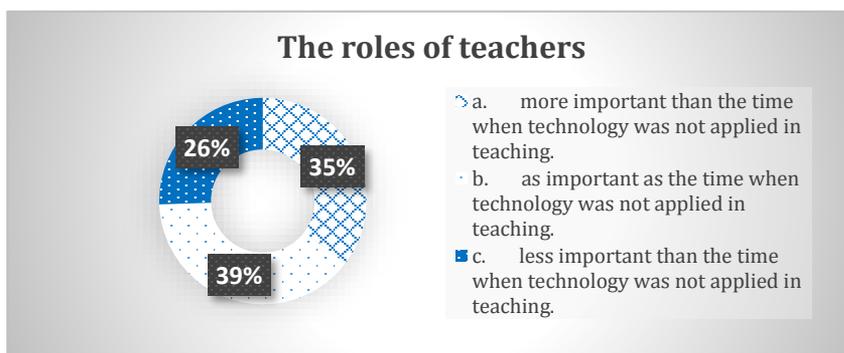
How often teachers should use technology in the classroom



As for the frequency of technology used in the classroom, most of them almost agreed that from 50% to 75% was enough to make an effective lesson. Over 50% approved that technology should only be used in half of the class time. No one argued for not using technology while 4% would like teachers to implement technology in the whole class time.

Figure 10

The roles of the teachers

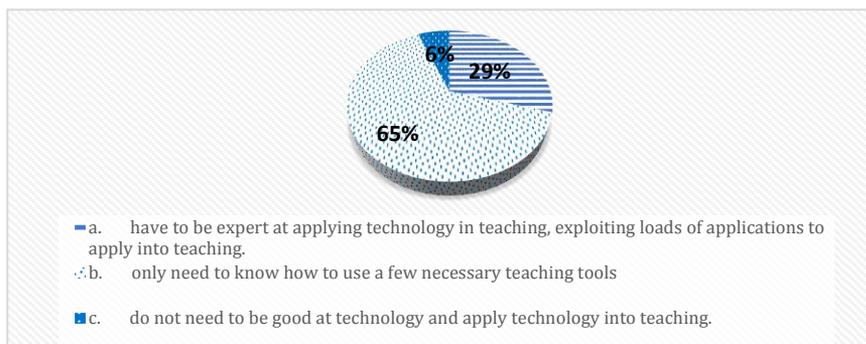


In relation to the importance of teachers in the digital era, nearly 40% thought that teachers' roles were just as important as the time before technology was implemented into the classroom. Besides, a third of them agreed that the roles of the teachers were more significant than in the past. More than a quarter of them claimed that the roles of the

teachers were less important than in the past.

Figure 11

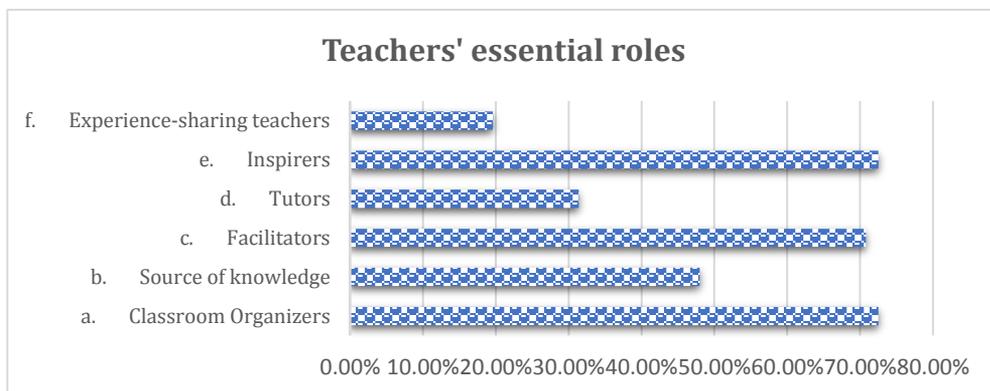
Teachers' mastery of technology for teaching



Due to the recognition that technology is inevitably important in class, should teachers endeavor to be specialized in technology? 65% of the population claimed that teachers do not need to be expert at applying technology into teaching, exploiting loads of applications to put into teaching practice. They supported the opinion that teachers only need to know how to use a few necessary teaching tools do diversify teaching activities to engage and inspire learners.

Figure 12

Teachers' essential roles



When it comes to the three most important roles in the students' point of view, three prominent ones recommended are classroom organizers, facilitators and especially inspirers. The roles of being a "source of knowledge" is still important but in the sense that teachers should be

the guiding stars to provide the right direction for their learning process.

Reliability of the survey

The statistics collected in the survey were imported into SPSS to ensure the reliability of the survey results and findings. As apparently seen from the result, the Cronbach's Alpha statistics, which is 0.826, clearly indicated the reliability of the results of 10 questions (from question 3 to question 12) in the survey.

Scale: ALL VARIABLES

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	150	95.5
	Excluded ^a	7	4.5
	Total	157	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.826	10

Scale Statistics

Mean	Variance	Std. Deviation	N of Items
28.8200	100.430	10.02150	10

DISCUSSION

The data analysis reveals that technology exploitation is meaningful for the whole language learning process and teachers' roles are still important but transform into new roles to assist learners to achieve necessary skills for modern society in the technological era.

90% of students regularly employ electronic devices to study foreign languages. This implies the underlying message that they are able to receive excessive exposure to authentic English through a variety of English applications available and portable almost everywhere. Teachers, therefore, should exploit the effectiveness of technology to not only encourage students inside the classroom but also inspire them to increase their autonomy to learn outside the box.

Smartphones and tablets' applications are preferable over other kinds of technology owing to their mobility. In this case, exploiting the use of

gadgets should be taken into full consideration so that teachers are able to facilitate learners in learning languages.

In order to engage learners in the learning process intriguingly, implementing their favorite applications such as Kahoot, Elsa, YouTube, etc. might be a good decision to make. Students also expect teachers to implement technology in teaching listening, vocabulary, speaking and pronunciation. However, as a teacher, a balance of implementation should be taken into careful account. Moreover, according to the students, the adequate percentage of utilizing technology in class for teaching is only around 50%.

There are three different disparities on the importance of teachers in the digital world from the students' perspectives: more important, as important, and less important than in the past.

Three roles students think teachers should play in the advanced technology environment are a classroom organizer, a facilitator and an inspirer for them in their process of achieving academic success. Being a source of knowledge in the overwhelming wealth of information is also considered important in the digital era.

The students do not require teachers to be excellent at using technology, they only need to update sufficiently effective and lively applications to exploit in their teaching.

IMPLICATIONS

Teachers are expected to apply a myriad of effective applications comprising of Kahoot, YouTube, Dictionary, games, etc. to motivate students' engagement and assist them to be enthusiastically involved in the tasks assigned.

Teachers now should be an effective organizer, a facilitator, and an inspirer for students to boost student's confidence to walk on their own learning path with the substantial assistance of technology.

Teachers do not need to remain neurotic, or even obsessed to improve their own technology skills. Nevertheless, essential training should be taken and steady improvement in technology use may greatly assist teachers to become more qualified.

Teachers should not mechanically employ technology much more than necessary.

LIMITATIONS

Only a small group of students in one university might not stand for the whole generation. Due to lack of time, only one survey could be conducted. Other forms of qualitative method could not be used to confirm the reliability of the research.

CONCLUSION

Technology does not make teachers become more or less important but assist teachers to make their lessons much more engaging, which might lead to a better outcome. Teachers should be active enough to update the trend of learning English using technology in class in an adequate and effective way and guide students in an attempt to improve the four skills and three areas in equilibrium. Technology undeniably puts an extra burden on teachers when they not only need to improve their professional knowledge but also advance their technological skills to follow the prevailing trend of the society to meet the requirements of 21st century skills forcing students to obtain. Technology is an effective tool whose purpose is to aid the teachers; it is not a replacement. Balancing the time of putting technology in the real-life classroom should be carefully taken into consideration.

FUTURE DIRECTION

In order to increase the level of reliability, larger populations and perspectives from language teachers should be taken into consideration. More in-depth understanding into how teachers facilitate students in detail should be cultivated. Tailored benefits to various skills and aspects should be researched.

THE AUTHOR

With approximately close to a decade of teaching English professionally to diverse English language learners in various contexts including both prestigious English center like VUS and distinguished tertiary institutions such as Open University, Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Ms. **Le Do Ngoc Hang** has accumulated invaluable teaching experience to deal with heterogeneous categories of students. Ms. Hang Le's current interests involve integrating technology into the classroom to suit the needs of the 21-century learners.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims at collecting data about how the students at Ho Chi Minh City Open University have been using technology to support their learning English and what their opinions on the English teachers' roles in the digital era.

I. Personal Information

1. Are you a _____?
 - a. freshman
 - b. sophomore
 - c. junior
 - d. senior
2. Which major are you studying?
 - a. Social studies
 - b. Business Administration
 - c. Education
 - d. Medicine
 - e. Foreign Languages
 - f. Business Law
 - g. English

II. Students' use of technology to support learning English

3. How often do you use electronic devices (such as smartphones, iPad, tablets, laptops, etc.) to support your learning English?
 - a. always
 - b. sometimes
 - c. never
4. How often do you do the following tasks to improve your English? (Please rate the frequency from 1 for the highest and 5 for the lowest level)

Usage	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Watching TV/ videos/ films/ short clips in English			
2. Listening to music/ podcasts/ broadcasts/ lectures in English			
3. Reading books/ newspapers/ stories in English			
4. Searching for information on websites for making presentations in English			
5. Writing assignments/ emails/ essays in English			
6. Looking up new words in dictionaries			

5. How often do you use the following types of technologies in enhancing your English level?

Technology	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Smartphones and tablets' apps (Dictionary.com, English Grammar, Elsa,			

Technology	Always	Sometimes	Never
Tflats, Games in English, Netflix, Quizlet, etc.)			
2. Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and blogs)			
3. Online video tools (YouTube, Skype, MP3 players, and podcasts)			
4. Computer Software's for learning English (Google translate, Longman/Oxford/Cambridge dictionary, Duolingo, etc.)			

6. Which of the following groups of applications do you find useful in assisting you to improve your English level?

Technology	Most effective	Neural	Not effective
1. Smartphones and tablets' apps (Dictionary.com, English Grammar, Elsa, Tflats, Games in English, Netflix, Quizlet, etc.)			
2. Social Networking Sites (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, and blogs)			
3. Online video tools (YouTube, Skype, MP3 players, and podcasts)			
4. Computer Software's for learning English (Google translate, Longman/Oxford/Cambridge dictionary, Duolingo, etc.)			

7. How often do you use your electronic devices to improve your English skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing) and areas (Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation)?

Skills/ Areas	Always	Sometimes	Never
1. Listening			
2. Speaking			
3. Reading			
4. Writing			
5. Grammar			
6. Vocabulary			
7. Pronunciation			

III. Perspectives on English teachers' roles

8. Which three skills/ areas do you hope your teachers to apply technology into teaching?
- a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
 - e. Vocabulary
 - f. Pronunciation
 - g. Grammar
 - h. Translation
 - i. Others (please write your own answer)

9. What do you think is the most appropriate percentage of the application of technology in your total class time?
- a. 0%
 - b. 25%

- c. 50%
- d. 75%
- e. 100%

10. In the digital era, the roles of English teachers have become

- a. more important than the time when technology was not applied in teaching.
- b. as important as the time when technology was not applied in teaching.
- c. less important than the time when technology was not applied in teaching.

11. In your opinion, English teachers

- a. must be expert at applying technology in teaching, exploiting loads of applications to apply into teaching.
- b. only need to know how to use a few necessary teaching tools
- c. do not need to be good at technology and apply technology into teaching.

12. Which roles do you expect the teachers to play in the classroom (please tick from one to three most important roles)?

- a. Classroom Organizers
- b. Source of knowledge
- c. Facilitators
- d. Inspirers
- e. Tutors
- f. Experience-sharing teachers
- g. Counsellors
- h. Others (please write your own answer) _____

BLENDING LEARNING IN ENGLISH TEACHING AT VAN LANG UNIVERSITY: A READING COURSE ON MOODLE

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Van Lang University

Ms. NGUYEN THI HUYNH LOC

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ABSTRACT

In the era of technology blooming, education has witnessed substantial changes in teaching methods when teaching and learning process is not much influenced by in-class activities. Technology advances offer a wonderful opportunity for learners to learn not only in the classroom but also outside. Blended learning with a combination of E-learning and face-to-face learning has prevailed among universities. However, there has been much research on learners' perceptions towards such new teaching method. This study aims to dig deep into learners' underlying obstacles, benefits, and perceptions in blended learning environment with the support of Moodle platform. 100 first-year non-English major students from Van Lang University were purposely selected for the research. A questionnaire was generated to collect data at the end of 15-week course. The results showed that learners have positive attitudes towards the reading course on Moodle related to flexible learning time and geographical convenience. However, they also faced some technical problems and WiFi connection interruption. In parallel with the findings, many recommendations have been made.

Keywords: *blended learning, Moodle platform, reading skill, non-English major students*

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, education has shifted from face-to-face learning to e-learning, in a large part, thanks to technology advances. E-learning is identified as the process of "the acquisition and use of knowledge distributed and facilitated primarily by electronic means" (Waight et al., 2002, p. 492). In other words, learners receive knowledge through online platforms namely Moodle, Edmodo, or Google Classroom anywhere they

can access the WiFi connection; therefore, blended learning, defined as “a combination of various instructional modalities intertwined with synchronous and/or asynchronous web-based technologies to facilitate interactive and reflective individual and collective learning” (Lupshenyuk and Adams, 2009, p. 428), becomes more and more popular. Keeping the pace of the world trend in education, Van Lang University has built an e-learning system based on Moodle platform. English teaching is also in the flow of changes throughout the school. Moreover, it is the fact that the classroom allotted time seems inadequate for enhancing learners’ reading skill because of daily mass of knowledge. As a result, teachers of English are encouraged to use this tool along with the normal classroom. The study is aimed to give insights into what motivate other teachers of English to take advantage of the emergent technology by the means of Moodle to better learners’ achievements and teaching quality in conjunction with reading skill.

Research questions

1 How do students perceive blended learning approach using Moodle?

2 What are students’ obstacles in reading course by blended learning approach?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of reading skill

Kaya (2015) stated that after students have been well equipped with reading skills, they enhanced their reading comprehension ability. Students lacking knowledge of reading skills will be probably unsuccessful in text comprehension (Pani, 2004; Yilmaz, 2013). Kaya (2015) also concluded that knowing how to use reading skills efficiently led to the comfort when taking the tests after the study. In the same way, Küçükoğlu (2013) shared that as students developed better understanding of reading strategies, their reading comprehension also improved.

Definitions

Moodle

Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), was an open-source software made by Martin Dougiamas in 1999. Via Moodle, users can create, deploy and manage online classes. Moodle is a type of learning management system (LMS) or online learning system (OLS). Teachers can take advantage of it to offer better guidance online

(Brandl, 2005). Moodle provides a fully free environment for users. That's why Moodle has become the most well-known e-learning management system, available in 235 countries and written in 82 different languages (Yildiz, Tezer, & Uzunboylu, 2018). Not only private schools but also public institutions succeeded in implementing such an e-learning system.

Oproiu pointed out some learning activities that Moodle supported such as distance learning, e-learning, flipped classroom model, and mixed learning (as cited in Yildiz, Tezer, & Uzunboylu, 2018, p.98).

Moodle creates a virtual learning environment (VLE) in which users are safe when being online. A VLE is a mixture of many tools and activities supporting teaching and learning. It is different from other online providers which just include a single blog, wiki or open, public forums and chats (Warth-Sontheimer, 2011).

In the field of language teaching, Moodle platform gives learners an opportunity to learn anytime and anywhere suitable for them, and brings transparency, good organization and students' self-evaluation (Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić, 2014). Suppasetserree and Dennis (2010) pointed out three advantages which Moodle platform offered English language teaching. The first benefit was that Moodle supported student-centered learning. Another good point was its facilitation for learning regardless of place and time. Thirdly, Moodle made the ease of course administration.

Blended learning

According to Delialioğlu and Yildirim (2007), blended learning combined ICT tools systematically and strategically to facilitate academic courses. Delialioğlu and Yildirim, 2007; Gülbahar and Madran (2009) stressed that blended learning was also considered as similar to hybrid instruction, a combination of web-based training and classroom techniques.

Picciano (2006) defined blended learning consisted of online instructions and face-to-face ones. Rovai and Jordan (2004) also quite agreed with the idea by saying that blended learning connected online learning with face-to-face communication. Akkoyunlu & Soylu, (2006); Graham, (2006); Stubbs, Martin & Endlar, (2006) asserted that blended learning meant face-to-face instruction integrated with computer mediated ones. In the opinion of Garrison and Kanuka (2004), with blended learning classroom face-to-face learning experiences was in connection with online learning experiences. Adopting this view, the

current research concentrated on investigating learners' experiences on Moodle platform and classroom instruction.

Learners' perceptions towards Blended Learning

Learners' perceptions of Blended Learning are affected by many factors. In the research conducted in the context of a university by Tselios, Daskalakis, and Papadopoulou in 2011, the findings revealed that learners showed positive attitudes when they perceived ease of use and usefulness in blended learning environments. Doo, Morris and Virginia, (2006) also emphasized learners' preference for blended delivery format compared with a mere online delivery format. In their study, learners admitted that they found it more challenging to learn online than in blended learning environment despite having the same learning target. One of the factors affecting their perceptions was that learners experienced more workload with online delivery format. Thoroughly analysing learners' satisfaction of blended learning, Owston, York and Murtha (2013) asserted that by combining face-to-face and online learning environment, learners enjoyed benefits of "increased time and spatial flexibility during courses; wider and easier access to resources used in the learning process; and a higher level of autonomy to regulate their learning process". The findings also uncovered a close connection between perceptions and grades. High achievers showed more satisfaction with their blended course than those with low learning levels. High achievers confessed that the convenience, need of engagement in blended course attracted them and made their learning better.

Benefits and Challenges of Blended Learning Using Moodle

In her study Hsu (2011) showed that face to face learning together with E-learning helped students and instructors understand each other more easily. Alkhanak and Azmi (2011) stated that the courses in which Information Technology was employed get learners' interests and pointed out that e-learning activities were more useful and effective in comparison with traditional in-class activities. Al-Ani (2013) emphasized that learners' self-regulated skills improved thanks to the use of Moodle in learning and made them inquiring when they look for new information and knowledge. Al-Ani (2013) continued that Moodle enhanced learners' activeness and motivation. They seemed more willing to share and cooperated with their peers and instructors.

However, Mtebe & Raphael (2016) asserted that blended learning still posed problems, such as out-of-date learning resources, absence of teachers in live online periods, underuse of learning centres, and

technical problems. Besides, Wu (2008) indicated that English teachers needed technical guidance from a group of IT experts for online courses on Moodle. However, the significant roles of teachers, teaching materials, and curricula were still neglected in technology-enhanced classes.

Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić (2014) pointed out that there were several drawbacks of Moodle platform including lacking interaction and live contact between students and teachers and inadequate speaking activities. In the field of English language teaching, Suppasetseree and Dennis (2010) also presented three disadvantages of Moodle platform with the problems related to technology, instruction (lack of training and time), and user-unfriendly features and options of Moodle. SARFO (2016) emphasized that inadequate computer skills and increased load of academics were still a constraint to academics for effective training and use of ICTs for effective teaching and learning.

Although there have been many studies conducted on blended learning with the support of Moodle platform, they primarily focus on this approach in general, not for specific skill, especially like reading. Apart from that, the research on learners' perceptions for this approach in the context of Vietnam seems still insufficient.

METHODOLOGY

Research instruments

In recognition of the importance of objectivity, reliability and generalizability of collected data, a questionnaire, which was preferable in language research (Brown, 1988) was designed and utilized in the current research. The contents of the questionnaire focus 3 main points including learners' attitude towards Reading course on Moodle, benefits blended learning using Moodle platform and obstacles learners faced during the course.

Sample

In the semester, there were 10 classes of level C (first-year students) were classified in level C based on the result of the placement test students took when they first entered university). 5 teachers of English (4 faculty staff and 1 visiting teacher). One of faculty staff who had ten-year experience in teaching English and got familiar with Moodle platform was chosen for the research. Participants in the research were approximately 100 learners from 2 classes of level C who the chosen teacher was responsible for teaching. The reason was that the current

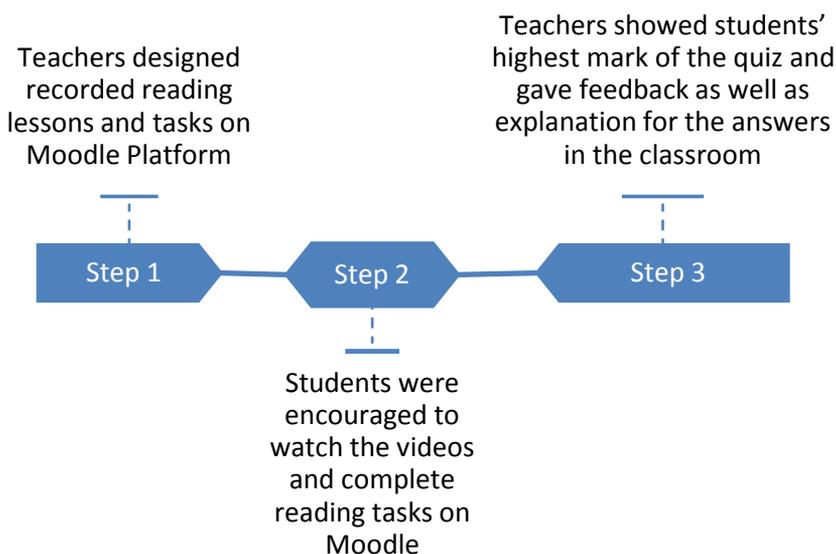
research was an action research so the participants were purposely selected. Students with Level C possessed average knowledge and Basic English proficiency. They had 3 periods of English every week and their course lasted only 15 weeks.

How the study was conducted

As planned, the study was carried out over 15 successive weeks. Students were encouraged to watch a recorded reading lesson on Moodle and required to complete the quiz after watching. Teachers always set “unlimited” for attempts students could try with the quiz so that students could stop learning and doing quiz when satisfied with the score graded by Moodle platform. In class, teachers showed students’ highest mark of the quiz and gave feedback as well as explanation for the answers. The reading passages in the course were extracted from the students’ textbook Jetstream-Elementary with the combination of Active Reading 1 considering the compatibility about topics and the focus of reading skills. After 15 weeks, each of students were delivered a questionnaire and encouraged to complete after the researchers explained the questions.

Figure 1

Implementation of blended learning approach



Methods of analysis

For the analysis of collected data, descriptive statistics of the SPSS

software was utilized. The participants' answers were coded and organized in accordance with the two research questions.

FINDINGS

Students' perceptions

This study attempted to identify students' perceptions about blended learning approach along with Moodle. The results presented that students showed their positive to the reading course on Moodle. They enjoyed learning English reading comprehension on Moodle because of recorded videos posted on Moodle (85%), a variety of tests (90%), and more time to learn reading (86%). Over a half of students thought that Moodle platform was friendly user (as seen in Table 1).

Table 1

Moodle platform_is_friendly_user

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
strongly disagree	2	2.0	2.0	2.0
moderately disagree	3	3.0	3.0	5.0
Valid slightly disagree	47	47.0	47.0	52.0
slightly agree	10	10.0	10.0	62.0
strongly agree	37	37.0	37.0	99.0
33.00	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Benefits which students gain from blended learning approach by the combination of the reading course on Moodle and in classroom

The research also aimed to investigate students' benefits from blended learning and the collected data the main benefits from the online course were feedback from teachers (100% tick responses), flexible time (99%), geographical convenience (98%), self-management (83%) (as shown in the table 2).

Table 2

Feedback from teachers

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TICK	100	100.0	100.0	100.0

Students’ difficulties in the course

With reference to learners’ difficulties, the collected data showed that the dominant obstacles students faced in the reading course were weak school network connection (99%), no technical support (83%), lack of vocabulary (98%), lack of knowledge about Moodle (99%), lack of technical skill (84%) (as seen in the Figure 2 and table 3,4).

Figure 2

The percentage of frequent disturbed school network perceived by students

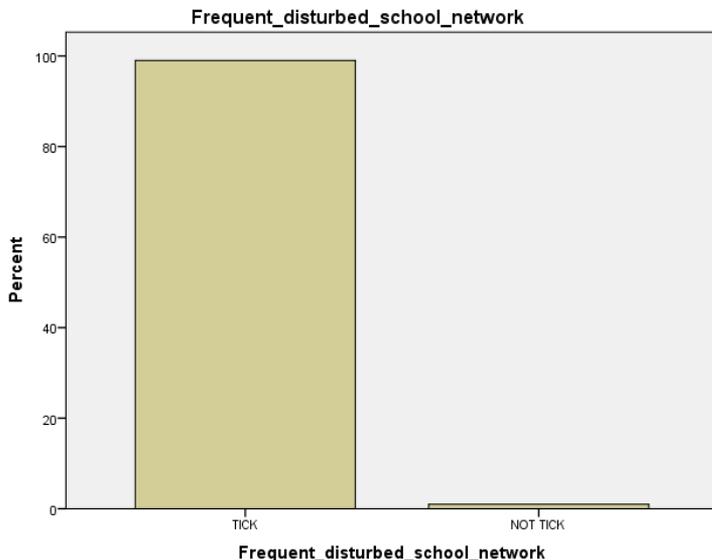


Table 3*Lack_of_knowledge_about_Moodle*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TICK	99	99.0	99.0	99.0
	NOT TICK	1	1.0	1.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

Table 4*Lack_of_vocabulary*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TICK	98	98.0	98.0	98.0
	NOT TICK	2	2.0	2.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

However, as presented in table 5, the findings uncovered that a majority of students (97%) had personal computers.

Table 5*No_personal_computer*

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	TICK	3	3.0	3.0	3.0
	NOT TICK	97	97.0	97.0	100.0
	Total	100	100.0	100.0	

The results also revealed that few students faced problems with lack of interaction (17%), lack of concentration when learning on Moodle (20%), anxiety in doing online quiz (3%), and especially no students had

troubles with computer devices.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to find out learners' perceptions about the usage of blended learning approach in English reading lessons using Moodle platform. Students showed their positive attitude towards the course although they faced troubles with technical problems. Suppasetserree and Dennis (2010) pointed out three advantages of using Moodle in English Language Teaching including student-centred learning, flexible place and time, and course administration but the Moodle platform seemed challenged for students to use because of technical problems. According to Tselios, Daskalakis and Papadopoulou (2011), the ease of use affected learners' perceptions in blended learning environment. This raised a question for the school administrators in implementing Moodle: "How do school administrators do to support students at best when learning on Moodle?" Giving more training about technical knowledge and Moodle to teachers and students, they can help to raise the effectiveness of online courses on Moodle.

Al-Ani (2013) stated that using Moodle helped raise students' self-regulation. Al-Ani (2013) also stressed that Moodle improves students' motivation and activeness. The findings from the current study were consistent with previous research when there were 83% of respondents agreed Moodle with blend learning helped improve their self-management in learning. Teachers should take advantage of Moodle to help students take up reading online and improve their reading skill.

The findings of the study proved that Moodle was helpful because students could learn anytime and anywhere. Moodle is a perfect match for teachers if they want to increase reading time of students by designing interesting reading lessons on Moodle. However, the teacher should be a key factor in planning lessons and giving feedback. The results from the research showed that 100% students benefited from in-class sessions in blended learning environment because they got clear feedback from their teachers. The major disadvantage of Moodle platform was the lack of interaction (Bošković, Gajić, & Tomić, 2014). However, the findings pointed out that few students experienced the interactional problems in the course. It means that blended learning approach can help minimize the defects of Moodle platform.

Although lessons with the use of technology seemed more effective than traditional ones, the roles of teacher were significant. Entmer et al.

(2008) stressed instructors influenced learners' participation and interaction based on online discussions between them. Hence, to create a successful lesson with blended learning approach, teachers should be willing to learn and apply technology in their lessons. Teachers may become a technical supporter for students when needed, should be willing to interact with learners in both online environment and in the classroom.

CONCLUSION

It has come to our knowledge that technology blooming opens a new horizon in education, especially language teaching. In the current situation most of higher institutions, especially at Van Lang University School learners need more time and opportunities outside and inside classroom to practice their reading skill. That's why blended learning was taken into consideration. The research was conducted to discover learners' perceptions towards blended learning reading course with the support of Moodle platform. Through questionnaire for students who experienced a 15-week reading course on Moodle, the researchers collected data to analyse. The results showed that learners had positive attitudes towards the reading course on Moodle related to flexible learning time and geographical convenience. However, they also faced some problems about technical knowledge and WiFi connection interruption. Considering the findings from the current research, the researchers suggest that school administrators should give teachers and students full training about Moodle system and how to employ it successfully. As for teachers, they should train themselves and ready to learn to be a technical supporter for students when needed. To help students interested in the reading online course, teachers should offer students a variety of tests in combinations of clear feedback and explanations for the answers in the classrooms.

Although the study was successful in examining learners' perceptions, benefits and obstacles in blended learning environment along with Moodle platform, there were still some unavoidable limitations. Firstly, it was a one-cycle action research; therefore, the generalizability was weak. Hence, other research with different methods could be implemented on larger scales to optimize the generalizability of the findings. Besides, as Moodle platform is a charged and systematic website, it requires much finance and efforts for maintenance and users' training, so blended learning along with Moodle platform may not be suitable for all school contexts. It is suggested that further research could investigate learners' perceptions, benefits and obstacles of blended learning approach on other free online platforms.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE LEARNING OF READING COMPREHENSION ON MOODLE

FOR STUDENTS AT VAN LANG UNIVERSITY

In order to improve the quality of the teaching and learning of reading comprehension at Van Lang University, please put a tick (✓) on the option which suits your own opinion

I. Students' attitude towards learning English reading course on Moodle

Please use the scale below to answer the following questions:

1 = *Strongly disagree*

2 = *Moderately disagree*

3 = *Slightly disagree*

4 = *Slightly agree*

5 = *Moderately agree*

6 = *Strongly agree*

Questions		1	2	3	4	5	6
Attitude	1	I enjoy learning English reading comprehension on Moodle?					
	2	I wish I would learn other English courses on Moodle.					
	3	The reading course on Moodle is helpful to improve learners' reading skill.					

Questions			1	2	3	4	5	6
	4	I have no problems when learning English reading on Moodle.						
	5	Moodle platform is friendly-user.						

II. Benefits

1. What benefits do you gain from the online-reading course on Moodle? You can have more than one choice

	1	Gives me more freedom in choosing an appropriate time to do the reading assignments.	
Benefits	2	Develops my skills in self-management.	
	3	Geographical convenience	
	4	Increases my desire to do homework in electronic way rather than paper.	
	5	Develops my typing and editing skills.	
	6	Gives me an updated feedback to evaluate my achievements.	
	7	Teaches me patience and endurance when doing reading assignments.	
	8	Develops my ability in problems-solving skills.	
		9	Others:

2. What do you like about blended learning approach (the combination of in-class teaching and reading practice on Moodle? (You can have more than one choice)

Features	1	Get more feedback and explanation for the answers in the reading course on Moodle thanks to in-class session	
	2	Recorded reading lessons on Moodle	
	3	Feedback and marks from Moodle Platform	
	4	Flexible time management	
	5	Interactions with peers and teacher	
	6	Variety of reading tests on Moodle	
	7	Autonomy to regulate the learning process	
	8	Others:	

III. Difficulties in learning reading comprehension on Moodle (you can have more than one choice)

1. What difficulties do you often have in reading course on Moodle?

Technical problems	1	Frequent disturbance in computer devices.	
	2	Frequent disturbance in university network.	
Technical support	3	There is no technical support or guidance when needed.	
Facility	4	Don't have a personal computer	
	5	Lack of interaction and live contact between students and teachers	

2. What difficulties do you often have with blended learning approach along with Moodle platform? (from yourself)

Learners	1	Lack of concentration when reading online	
	2	Limitation of vocabulary	
	3	Lack of knowledge about using Moodle	
	4	Feel worried in doing online quizzes.	
	5	Lack of typing and editing skills	

Thank you for your cooperation

TEACHING CHINESE

THE FORMATION OF CHINESE HOMOPHONE

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Dong Thap University

ABSTRACT

Chinese homophone is a linguistic phenomenon. It is a special approach expressing language. There are many kinds of Chinese homophones, and their content is rich and widely used in real life. Studying the basis of the homophone formation allows Chinese learners to deeply understand the rich connotations of national cultures.

Keywords: *homophone, basis of the formation, association*

CƠ SỞ HÌNH THÀNH HÀI ÂM TIẾNG HÁN

ThS. Nguyễn Châu Minh Thư

Đại Học Đồng Tháp

TÓM TẮT

Hài âm là một hiện tượng ngôn ngữ phổ biến trong tiếng Hán. Hài âm là một cách diễn đạt ngôn ngữ hiệu quả. Có nhiều loại hài âm, nội dung của hài âm cũng rất phong phú, và nó được sử dụng rộng rãi trong cuộc sống hằng ngày. Nghiên cứu hiện tượng hài âm tiếng Hán, đặc biệt là cơ sở của sự hình thành của nó, có thể giúp người học tiếng Hán hiểu sâu hơn về ý nghĩa phong phú của văn hóa đất nước Trung Quốc.

Từ khóa: hài âm, cơ sở hình thành, liên kết

1. Đặt vấn đề

Hài âm là một hiện tượng ngôn ngữ phổ biến trong đời sống xã hội Trung Quốc. Học tiếng Trung sẽ không khỏi bắt gặp hiện tượng này. Điều này đòi hỏi người học tiếng Trung phải có sự tích lũy kiến thức ngôn ngữ nhất định và thành thạo một số lượng lớn từ đồng âm hoặc gần âm trong học tập hàng ngày. Người học cũng cần hiểu kiến thức văn hóa xã hội liên quan đến hài âm. Như thế, chúng ta có thể nhớ và hiểu một số lượng lớn các từ hài âm trong tiếng Trung, đó là một phần yêu cầu ngôn ngữ. Cần kết hợp văn hóa truyền thống, phong tục địa phương, cùng với suy nghĩ, tâm lý văn hóa, lịch sử văn học và địa lý của người Trung Quốc, mới có thể hiểu rõ hơn về hiện tượng hài âm và ý nghĩa văn hóa của nó. Giáo viên tiếng Hán dạy Hán ngữ như một ngoại ngữ, trong các hoạt động giảng dạy kiến thức ngôn ngữ và các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ khác nhau, cũng cần phải giới thiệu nhiều yếu tố văn hóa dân gian vì nó có liên quan mật thiết đến đời sống, để sinh viên có thể hạn chế hiểu lầm và giảm trở ngại hơn khi học tập, đồng thời hiểu biết và hòa nhập tốt hơn khi tiếp xúc với người bản xứ.

2. Hiện tượng hài âm trong tiếng Hán

Theo Châu Thúy Anh (2011), “hài âm là một hiện tượng từ vựng đặc biệt trong chữ Hán. Tất cả các hiện tượng ngôn ngữ dựa vào đặc điểm đồng âm, cận âm của từ vựng để tạo thành đều là hiện tượng hài âm, đây là biểu hiện đặc biệt trong sử dụng ngôn ngữ.”

Dur Hoa Đông (2007) phát biểu. “hài âm” chính là “một loại biện pháp tu từ sử dụng các tính năng giống hoặc gần giống của âm thanh của

một ngôn ngữ để diễn đạt ý.” Mỗi loại hài âm của ngôn ngữ đều có sự thể hiện khác nhau, nhưng quan trọng hơn, hài âm có gắn kết với tính dân tộc, văn hóa, tâm lý. Nghiên cứu hài âm trong chữ Hán và cách sử dụng hài âm sẽ giúp người nước ngoài hiểu và sử dụng thành thạo các cách diễn đạt của người Trung Quốc. Việc này không chỉ cải thiện kỹ năng ngôn ngữ, mà còn giúp người học hiểu nguồn gốc văn hóa, đặc điểm từ ngữ.

Tác giả Hoàng Khiết (2015) đã đưa ra khái niệm “cách tạo từ hài âm”, một trong những phương pháp quan trọng nhất để tạo từ bằng cách sử dụng từ vựng. Những từ hài âm có thể mang lại hiệu ứng giao tiếp tốt, dễ nhớ và thể hiện ý nghĩa một cách sinh động.

Hài âm tiếng Hán là hiện tượng được hình thành từ đặc điểm đồng âm hay cận âm của phiên âm chữ Hán. Đây là hiện tượng có tần suất xuất hiện cao trong học tập cũng như ngoài cuộc sống.

3. Cơ sở hình thành hài âm trong chữ Hán

Mỗi dân tộc và quốc gia đều có đặc trưng riêng. Ngôn ngữ là một trong những bản sắc của quốc gia, và hài âm là một biện pháp tu từ rất đặc biệt. Được thể hiện đa dạng trong tiếng Hán. Hiện tượng hài âm trong Tiếng Hán có liên quan mật thiết đến đặc điểm của chữ Hán.

3.1 Cơ sở ngữ âm

Trong tiếng Trung Quốc hiện đại, hiện tượng hài âm được hình thành bởi các từ đồng âm khác nhau hoặc gần âm trong ngôn ngữ.

Đối với hệ thống ngữ âm của Trung Quốc và quy luật phát triển của nó có liên quan đến phiên âm chữ Hán. Các tính năng của âm tiết Trung Quốc đơn giản. Trong các âm tiết chữ Hán, âm điệu là sự kết hợp chính của lời nói. Hệ thống âm tiết tiếng Trung có tính quy luật cao.

Đặc điểm của ngữ âm tiếng Trung là đặc điểm của hiện tượng hài âm. Để nhận ra rằng cách phát âm của các ký tự Trung Quốc rất phong phú, rõ ràng nhất là hiện tượng “một ký tự có nhiều âm thể hiện và một âm có nhiều chữ thể hiện”. Điều này dẫn đến việc hình thành các từ đồng âm trong chữ Hán. Các ký tự Trung Quốc là “các ký tự hình khối” và có nhiều đặc điểm: hiểu về hình ảnh, trong cách diễn đạt ngữ nghĩa, một ký tự Trung Quốc khác nhau sẽ khiến mọi người nghĩ khác về ý nghĩa và cách sử dụng.

Một phần quan trọng của một âm tiết là nguyên âm, trong đó ba nguyên âm có thể xảy ra nhiều nhất. Một phụ âm là khởi đầu của một âm tiết, chủ yếu nằm ở phía trước nguyên âm, nhưng một số ít phụ âm có thể đứng sau nguyên âm, đó là kết thúc của âm tiết. Thường chỉ có một

phụ âm trước và sau nguyên âm. Trong hệ thống ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, sự kết hợp của nguyên âm, phụ âm và âm điệu(thanh điệu) để tạo thành phiên âm. Bắt đầu của một âm tiết thường là một phụ âm. Nguyên âm là phần sau chữ cái đầu trong âm tiết, đó là nguyên âm, nó cũng có thể là nguyên âm hoặc kết hợp nguyên âm và phụ âm. Âm đề cập đến cấp độ và tăng giảm của âm tiết. Tiếng Trung là một ngôn ngữ thanh điệu. Số lượng hệ thống âm điệu của tiếng Hán rất ít. Phiên âm tiếng Hán chỉ có 21 thanh mẫu và 35 vận mẫu. Trong tiếng Hán có 21 phụ âm (còn gọi là thanh mẫu). Trong đó 18 phụ âm đơn và bao gồm 3 phụ âm kép. Còn 2 phụ âm không chính thức: y và w chính là nguyên âm i và u khi nó đứng đầu câu. Cũng có thể coi là có 23 phụ âm là vì vậy. Trong tiếng Hán gồm có 35 nguyên âm (gọi là vận mẫu). Có 4 thanh điệu cơ bản trong tiếng Trung, các thanh điệu này được ký hiệu là: Thanh thứ nhất: cũng gọi là “âm bình (阴平)”, là thanh cao, rất đều. Gần giống thanh “ngang” trong tiếng Việt. Ký hiệu trong bính âm là “-”. Thanh thứ hai: được gọi là “dương bình (阳平)”, là thanh cao, đều, từ thấp lên cao. Gần giống thanh “sắc” trong tiếng Việt. Ký hiệu trong bính âm và chú âm là “-ˊ”. Thanh thứ ba: thì được gọi là “thượng thanh (上声)”, là thanh thấp, xuống thấp lại lên cao. Gần giống thanh “hỏi” trong tiếng Việt. Ký hiệu trong bính âm và chú âm là “-ˇ”. Thanh thứ tư: cũng gọi là “khứ thanh (去声)”, là thanh từ cao xuống thấp. Ngắn và nặng hơn thanh “huyền”, dài và nhẹ hơn thanh “nặng” trong tiếng Việt. Ký hiệu trong phiên âm và chú âm là “-ˋ”. Ngoài ra còn một thanh nữa, trong chú âm, thanh “ngang” lại không có ký hiệu, gọi là thanh nhẹ (轻声, khinh thanh). Thanh này chỉ dùng khi muốn làm nhẹ một âm phía trước. Trong phiên âm, thanh nhẹ không có ký hiệu, nhưng trong chú âm thì nó được ký hiệu là “.” (dấu khuyên nhỏ).

Khi hai hoặc nhiều âm tiết được kết nối với nhau, nó sẽ thay đổi độ cao của âm tiết, hiện tượng này được gọi là biến âm Hán ngữ. Ví dụ 2 âm tiết mang thanh 3 đi liền nhau âm tiết đầu sẽ chuyển thành thanh thứ 2. Việc phát âm âm điệu của phương ngữ Trung Quốc là một vấn đề phức tạp. Âm “儿化” cũng rất phổ biến trong hệ thống ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc. Khi 儿化 được đặt sau các âm tiết khác, âm cuối kết hợp “儿” và âm tiết trước biến âm. Một số trong số chúng đã trở thành đồng âm sau “儿” ví dụ 扣: cài và 扣儿: cài nút, nhưng từ loại của hai từ này khác nhau.

Có rất nhiều biểu tượng chữ viết của Trung Quốc. Theo thống kê, có hơn 100.000 ký tự Trung Quốc cổ đại và hiện đại. Vào thế kỷ 20, Lãn Ngọc Long và Vi Nhất Tâm (1994) đã xuất bản một cuốn từ điển tu từ “中华字海” chứa hơn 86.000 ký tự Trung Quốc. Theo từ điển “辞海” có hơn 14.000 ký tự Trung Quốc, nhưng số lượng ký tự Trung Quốc thường

sử dụng là rất ít so với tổng số. Có khoảng 2.500 ký tự tiếng Hoa thường được sử dụng bởi Hiệp Hội Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc và chỉ có 1.000 từ vựng thường được sử dụng hàng ngày. Theo báo cáo thống kê từ Viện nghiên cứu giảng dạy của Khoa ngôn ngữ của Đại học Bắc Kinh, chỉ có 1.000 ký tự tiếng Hoa thông dụng. Các ký tự phổ biến của Trung Quốc chiếm 4,1% trong số 86.000 ký tự và các ký tự được sử dụng phổ biến nhất chiếm 1,2% trong số 86.000 ký tự. Không chỉ có ít từ trong sử dụng hàng ngày, mà còn có rất ít từ được sử dụng phổ biến. Theo báo cáo thống kê của Viện nghiên cứu giảng dạy của Đại học Văn hóa và Ngôn ngữ Bắc Kinh, chỉ có 3817 từ phổ biến. Hàng trăm triệu người ở Trung Quốc sử dụng hơn 3.800 từ mỗi ngày để nói và viết, tất nhiên, những từ tương tự cũng phát sinh.

Về mặt âm tiết, so với các ký tự và âm tiết thường được sử dụng, các ký tự Trung Quốc nhiều hơn các âm tiết. Có ít từ và âm tiết phổ biến hơn. Do đó, chỉ có 414 âm tiết tiếng Trung Quốc, chiếm 11,8% so với 3500 ký tự tiếng Hán thường được sử dụng. Do đó, mọi người thường nói cùng một âm tiết sau khi viết một bài viết cứ sau 11,8 từ. “辞海” (1936) chỉ đơn giản đếm được 14.872 ký tự Trung Quốc và 972 âm tiết với chữ “c” ban đầu, chiếm 6,2% tổng số. Có 2144 từ có “an” (bao gồm cả ian và uan) trong nguyên âm, chiếm 14,4% tổng số. Có 272 từ phát âm là “yi”, 237 từ phát âm là “yu” và 165 từ phát âm là “yan”. Do đó, một số lượng lớn từ đồng âm và từ ngữ âm cung cấp một cơ sở ngữ âm phong phú để nảy sinh các từ hài âm.

3.2 Cơ sở vô vật chất

Cơ sở vật chất được hình thành bởi các đặc điểm ngữ âm và đặc trưng chữ Hán. Số lượng âm tiết trong tiếng phổ thông có hạn. Sự kết hợp giữa thanh mẫu và vận mẫu chỉ có 414, với thanh điệu được thêm vào: Âm bình, Dương bình, Thượng thanh, Khứ thanh cũng chưa tới 1300 âm tiết. Nhưng mà số lượng Hán tự lại rất nhiều. Số lượng ký tự trong “中华字海” của Trương Ngọc Thư và các biên tập viên khác (1985) là 47.043, và số lượng ký tự trong Từ điển tiếng Trung của Trâu Hoa Khánh (2010) đã lên tới hơn 56.000. Do Hán ngữ âm đọc và hình thức mặt chữ không nhất quán dẫn đến có nhiều hình thức đồng âm khác nhau.

Ngoài ra, do cách đặt trung phối hợp của phát âm của chữ Hán và các ký tự chữ Hán có tính cố định, hầu hết các từ vựng đều có một phiên âm. Về cơ bản, mỗi âm tiết Trung Quốc tương ứng với một ký tự Trung Quốc, và mỗi ký tự thể hiện một ý nghĩa. Từ quan điểm của ý nghĩa từ điển tiếng Trung, nhiều ngữ nghĩa tiếng Trung được thể hiện dưới

dạng ngữ âm giống hoặc tương tự. Đặc điểm này của hình dạng, âm thanh và ý nghĩa hình thành các biện pháp tu từ đồng âm.

Đồng thời, phương pháp tạo chữ Hán chủ yếu dựa trên phương pháp Hình Thanh (形聲文字), phương pháp này được dùng với tần số cao. Chữ Hình Thanh bao gồm hai phần: phần hình - 形 biểu đạt nghĩa chính mà đã được dùng từ lâu đời, còn phần thanh - 声 là thể hiện cách phát âm của từ đó, một cách phát âm hoặc các phương thức tương tự, chẳng hạn như “值、植、殖、置、埴、植、洩、殖、殖、植、轟” và các từ khác là cách phát âm điển hình. Tất cả họ đều sử dụng “直” làm thanh, và phát âm của chúng là "zhi". Ví dụ: khi có từ “旦” xuất hiện thì chữ Hán đó sẽ thường có cách đọc “dan”, “担、胆、但、袒、旦、袒、𠂔” v.v. Theo đó, các chữ Hán có âm một phần bên cạnh sẽ tạo thêm càng nhiều chữ Hán hài âm.

Từ góc độ thay đổi ngữ âm, phát âm tiếng Trung ngày càng đơn giản hơn. Có một số cách nói khác nhau trong thời cổ đại, vì âm thanh không tiếp tục thay đổi, bây giờ nó trở thành cùng một ngữ âm. Trong tiếng Trung Quốc cổ đại, ngay cả trong hầu hết các phương ngữ hiện nay, người ta vẫn phân chia âm thanh sắc nét và nhóm. Như chữ cái đầu “z, c, s” cùng “i, ü” hoặc bắt đầu “i, ü”. Âm thanh nhóm đề cập đến của “j, q, x” có chữ cái đầu cùng đi là “i, ü” hoặc những âm bắt đầu bằng “i, ü”. Trong khu vực phương ngữ, “jian, qian, xian” là “zian, cian, sian”. Trong ngữ âm tiếng Trung, ở một số vùng không có sự phân biệt giữa “Âm mặt lưỡi”, ví dụ: “尖 = 兼”jiān, “先 = 掀”xiān, “千 = 牽”qiān。

3.3 Cơ sở tâm lý

Cơ sở của tâm lý đời sống được nhận ra bởi biểu hiện đồng âm là sự liên kết phong phú và kỳ lạ và đặc biệt từ tính dân tộc.

Một số điều rất bình thường và bình thường có thể được điểm tô bởi sự hài hòa của chúng. Cũng có thể thay đổi tên của những gì mọi người nghĩ là không được tốt, không lành, để uyển chuyển, nói tránh nói giảm để tạo ra mái tâm lý. Mọi người có thể chuyển sang cách khác để diễn đạt nó bằng cách dùng hài âm. Có một số yếu tố tâm lý sau:

3.3.1 Liên tưởng

Liên tưởng là sự hồi sinh của các kết nối thần kinh tạm thời trong não người, phản ứng của não người đối với các kết nối giữa các sự vật. Liên tưởng là hành động của một người hoặc vật nào đó kết nối những người và vật khác có liên quan. Khi con người bị thế giới bên ngoài kích

thích, não người sẽ ngay lập tức kích hoạt loại tiếp xúc này ẩn trong vỏ não. Những tiếp xúc thần kinh tạm thời này sẽ cho phép con người liên kết ngay lập tức, các kết hợp khác nhau của các khái niệm khác nhau về ý nghĩa vật chất. Hình dạng, màu sắc, thiên nhiên và âm thanh tuyệt đẹp của mọi thứ có thể ảnh hưởng đến sự liên kết của con người. Hài âm là cùng một ngôn ngữ hoặc liên kết tương tự của âm thanh. Theo nghĩa này, sự liên kết có thể là một phần của nền tảng tâm lý của sự hài âm.

Các từ hài âm liên tưởng dựa trên cùng một lời nói tương tự, và uyển ngữ được ngụ ý ngầm để tăng cường hiệu ứng biểu hiện. Sự hình thành của đồng âm thông qua phương pháp tâm lý này làm cho cuộc sống ngôn ngữ của mọi người trở nên phong phú hơn, làm nổi bật vai trò quan trọng của hài âm.

Hiện tượng hài âm có thể được nhận ra, điều này có lợi cho khả năng liên kết phong phú của người Trung Quốc. Các nhà tâm lý học nghĩ rằng khái niệm khoảng cách xa trong hai giác quan là dù sao đi nữa miễn là liên kết trong các bước giữa, bạn có thể kết nối từ khái niệm này sang khái niệm khác. Sự vật và hành vi không liên quan đến quá trình biểu hiện đồng âm, nhưng âm thanh của chúng tương tự hoặc giống nhau.

Các yếu tố trong từ đồng âm như: tâm lý, văn hóa dân tộc, môi trường xã hội và thói quen, thẩm mỹ có liên quan mật thiết đến trình độ văn hóa của chính người đọc, người nghe.

3.3.2 Trí nhớ

Trí nhớ là phần được lưu giữ bởi bộ não con người. Sau khi hiểu sự vật, hiện tượng, nó là cơ sở của mức độ suy nghĩ, trí tưởng tượng và hoạt động tâm lý. Trí nhớ của con người liên quan trực tiếp đến cấu trúc não.

Trí nhớ là sự phản ánh của những trải nghiệm trong quá khứ trong bộ não con người. Phần bộ nhớ bao gồm: bộ nhớ về tình huống, hình ảnh, cảm xúc, ngữ nghĩa và hành động. Trí nhớ đóng vai trò quan trọng trong tâm lý con người. Hoạt động tâm lý tích cực này là cơ sở và tiền đề của các hoạt động tâm lý khác.

Bộ nhớ ngữ nghĩa là một hình thức của thông điệp khái quát và quy nạp. Tiền đề tâm lý của mọi người trong bộ nhớ ngữ nghĩa, biểu hiện ngôn ngữ, thực hành nói và viết. Từ quan điểm của sự hình thành từ hài âm, chúng ta có thể tìm thấy các từ hài âm và các thư viện tín hiệu từ vựng tương tự, và sử dụng các thay đổi tâm lý liên quan đến tâm lý. Sự hình thành từ vựng hài âm sẽ gặp khó khăn nếu không có ký ức về hoạt động tâm lý này là điều kiện tiên quyết. Về mặt quan hệ ngữ âm, từ vựng

chủ yếu bao gồm các chuỗi ngữ âm có cùng giọng nói, giống nhau và khác biệt. Hài âm là hiện tượng tu từ trong bộ nhớ ngữ nghĩa của bộ não và các thông điệp được thay thế. Có thể nói, trí nhớ là nền tảng tâm lý được hình thành bởi các từ hài âm.

3.4 Cơ sở xã hội

Hài âm là tạo ra và diễn đạt ý nghĩa trong quá trình sử dụng cùng một giọng nói gần như âm điệu trong một ngôn ngữ, diễn đạt ý nghĩa của một từ này như một từ khác, gây ra hiệu ứng đặc biệt của hiện tượng ngôn ngữ. Một số lượng lớn các từ âm thanh giống hệt và gần giống trong tiếng Hán là nguồn tài nguyên hài âm phong phú nhất. Âm tiết là những từ ngữ âm nhỏ nhất. Các thành phần âm thanh có thể được phân biệt bằng thính giác. Khi học âm tiết tiếng Hán, một ký tự tiếng Hán thường có cách phát âm một âm tiết. Có khoảng 400 âm tiết trong tiếng Trung, và có hơn 1.300 âm tiết có thể điều chỉnh (không đề cập đến âm thanh nhẹ). Bất kỳ ngôn ngữ nào cũng có cấu trúc âm tiết riêng, trong tiếng Hán, cấu trúc âm tiết tương đối đơn giản và hầu hết chúng đều là âm tiết đơn âm.

Do có nhiều âm tiết đơn âm dẫn đến một hậu quả là có một số lượng lớn từ đồng âm khác nghĩa. Ngoài ra, hệ thống ngữ âm của Trung Quốc đã trải qua những thay đổi lớn từ thời cổ đại, đó là xu hướng phát triển. Hệ thống ngữ âm rất phức tạp trong tiếng Trung Quốc cổ đại, với tám âm điệu. Trong tiếng Trung Quốc hiện đại, nó trở thành bốn âm: Âm bình(thanh 1); dương bình(thanh 2); thượng bình(thanh 3) và khứ thanh(thanh 4), và âm mẫu, vận mẫu cũng thay đổi.

Hài âm được sử dụng rộng rãi trong tiếng Trung Quốc. Nó không chỉ xuất hiện bằng lời nói trong cuộc sống hàng ngày, mà còn tồn tại trong các nghệ thuật dân tộc và dân gian khác nhau.

Sự phát triển của ngôn ngữ không thể tách rời khỏi sự phát triển văn hóa, và tính dân tộc là một đặc trưng điển hình của văn hóa. Tính năng này cũng được phản ánh trong ngôn ngữ, cho thấy một đặc tính độc đáo của quốc gia. Từ thời xa xưa, người Trung Quốc đã coi trọng sự hài hòa, minh chứng và ý nghĩa và có thể sử dụng sự hài âm để cải thiện, nâng cao hiệu quả của mọi người đối với việc giao tiếp.

Có nhiều từ hài âm trong tiếng Trung. Hài âm không chỉ xảy ra trong ngôn ngữ giao tiếp và tác phẩm văn học, mà còn trong cuộc sống hàng ngày, tên cá nhân, tên địa điểm, quảng cáo, tên sản phẩm, nhãn hiệu, Internet, câu đố xã hội và các lĩnh vực nghệ thuật khác nhau. Nói cách khác, sự hài âm được thể hiện trong tất cả các khía cạnh của đời sống văn hóa xã hội.

Chỉ có thể hiểu hiện tượng hài âm của tiếng Hán, từ các lĩnh vực tâm lý quốc gia, chế độ tư duy, phong tục, tập quán địa phương, lịch sử địa lý và truyền thống văn hóa của quốc gia Trung Quốc. Các đặc điểm văn hóa của tâm lý, tư duy và đặc điểm thẩm mỹ của mỗi quốc gia được tích lũy trong tiềm thức của con người. Ý thức của con người sẽ thay đổi với sự ảnh hưởng của các yếu tố như kinh nghiệm và kiến thức. Do đó, những người có nền tảng văn hóa nhất định có thể hiểu việc sử dụng văn hóa đồng âm trong sự thay đổi tiềm thức.

Từ hài âm của từ nước ngoài cũng được gọi là từ nước ngoài hoặc từ mượn bao gồm: “ coffee - 咖啡、sofa - 沙发、show - 秀、sandwich - 三明治、card - 卡、marathons - 马拉松、guitar - 吉他 ” v.v. Theo thời gian, nó đã được dùng phổ biến, một cách Hán ngữ hóa. Và việc sử dụng từ đồng âm đã trở thành một của người Trung Quốc. Ví dụ, từ đồng âm kỹ thuật số có thể sử dụng “88” để diễn tả “tạm biệt” , 520 là “Tôi yêu bạn” , v.v. Từ hài âm cách này rất thú vị, vì vậy nó rất phổ biến trong tin nhắn văn bản và ngôn ngữ online. Nếu có thể kết hợp giới thiệu hài âm từ các từ nước ngoài, cũng như cách chúng xuất hiện và được dùng trong online sẽ giúp người học dễ nắm và có hứng thú tiếp thu.

4. Kết luận

Hiện tượng hài âm là một phần quan trọng trong đặc điểm của ngôn ngữ tiếng Hán, và nó cũng là một hướng quan trọng để kế thừa và phát triển ngôn ngữ hiện đại. Hiện tượng hài âm trong ngôn ngữ học được sử dụng rộng rãi, cung cấp tài liệu quan trọng cho nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ. Bằng cách nghiên cứu hiện tượng hài âm trong các câu thơ, câu ghép và văn xuôi cổ đại, chúng ta có thể hiểu rõ hơn về thói quen sử dụng ngôn ngữ và nền tảng sống của họ, và đóng vai trò hỗ trợ trong nghiên cứu phát triển ngôn ngữ. Bằng cách quan sát và so sánh các ứng dụng đồng âm phổ biến trong cuộc sống hàng ngày như từ quảng cáo và khẩu hiệu trong cuộc sống hiện đại, phương pháp kế thừa ngôn ngữ hiệu quả và tiện lợi hơn, giúp ngôn ngữ học từ khoa học vào cuộc sống và hòa nhập hoàn hảo vào xã hội. Tuy nhiên, trong việc áp dụng hài âm, chúng ta cũng phải chú ý đến các phương pháp để tránh những ảnh hưởng xấu đến người học mới làm quen với văn hóa Trung Quốc.

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IDENTIFYING THE DIFFICULTY AND PROMOTING SUCCESS OF ONLINE CHINESE TEACHING

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ABSTRACT

In the era of industry 4.0 development, it is more convenient to learn through various information technology application software, especially in foreign language learning so that learners can successfully learn Chinese. The practice of online Chinese training has been paid more and more attention by various schools, and training is carried out through various information technology application software and in various ways. In this paper, we discuss the difficulty and suggest approaches for the actual situations of online Chinese teaching at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. We then recommend some ways to overcome the difficulties and make the study convenient for the learners.

Keywords: *Chinese, online teaching and learning*

KHÓ KHĂN VÀ THUẬN LỢI TRONG VIỆC GIẢNG DẠY TRỰC TUYẾN NGÔN NGỮ TRUNG QUỐC

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摘要

在工业 4.0 发展的时代，通过各种信息技术应用软件使学习更加便利，尤其在学习外语方面更为方便，使学习者能够顺利地学习汉语达到成功。其中，在线培训汉语的工作日益得到各个学校重视并且通过各种信息技术应用软件及各种方式来进行培训。在此，我们对胡志明市开放大学在线汉语教学的实际情况提出若干顺利与困难，从此能够提出若干克服困难的方法，为学习者做出学习方面的顺利与方便。

关键词：困难，顺利，汉语，在线教学

Tóm tắt

Trong thời đại phát triển công nghệ 4.0 thì việc học tập cũng dần trở nên dễ dàng hơn thông qua các ứng dụng công nghệ, trong đó có việc học ngoại ngữ, người học có thể học tập một cách thuận lợi và thành công. Việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc trực tuyến cũng ngày càng được nhiều đơn vị giáo dục đào tạo triển khai với đủ hình thức và sự hỗ trợ từ các ứng dụng công nghệ. Trong bài viết này, chúng tôi muốn nêu ra những khó khăn và thuận lợi trong việc giảng dạy Tiếng Trung Quốc tại trường đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, từ đó có thể nêu thêm một số phương pháp khắc phục trong quá trình giảng dạy, tạo sự thuận lợi cho người học.

Từ khóa: khó khăn, thuận lợi, Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, giảng dạy trực tuyến

1. ĐẶT VẤN ĐỀ

Trong quá trình hội nhập và hiện đại hóa thì việc học tập trực tuyến hay còn gọi là học tập online ngày càng phổ biến đến người học. Trên tinh thần này thì các đơn vị giáo dục đào tạo cũng triển khai mô hình giảng dạy trực tuyến (giảng dạy online) giúp cho việc học tập trở nên thuận lợi hơn. Trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh là một trong những đơn vị tiên phong triển khai mô hình học tập trực tuyến.

Chúng tôi thuộc nhóm giảng viên giảng dạy Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc đã và đang bắt đầu soạn bài giảng trực tuyến. Trong quá trình soạn bài và giảng dạy chúng tôi nhận thấy việc giảng dạy trực tuyến có những khó khăn và thuận lợi nhất định đối với giảng viên và người học. Vì Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc là một ngoại ngữ khó đối với người nước ngoài do đó việc giảng dạy cũng có những khó khăn nhất định.

Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc có chữ viết theo dạng hình ảnh, cấu tạo các nét khó viết, phát âm cũng có nhiều dấu giọng, có các điểm ngữ pháp phức tạp ...v.v. Trong quá trình giảng dạy trực tuyến sẽ có những khó khăn nhất định khi không trực tiếp giảng dạy với người học như cách phát âm, luyện ngữ pháp, tương tác trực tiếp với sinh viên.

2. THUẬN LỢI

Trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh là một trong những đơn vị giáo dục đào tạo đi đầu trong lĩnh vực đào tạo từ xa và đào tạo trực tuyến với sứ mạng của mình là đóng góp và nâng cao trí thức cho cộng đồng bằng các phương pháp phương pháp linh hoạt và thuận tiện nhất. Hiện tại thì trường đã có Trung tâm đào tạo trực tuyến, nơi triển khai và mở rộng hình thức đào tạo trực tuyến các ngành học của các khoa trực thuộc Trường, với đội ngũ giảng viên cơ hữu và thỉnh giảng dồi dào kinh nghiệm, dày dặn trong quá trình giảng dạy. Về phương thức đào tạo, Trường sử dụng nhiều hình thức linh hoạt để đáp ứng yêu cầu của người học, Trường đang từng bước xây dựng chương trình học qua trực tuyến online, kết hợp với hình thức cung cấp học liệu và tổ chức ôn tập trực tiếp. Ngoài ra Trường còn là một đơn vị thành viên của nhiều hiệp hội các trường đào tạo từ xa trên thế giới như AAOU, ICDE, SEAMONLEC...

Về cơ sở vật chất, hiện tại Trung tâm Đào tạo Trực tuyến được trang bị hoàn hảo về phong thu, ghi hình hỗ trợ ghi hình việc giảng viên giảng dạy. Đội ngũ nhân viên hỗ trợ kỹ thuật và chuyên viên văn phòng làm việc rất chuyên nghiệp và tinh thần làm việc nhóm, làm việc có trách nhiệm rất cao. Ngoài ra người học còn được cấp tài khoản để vào LMS của trường làm bài tập và hoàn thành những yêu cầu của giảng viên dành cho học viên. Trường hỗ trợ cung cấp không gian để giảng viên sau khi kết thúc bài giảng có thể online trực tiếp giải đáp những thắc mắc của người học và cũng là cách thức giảng viên trực tiếp trao đổi, tương tác với người học thông qua những buổi trao đổi trực tuyến (Video conference). Hệ thống LMS của Trường có chức năng hiển thị bài học của giảng viên để sinh viên có thể truy cập vào và xem bất kỳ lúc nào, ngoài ra hệ thống có thể ghi nhận việc học viên gửi bài tập cho giảng viên, học viên cần nêu những thắc mắc của mình, ghi nhận số điểm của giảng viên dành cho người học, đồng thời thông báo cho người học.

Về phần giảng viên trong việc biên soạn bài giảng để giảng dạy theo hình thức trực tuyến thì cũng khá thuận lợi, vì bài giảng cho các môn học bình thường giảng viên cũng đã tiến hành biên soạn bài giảng điện tử. Trong phần lên lớp giảng dạy giảng viên chỉ việc đứng giảng hết những nội dung trong bài giảng mà không cần phải tương tác với sinh viên người học, công việc thực sự chỉ giảng dạy trước ống kính máy quay. Sau phần giảng dạy, giảng viên có thể giao bài tập cho người học thông qua hệ thống LMS, và cũng có thể tiến hành chấm điểm cho người học trên hệ thống này.

Nguồn giảng viên trẻ hiện nay trong bộ môn Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc (NNTQ) khá dồi dào, có khả năng thích ứng với môi trường làm việc ứng dụng công nghệ, chịu khó tìm tòi, học hỏi, ngoài ra trình độ của Giảng viên tổ bộ môn NNTQ đều là trình độ tiến sĩ, nên việc giảng dạy có chất lượng, đào tạo uy tín.

3. KHÓ KHĂN

Thực tế khi tiến hành giảng dạy bộ môn Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc theo hướng đào tạo trực tuyến thì cũng gặp phải những khó khăn nhất định.

Thứ nhất là việc giảng viên không trực tiếp lên lớp, không có tương tác trực tiếp với người học, trong quá trình giảng dạy giảng viên sẽ không nhận được tín hiệu từ người học, không biết người học có hiểu bài hay không. Việc phát âm trong tiếng Trung có những khó khăn nhất định trong những âm bậc hơi, không bậc hơi, âm ma sát hoặc không ma sát, âm tắt sát, âm uốn lưỡi hoặc không uốn lưỡi, thanh điệu (dấu giọng) với các quy tắc biến âm đặc biệt. Giảng viên không thể trực tiếp chỉnh sửa cho người học ngay lập tức trong quá trình học tập, sẽ bị ảnh hưởng đến việc phát âm, kỹ năng Nói và Nghe của người học. Người học chỉ có thể tiến hành học theo dạng mô phỏng phát âm, sẽ bị hạn chế bởi không có sự tiếp xúc trực tiếp với giảng viên (trong khi sinh viên chuyên ngữ lên lớp học trực tiếp với giảng viên còn có rất nhiều sinh viên đến năm thứ 4 vẫn bị lỗi phát âm sai, ngay cả một số giảng viên giảng dạy vẫn bị lỗi phát âm, nhất là lỗi phát âm thanh 1 và thanh 4), điều này rất bất lợi cho người học.

Thứ hai là cách giảng dạy Hán tự, NNTQ có chữ viết theo hình vẽ, ký tự là các nét viết với các quy tắc viết cơ bản, quy tắc viết bút thuận, việc học Hán tự sơ sót không hoàn chỉnh sẽ gây cho người học một tâm lý cho rằng Hán tự khó nhận biết, khó ghi nhớ và khó viết, nhưng nếu được học một cách bài bản thì người học sẽ cảm thấy Hán tự rất dễ viết, dễ ghi nhớ, dễ nhận biết bởi vì mỗi một chữ Hán (Hán tự) mang một ý nghĩa đặc thù, nếu được giảng nghĩa kỹ sẽ có thể giúp cho người học hiểu ý nghĩa của

Hán tự và có thể phân biệt những Hán tự có hình dạng cách viết gần giống nhau và dễ ghi nhớ một từ khi kết hợp với từ khác. Cái khó trong việc giảng dạy online dành cho Hán tự là người giảng phải gói gọn trong bài giảng được trình chiếu trên màn hình một cách khúc chiết, đơn giản, ngắn gọn, không thể gói gọn tổng thể phần Hán tự một cách khái quát, chi tiết từng phần trong một khoảng thời gian ngắn nhất định theo quy định cho một video bài giảng.

Không có sự tương tác trực tiếp giữa giáo viên và người học, người học sẽ bị hạn chế kỹ năng nói mà trong đó chủ yếu là sự phản xạ trong việc học ngoại ngữ, phản xạ trong khi luyện phát âm, phản xạ trong khi luyện khẩu ngữ, phản xạ trong quá trình luyện mẫu câu, ngữ pháp. Những kỹ năng này được tạo thành thói quen, hay gọi là phản xạ có điều kiện khi được giảng viên trực tiếp giảng dạy mới có được.

Sự tương tác lẫn nhau giữa các sinh viên khó khăn. Trong quá trình giảng dạy, giảng viên có thể hướng dẫn sinh viên làm bài tập nhóm, cần sự thảo luận và tương tác lẫn nhau, ví dụ như trong quá trình học các kỹ năng nghe, nói, đọc, viết, sinh viên cần có sự tương tác để có thể đánh giá bản thân và đánh giá đối phương, từ đó có thể rút ra được những kinh nghiệm để bản thân sửa chữa cho hoàn chỉnh hơn, thuần thục, nhuần nhuyễn hơn. Nếu được học ở môi trường trực tiếp, người học có thể trao đổi trực tiếp, rèn luyện trực tiếp và có thể nêu ra ý kiến cá nhân đồng thời đánh giá được ý kiến của đối phương, bạn cùng học. Còn như học ở môi trường trực tuyến, chỉ có cá nhân tự xem bài giảng của giảng viên, tự học, tự phát huy các kỹ năng cần thiết của bản thân, đây cũng là điều hạn chế dành cho người học trực tuyến. Việc giảng dạy trực tuyến đa phần thuận lợi cho những môn học lý thuyết và có bài tập giao riêng cho người học tự hoàn thành sau buổi học. Việc giảng dạy môn ngoại ngữ lại tập trung vào việc rèn luyện kỹ năng cho người học ở giai đoạn cơ bản, thì thực hiện việc giảng dạy trực tuyến sẽ khó cho người học, không tập trung vào việc rèn luyện các kỹ năng, hoặc người học sẽ phải tự học và tự luyện tập các kỹ năng đó với rất nhiều thời gian.

Phần tài liệu giảng dạy là một phần quan trọng trong quá trình sử dụng tài liệu để biên soạn bài giảng, đây là cũng là mấu chốt vấn đề mà hiện tại nhiều giảng viên đang thắc mắc và nan giải. Việc chọn giáo trình để sử dụng làm tài liệu giảng dạy và tài liệu học tập chính cho người học được thực hiện cho đối tượng sinh viên học chính quy hệ tập trung, đây là việc làm bình thường trong các trường đại học. Trong quá trình học tập ở giai đoạn đại cương, sinh viên hoặc người học cần tập trung học tập và rèn luyện các kỹ năng Nghe hiểu, Đọc hiểu, Khẩu ngữ (kỹ năng nói) và kỹ năng Viết, cần thiết sử dụng các bộ giáo trình của các trường Đại học hàn lâm của Trung Quốc, có bề dày kinh nghiệm giảng dạy tiếng

Trung Quốc cho người nước ngoài biên soạn theo từng giai đoạn và cấp bậc. Một số bộ giáo trình này đã được một số nhà xuất bản của Việt Nam mua bản quyền và tiến hành in ấn sách giúp cho việc mua và sử dụng giáo trình được thuận lợi hơn, tuy nhiên, việc sử dụng nội dung của một giáo trình cụ thể để biên soạn thành bài giảng và giảng dạy trực tuyến được đưa ra rộng rãi trước công chúng mà chưa có sự cho phép từ nhà xuất bản hoặc của tác giả sẽ là một việc vi phạm bản quyền nghiêm trọng. Chúng ta không thể nói rằng, người học của tôi vẫn sử dụng sách, giáo trình do nhà xuất bản in ấn thì việc tôi sử dụng nội dung trong sách hoặc giáo trình đó để soạn bài giảng và giảng dạy rộng rãi là hoàn toàn được phép. Đây cũng là một hạn chế lớn trong việc tiến hành soạn bài giảng và giảng dạy trực tuyến.

Ngoài ra, việc học trực tuyến tập trung theo một thời gian nhất định sẽ giúp cho người học và giảng viên có cơ hội gặp mặt trực tuyến, có thể giải quyết được kiến thức cần truyền đạt, tuy nhiên vẫn tồn tại một số hạn chế như: học viên không tập trung, có thể tắt webcam để làm chuyện riêng; hoặc có thể vừa học trực tuyến mà vẫn có thể làm việc khác ngoài việc học, ngay trên máy tính của người học; hoặc trong quá trình giảng dạy, giảng viên không thể bao quát, tương tác được hết lớp vì lượng người học truy cập trong một lớp thường là trên 30 người, giảng viên tương tác không hết cả lớp, và cuối cùng sẽ ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng buổi giảng dạy và chất lượng học tập của người học.

Song song đó có một hạn chế lớn nữa là khi học trực tuyến giảng viên và người học cùng online một lúc thông qua các ứng dụng như Zoom, hoặc Google meeting ... thì đường truyền không ổn định, người học hoặc giảng viên có thể bị rớt mạng là chuyện thường gặp khiến cho việc người dạy và người học gặp phải tâm lý chán nản; hoặc là người học đổ lỗi cho đường truyền và không tham gia lớp học là những chuyện thực tế đã xảy ra.

4. MỘT SỐ GIẢI PHÁP

Trong quá trình hội nhập, phát triển việc học trực tuyến là điều cần thiết phải làm do nhu cầu xã hội và con người, tuy có những khó khăn nhất định, song vẫn có thể khắc phục được nếu như chúng ta biết sử dụng và kết hợp một cách hợp lý và hiệu quả, chắc chắn công tác triển khai học trực tuyến dành cho bộ môn ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc hoàn toàn có thể thực hiện được. Sau đây là một số đề nghị dành cho việc triển khai giảng dạy trực tuyến.

Thứ nhất, cần giải quyết vấn đề về bản quyền để giảng viên có thể chuyên tâm vào việc biên soạn bài giảng điện tử, sử dụng cho việc giảng

dạy trực tuyến, như vậy Nhà trường có vai trò quan trọng trong việc ký kết với Nhà xuất bản hoặc tác giả để có thể có quyền sử dụng nội dung trong giáo trình mà nhà trường chọn lựa làm giáo trình giảng dạy trực tuyến. Có được quyền sử dụng, người học và giảng viên sẽ yên tâm hơn và hình ảnh Nhà trường càng uy tín hơn.

Thứ hai, để giải quyết cho vấn đề người học không chuyên tâm vào việc học khi tiến hành giảng dạy trực tuyến face-to-face thông qua các ứng dụng thì nên có sự kết hợp trong công tác giảng dạy, giảng viên sẽ tiến hành quay phần giảng dạy lý thuyết (về ngữ âm, từ vựng, ngữ pháp) thành những video với thời lượng ngắn đủ để người học chỉ chuyên tâm trong một khoảng thời gian ngắn (từ 10 đến 15 phút), để người học có thể xem đi xem lại bài giảng và tự học tập, sau một đến hai đơn vị bài khóa thì sẽ tiến hành gặp trực tuyến giữa giảng viên và người học thông qua ứng dụng hoặc trang web của trường, để giảng viên có thể giải đáp những thắc mắc về ngữ pháp, từ vựng cho người học. Song song đó, cần hạn chế số lượng người học trong một lớp học, khi tiến hành video trực tuyến để giảng viên có thể gặp trực tiếp người học thì số người học nên hạn chế với số lượng khoảng từ mười đến hai mươi người, như vậy giảng viên mới có thể tiếp xúc và quản hết lớp học cũng như là có thể tiến hành chỉnh sửa cách phát âm, tương tác phản xạ trong phần học khẩu ngữ, và giải đáp thắc mắc về phần ngữ pháp một cách cụ thể, rõ ràng.

Thứ ba, về phần Hán tự, giảng viên có thể soạn bài bằng bài trình chiếu PPT và có thể tra cách viết Hán tự thông qua từ điển điện tử, sau đó chép thành file hình ảnh động đưa vào bài trình chiếu, như vậy giúp học viên có thể vừa xem cách viết vừa học viết Hán tự, giúp cho người học không cảm thấy nhàm chán mà ngược lại còn cảm thấy thú vị hơn.

Thứ tư, về phần đường truyền mạng, Nhà trường có thể đầu tư sử dụng những phần mềm ứng dụng có tính năng truyền tải thông suốt cao, ít gặp trở ngại, và có thể tiến hành vừa giảng dạy vừa chia sẻ tài liệu (bài giảng ppt, file nghe, hoặc hình ảnh, phim ảnh) cho người học mà không gặp trở ngại gì về phần mềm cũng như là tính tương tác cao. Song song đó phần mềm này còn cho phép người học có thể tải bài tập lên để giảng viên có thể chỉnh sửa và chấm điểm, cần hỗ trợ cho phép người học đăng tải các dạng bài tập (bài ghi âm, bài tập làm trên word, dạng bài tập hình vẽ, dạng bài tập excel, dạng bài tập là video ...), vì việc học ngoại ngữ cần nhất là việc phát âm, các tình huống giao tiếp cần đến việc ghi âm và ghi hình. Ngoài ra, số lượng người dùng cũng ảnh hưởng đến việc chia sẻ tài nguyên và đường truyền, do vậy, hạn chế số lượng người học ở mức mười đến hai mươi người cũng có lợi cho việc đường truyền nhanh hơn trong quá trình học trực tuyến hoặc video conference.

Ngoài ra, tất cả những việc làm có thành công hay không đều phụ thuộc vào ý chí của mỗi con người, việc học có thành công hay không phụ thuộc vào thái độ học tập, nhu cầu bổ sung kiến thức của người học; việc giảng dạy có thành công hay không phụ thuộc vào khả năng chịu khó học hỏi, chịu khó thay đổi môi trường giảng dạy từ người dạy, giảng viên có thể tiếp thu những công nghệ mới để có thể đưa bài giảng của mình vào các ứng dụng giúp người học đi đến mục đích học tập của mình. Việc giảng viên tiếp nhận, thay đổi cách giảng dạy để phù hợp với nhu cầu xã hội là việc cần thiết phải làm, Nhà trường cần có những chính sách phù hợp dành cho giảng viên với công tác giảng dạy trực tuyến này, giúp cho người lao động vừa giải tỏa được những căng thẳng về công việc cũng như có thể dồn công sức tâm huyết vào công tác giảng dạy, giúp cho việc giảng dạy được thuận lợi, danh tiếng Nhà trường ngày càng vươn xa.

KẾT LUẬN

Mô hình giảng dạy trực tuyến được áp dụng khá phổ biến ở nhiều nước trên thế giới mà trong đó giáo viên là người truyền đạt kiến thức ở mức độ hiểu và biết, thiết kế nhiều bài tập cho người học để người học có nhiệm vụ luyện tập, thực hành và ứng dụng hoàn thành những nhiệm vụ vào giáo viên giao cho. Tuy nhiên trong quá trình giảng dạy môn học tiếng Trung Quốc sẽ còn phát sinh những hạn chế, từ thực tiễn sẽ có những khắc phục cụ thể đòi hỏi ở giáo viên cần phải luôn tìm tòi học hỏi kinh nghiệm giảng dạy để áp dụng vào bài giảng của mình một cách linh động và hiệu quả hơn.

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RESEARCH ON LANGUAGE OF ADVERTISEMENT IN CHINESE: CONTRASTING CHINESE AND VIETNAMESE

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is one of the factors that affects the sale of products. Beside the visual images, language plays an important role in advertising. It persuades consumers, increases sales, contributes to the growth of manufacturers and retailers. Chinese advertising language possesses some properties which are benefit-oriented, creativity-oriented, unique, and ethical. By contrasting the advertising language on essential products in China and Vietnam, this research investigates the differences and similarities in cognitive linguistics aspects of Chinese and Vietnamese. Furthermore, the result would contribute to the field of contrastive linguistics.

Keywords: *language in advertising, product, function, ethics, Chinese-Vietnamese contrastive linguistics*

MỘT VÀI ĐẶC ĐIỂM NGÔN NGỮ QUẢNG CÁO TRONG TIẾNG TRUNG VÀ ĐỐI CHIẾU TRUNG - VIỆT

TS. Hồ Thị Trinh Anh

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TÓM TẮT

Quảng cáo là một hoạt động quan trọng trong quá trình tiêu thụ sản phẩm, bên cạnh hình ảnh trực quan, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo đóng một vai trò quan trọng trong quảng cáo sản phẩm, với công năng thu hút sự chú ý của người tiêu dùng, thúc đẩy tiêu thụ sản phẩm, mang lại lợi ích kinh tế cho nhà sản xuất và người bán hàng. Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo trong Tiếng Trung mang những đặc trưng chính: hướng đến tính lợi ích, hướng đến tính linh hoạt sáng tạo, hướng đến tính độc đáo, phù hợp với quan niệm giá trị, chuẩn mực đạo đức của một dân tộc.

Phân tích ngôn ngữ quảng cáo trên sản phẩm trong phạm vi hàng hóa nhu yếu phẩm thiết yếu của Trung quốc, đối chiếu với ngôn ngữ quảng cáo tương ứng tại Việt Nam giúp chúng ta nhìn ra được một góc độ tương đồng và khác biệt trong tư duy nhận thức của hai dân tộc, đóng góp vào lĩnh vực nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng trong phạm vi đối chiếu ngôn ngữ Trung-Việt.

Từ khoá: Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo, sản phẩm, công năng, chuẩn mực đạo đức, đối chiếu ngôn ngữ Trung Việt.

1. DẪN LUẬN

1.1. Tính bức thiết của vấn đề

Việt Nam hiện nay, nhiều chương trình đào tạo tại các trường đại học giảng dạy Ngoại ngữ theo định hướng ứng dụng. Với ngành đào tạo Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, trong mục tiêu đào tạo ra những cử nhân ngoại ngữ tiếng Trung cơ thể gắn liền sự hiểu biết với ngôn ngữ sử dụng hàng ngày trong xã hội. Quảng cáo với vai trò là một hoạt động xã hội gắn liền với ngôn ngữ, đặc biệt với Những đặc điểm thể loại ngôn ngữ đặc thù, trong xã hội sản xuất hàng hóa phát triển như xã hội Trung Quốc, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo sản phẩm càng được sử dụng rộng rãi và trở thành đề tài nghiên cứu của các nhà ngôn ngữ học.

Việc giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc cho người Việt Nam, để người học có thể vận dụng kiến thức tiếng Trung vào giao tiếp và thực hiện nhiệm vụ đối chiếu ngôn ngữ Trung Việt, việc hiểu rõ ngôn ngữ gắn liền với hoạt động xã hội nói chung, có khả năng phân tích đối chiếu ngôn ngữ quảng cáo thuộc ngôn ngữ thương mại trong tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt là một đòi hỏi không thể tách rời cho công tác dạy và học tiếng Trung Quốc theo định hướng ứng dụng.

1.2 Cơ sở lý luận

Ngôn ngữ thương mại: Tác giả 王军元 chỉ rõ: “Ngôn ngữ thương mại là khái niệm hiện đại, phản ánh hành vi ngôn ngữ được sinh ra trong các hoạt động thương mại, đồng thời từ hành vi ngôn ngữ ấy chuyển thành hiện tượng ngôn ngữ. Ngôn ngữ thương mại chủ yếu bao gồm Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo (广告语言), ngôn ngữ thương hiệu (商标语言), ngôn ngữ tên cửa hàng (商店名称语言), ngôn ngữ bán hàng (商品叫卖语言), ngôn ngữ sách hướng dẫn sử dụng hàng hóa (商品说明书语言)”. Như vậy, có thể thấy ngôn ngữ quảng cáo là một bộ phận không thể tách rời của ngôn ngữ thương mại trong tiếng Trung. Đây cũng là một hướng nghiên cứu hiện đại phục vụ thiết thực cho lĩnh vực ứng dụng nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ như lĩnh vực đời sống xã hội.

Lý thuyết giao tiếp (Lý thuyết ngôn giao): theo tác giả R. Jakobson, trong công trình “Linguistics and Poetics”, đã đưa ra sơ đồ giao tiếp chỉ rõ 6 yếu tố không thể thiếu trong giao tiếp đó là: Người phát, ngữ cảnh, thông điệp, tiếp xúc, mã, người nhận). Theo đó, sự giao tiếp liên quan đến ít nhất hai nhân vật giao tiếp: Người phát và người nhận. Trong quá trình giao tiếp, nội dung giao tiếp chứa trong thông điệp (thực chất là một chuỗi tín hiệu được mã hóa) được truyền đạt và tiếp nhận giữa hai lại mã giao tiếp này thông qua một loại mã nhất định, chẳng hạn, ý nghĩa dừng lại có thể được truyền đạt bằng đèn đỏ trong hệ thống ký hiệu giao thông... Để có thể được truyền đạt bất cứ điều gì, người phát và người nhận thông điệp buộc phải có sự tiếp xúc hay quan hệ với nhau. Điều đó có nghĩa là, thông điệp mà người phát muốn gửi đi phải được truyền qua một kênh dẫn thông tin nào đó: Trong hội thoại, kênh đó là *sóng âm*, trong giao tiếp, kênh là các *con chữ*. Cuối cùng, bất kỳ hành động giao tiếp nào diễn ra đều trong một *ngữ cảnh*. – TS. Mai Xuân Huy chỉ rõ.

Quảng cáo, phân loại quảng cáo và ngôn ngữ quảng cáo

Quảng cáo: “Quảng cáo” có nguồn gốc từ tiếng Latin *adventure*, có nghĩa là “mời gọi sự chú ý đối với một sự vật nào đó”

Phân loại quảng cáo (QC): Dẫn theo tác giả Mai Xuân Huy, nếu

dựa vào *tiêu chí truyền thông*, thì quảng cáo có thể được chia thành: Quảng cáo in ấn (Print Advertising), quảng cáo phát sóng (Broadcast Advertising), quảng cáo ngoài nhà (Out-of-home Advertising), quảng cáo thư trực tiếp (Direct mail Advertising); theo *tiêu chí khu vực địa lý*, thì quảng cáo có thể được chia thành: QC Quốc tế (Internatinonal Advertising), QC quốc gia (National Advertising), QC vùng (Reginal Advertising), QC địa phương (Local Advertising); theo *tiêu chí người tiếp nhận*, QC có thể chia thành QC người tiêu dùng (Consumme Advertising) và quảng cáo kinh doanh (Bussiness Advertising); theo tiêu chí mục đích, QC có thể chia thành QC thương mại (Commercial Advertising) và QC phi thương mại (Noncommecial Advertising).

2. ĐẶC TRƯNG CƠ BẢN CỦA NGÔN NGỮ QUẢNG CÁO

2.1 Tính trung thực (求真性): Trung thực là yếu tố đầu tiên đòi hỏi ở ngôn ngữ quảng cáo. Tính trung thực của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo thể hiện ở việc thông tin được diễn đạt trên ngôn ngữ căn cứ và sự thật khách quan, phản ánh chính xác thực chất, cung cấp những minh chứng xác thật, từ đó tạo nên tác dụng định hướng mua sắm cho người tiêu dùng.

Pháp luật Trung Quốc có quy định nghiêm trong việc thẩm định tính trung thực của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo. Như điều 3 trong: “Luật quảng cáo nước Cộng hòa Nhân dân Trung Hoa” quy định: Trong quảng cáo phải chân thực, phù hợp với tinh thần xây dựng văn minh chủ nghĩa xã hội; điều 10 quy định: Số liệu, tư liệu thống kê, kết quả điều tra, trích dẫn, dẫn lời đều phải đảm bảo tính chân thực, chuẩn xác, đều phải có minh chứng đầy đủ.

Tác giả 王军元 cho rằng: “Đáng chú ý là: Tính chân thật của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo và nghệ thuật quảng cáo không mâu thuẫn, càng không đối lập. Tính chân thực của quảng cáo là dùng những kỹ xảo và các phương pháp khác nhau để triển khai phương án quảng cáo đảm bảo tính: “nghệ thuật một cách trung thực”.

2.2 Tính uyển chuyển (灵活性)

Trong vô số những quảng cáo sản phẩm trên thị trường, nếu quảng cáo không có tính nghệ thuật, mềm mại uyển chuyển thì nội dung quảng cáo dễ thành đơn điệu, rất khó có được sự chú ý của người tiêu dùng. Do đó, trên nền tảng tính chân thật, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo nên cần phải linh hoạt, sống động và có tính quần chúng nhất định.

Tính linh hoạt sống động của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo đầu tiên đến từ sự vận dụng các biện pháp tu từ trong ngôn ngữ, trong quảng cáo: các

thủ pháp ẩn dụ, cường điệu, hoán dụ, biểu trưng nhằm tăng hiệu quả diễn đạt của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo.

Bên cạnh đó, tính linh hoạt sinh động của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo còn được thể hiện ở sự sáng tạo mỹ thuật trong quá trình vận dụng ngôn ngữ quảng cáo. Trong tiếng Hán, những câu thơ vần điệu kinh điển thường được sử dụng vào ngôn ngữ quảng cáo để thể hiện tính thẩm mỹ của âm luật. Những câu thơ 5 chữ đến 7 chữ phù hợp nhất với diễn đạt trong Hán ngữ, do Hán ngữ là ngôn ngữ đa âm tiết, do vậy, số lượng chữ ít thì nội dung không phong phú, số lượng chữ nhiều làm cho bản quảng cáo rườm rà khó nhớ, do vậy, việc vận dụng những vần thơ 5 đến 7 chữ là vừa vận để ngôn ngữ quảng cáo vừa có lượng thông tin, vừa dễ nhớ.

2.3 Tính hướng đến có ích (求益性)

Mục đích của quảng cáo sản phẩm là thông qua quảng cáo để làm tăng việc tiêu thụ sản phẩm, nhằm kích thích nhu cầu mua sắm của đông đảo người tiêu dùng, làm cho những người sản xuất và kinh doanh hàng hóa đạt được sự thu hoạch về lợi ích kinh tế. Do vậy, một trong những đặc trưng của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo chính là tính lợi ích của nó. Nếu ngôn ngữ quảng cáo không thể hiện được công năng của quảng cáo là mục đích bán hàng, thì đó không còn là quảng cáo nữa. Bất kỳ một quảng cáo nào, đều mong muốn người tiếp thu quảng cáo thông qua việc tiếp nhận thông tin, thuyết phục nhiều người mua sản phẩm, từ đó thực hiện lợi ích kinh tế của mình. Muốn đạt được mục đích kích thích tiêu dùng, cần phải thông qua quảng cáo, phải vận dụng ngôn ngữ một cách khéo léo nhằm kích lệ sự tiêu dùng của người mua, như quảng cáo rượu thương hiệu 张弓九 viết: “东西南北中，好久在张弓”，quảng cáo quạt máy, có: “买电商，到宏图三胞”

Ngoài ra, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo còn phải có tính đại chúng, tính đại chúng đề cập đến ở đây thể hiện qua các quảng cáo vần điệu nhẹ nhàng, nghe êm tai, dễ hiểu dễ nhớ.

Cũng cần phải nói rõ rằng, công năng của quảng cáo và công năng của tuyên truyền công ích khác có sự khác biệt rõ ràng, công năng của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo sản phẩm thể hiện rõ ở lợi ích kinh tế của người nhà sản xuất và người bán hàng, công năng của các ngôn ngữ tuyên truyền công ích khác thể hiện ở mục đích lợi ích về định hướng chính trị, hành vi xã hội...

2.4 Tính hướng đến khác biệt (求异性)

Tính khác biệt của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo thể hiện ở tính mới lạ của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo, vừa thể hiện rõ cá tính, vừa thể hiện rõ đặc tính

chung của dân tộc.

Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo phải mới mẻ, làm cho ngôn ngữ có tính

Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo muốn đạt được tính mới lạ, phải có cá tính, sự lặp lại nhằm chần chừ không thể thu hút sự chú ý của người tiêu dùng, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo độc đáo khác biệt cũng chính là tài sản của doanh nghiệp.

Những quan niệm về giá trị cuộc sống, thói quen tư duy, quan niệm đạo đức của một dân tộc sẽ ảnh hưởng trực tiếp đến tính khác biệt, độc đáo của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo. Như câu quảng cáo kem đánh răng Trung hoa của Trung Quốc, kết hợp phương pháp tu từ hài âm và tinh thần ái quốc luôn là chuẩn mực đạo đức được tôn vinh, đặc biệt tại Trung Quốc: 中华永在我心中。

3. THỬ PHÂN TÍCH NGÔN NGỮ QUẢNG CÁO MẶT HÀNG NHU YẾU PHẨM CỦA TRUNG QUỐC VÀ VIỆT NAM:

Các mặt hàng nhu yếu phẩm gắn liền với đời sống của con người, từ góc độ phổ cập có thể xem là hàng hóa đại trà. Chúng ta có thể nhìn thấy các mặt hàng nhu yếu phẩm ở nhiều nơi: trên kệ các siêu thị bách hóa, tại những cửa hàng nhỏ ở các khu dân sinh, tại các khu chợ bình dân... Gắn liền với nhu cầu cơ bản của con người, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo nhu yếu phẩm vì thế làm thế nào gắn liền với thực quan sinh động, dễ hiểu dễ nhớ, thông tin trung thực, nhưng vẫn đảm bảo được tính sáng tạo, độc đáo, gần gũi với quan niệm về các giá trị tốt đẹp của con người nói chung và văn hóa phương đông nói riêng.

Trong phạm vi bài viết, tác giả thử tìm hiểu một số quảng cáo hai mặt hàng nhu yếu phẩm gần gũi với sinh hoạt hàng ngày của con người, bao gồm: nước uống đóng chai, bột (nước) giặt quần áo, để tìm ra một số điểm tương đồng và khác biệt trong thói quen tư duy, nhận thức của người dân Trung Quốc và Việt Nam trong giai đoạn hiện nay.

3.1 Tìm hiểu và so sánh ngôn ngữ quảng cáo một số thương hiệu bột (nước) giặt và nước khoáng Trung - Việt.

Bằng phương pháp sưu tập 60 mẫu ngôn ngữ quảng cáo trong tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt, bao gồm hai nhóm hàng hóa, mỗi nhóm 5 thương hiệu, mỗi thương hiệu 3 khẩu hiệu quảng cáo, tác giả Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo bột (dung dịch) giặt tại Trung Quốc và tương ứng tại Việt Nam, chúng tôi tiến hành thu thập mẫu quảng cáo ngẫu nhiên, phân tích sự đáp ứng hay không đáp ứng một hoặc nhiều đặc trưng của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo, từ đó tiến hành một và tổng kết so sánh điểm chung, điểm khác biệt trong thói

quen tư duy, quan niệm giá trị, nhận thức giữa hai Dân tộc Trung-Việt.

Để chọn lựa có hay không có một đặc trưng trong 4 bốn đặc trưng cơ bản của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo, chúng tôi dựa trên tiêu chí tính khoa học khách quan, như nội dung có thực nghiệm khoa học kèm theo không (minh chứng), nội dung có khả năng hiện thực hóa trong thực tế hay không, nội dung thông tin quảng cáo có đúng thực tế hay không. Ví dụ như quảng cáo: “Giặt máy hiệu quả như tay mẹ giặt” của nước giặt Omo, chúng tôi phủ định (-) tính trung thực, vì lý do hiệu quả của việc giặt tay và giặt máy dựa trên tiêu chí nào đánh giá, tay mẹ giặt và tay người không phải là mẹ giặt có số liệu chứng minh nào cho biết hiệu quả khác nhau. Do vậy, chúng tôi chọn phủ định (-) về đặc trưng cho những quảng cáo rơi vào trường hợp trên. Đối với những trường hợp sự so sánh ví von mang không mang tính cụ thể hóa hiệu quả chất lượng sản phẩm chưa được chứng minh, nhưng sử dụng các từ ngữ mơ hồ như: Omo-trắng đột phá.

Bảng 1:

Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo bột giặt và nước khoáng tại Việt Nam

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính uyển chuyển / ví von	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
01		Omo	-	+	+	+	- Giặt máy hiệu quả như chính tay mẹ giặt.
			+	-	+	-	- Đánh bật nhiều loại vết bẩn khô cứng trong một lần giặt với năng lượng xoáy.
			-	+	+	-	- Sạch nhanh vết bẩn cứng đầu trong một lần giặt
02		Tide	+	+	+	-	- Trắng đột phá

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính uyển chuyển / ví von	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
	Bột giặt/ Nước giặt		+	-	+	-	- Tide chuyên dụng - công thức độc đáo cho chuyên dụng
			-	-	+	-	- Bột giặt Tide tan nhanh gấp 5 lần so với Bột giặt thông thường.
03		Surf	-	+	+	+	Surf - Hương nước xả vải ngát hương xuân - Ngát hương bền lâu sau cả ngày dài
			-	+	+	+	Nay đã có nước giặt mới, thơm mát gấp hai lần.
				+	+	+	Bột giặt Surf Nước hoa - Không chỉ sạch mà còn thơm vi diệu
04		Attack	-	+	+	+	-Mùi mốc sạch bong như hong trong nắng - trắng sạch đến ngạc nhiên.
			+	+	+	+	-Vò siêu nhanh, giặt siêu nhẹ trắng sạch đến ngạc nhiên.
			-	+	+	+	-Attack khử mùi mới cho hiệu quả như phơi nắng
05		Lix	-	+	+	-	Hương nước hoa, thơm thật lâu

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính uyển chuyển / ví von	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
			-	+	+	+	Lix đậm đặc - xóa sạch vết bẩn mạnh gấp hai lần.
			-	+	+	+	Lix hương hoa xuân - lưu giữ thật lâu hương hoa thơm ngát.
06	Nước tinh khiết / nước khoáng	Aqua fina	-	+	+	-	Aquafina-vị ngọt của sự tinh khiết
			-	+	+	-	Aquafina - diện mạo hoàn hảo của sự thuần khiết.
			-	+	+	-	Aquafina - Vị xuân thuần khiết
07		TH true WATER	+	-	+	+	- TH true WATER - nước uống tinh khiết chính thức duy nhất tại Hội nghị Mỹ - Triều
			-	-	+	-	- TH true Water - Nước tinh khiết hoàn hảo từ thiên nhiên.
			-	-	+	-	- TH true Water - Nguồn nước ngầm hoàn toàn từ thiên nhiên.
08		Lavie	+	-	+	-	-Lavie - nước khoáng thiên nhiên./ Một phần

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính uyển chuyển / ví von	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
							tất yếu của cuộc sống
			-	+	+	+	
					+		Tặng 20%, tăng thêm 100ml giá không đổi.
09		Vinh hảo	+	-	+	-	Vinvan-nước chứa khoáng thiên nhiên./Nước khoáng có gas tự nhiên/ Nước uống không gas tự nhiên/Vihawa-tinh khiết mát lạnh
			+	-	+	-	Vinh hảo – có từ 1928- đích thực tại nguồn.
			+	-	+	+	Tự nhiên- Nhiều khoáng hơn-Hiệu quả hơn.
10		Danasi	-	+	+	-	Danasi: Thanh khiết trong từng giọt nước .
			+	-	+	-	Danasi: Sản phẩm của công ty coca cola.
			-	+	+		Danasi: Uống vào thanh khiết – cả năm tươi xanh.

Bảng 2:

Ngôn ngữ quảng cáo bột giặt và nước khoáng tại Việt Nam

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính linh hoạt	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
01	Bột giặt/ Nước giặt	奥妙 OMO	+	+	+	-	-净蓝全效 - 深层清洁系农业.
			+	-	+	-	+深层洁净洗衣液
			-	+	+	-	+净蓝全校-动活力功效
02		蓝月亮	+	-	+	-	深层清洁护理洗衣液 - 护肤护色.
			-	+	+	-	蓝月亮 亮白增艳洗衣液.
			-	+	+	-	蓝月亮洗衣液 开创洗衣新时代
		立白	-	+	+	-	天然洗精华液。
			-	+	+		不上手的立白-立刻亮丽的洁白。
			+	+	+	-	白色亮白-彩衣鲜艳。
		Tide 汰渍	+	+	+	-	全面洁净 - 一步到位
			+	-	+	-	天然植本皂
			+	-	+	-	内衣专用皂- 除菌抑菌

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính linh hoạt	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
5		Kispa 好爸爸	-	+	+	-	天然亲夫洗衣液 亲夫无刺激。
			-	+	+	-	好爸爸天然墨香洗衣液。
			+	-	+	-	特九舒缓墨香
6	Nước tinh khiết/ nước khoáng	农夫山泉	+	-	+	-	农夫山泉引用自然水
			+	+	+	-	农夫山泉 - 有点甜
			+	+	+	+	我们只做大自然搬运工
7		恒大水泉	-	+	+	-	一处水源供全球！
			-	+	+	-	长白山矿泉水- 长寿之源
			-	+	+	-	天然水泉 - 美丽永恒
8		可蓝- Kenlan	+	+	+	-	天然矿泉水
			+	+	+	-	可蓝矿泉水----绿色健康源泉
			+	-	+	+	可蓝 Baby 幼儿饮用水。
9			+	-	+	+	崂山矿泉水 - 清凉

STT	Nhóm hàng	Thương hiệu	Đặc trưng				NN quảng cáo
			Tính Trung thực	Tính linh hoạt	Tính có ích	Tính khác biệt	
10		崂山矿泉水					下日-健康生活.
			-	-	+	-	饮用天然矿泉水
			-	+	+	-	崂山矿泉水风味饮料。
		哇哈哈	-	+	+	-	哇哈哈引用纯净水
			+	+	+	-	优质健水-认准哇哈哈
			+	-	+	-	纯净，经得起考验

3.2 Một vài so sánh

Từ kết quả phân tích phủ định và khẳng định các đặc trưng của các quảng cáo trong bảng 1 và bảng 2, chúng ta dễ dàng nhận thấy nhận thấy, 100% quảng cáo bán hàng đều hướng đến đặc trưng “tính có ích”. Vì lẽ người khi tiêu dùng quyết định mua một món hàng, luôn xuất phát từ động cơ ích lợi của nó phù hợp với nhu cầu của mình. Đối với đặc trưng “tính trung thực” và “tính uyển chuyển/ ví von” hầu như thường bị mâu thuẫn lẫn nhau. Điều này thể hiện rõ nếu một quảng cáo thực hiện các biện pháp tu từ trong diễn đạt, đặc biệt là so sánh, ẩn dụ, chúng ta sẽ thấy rõ lý do biện chứng, những hình ảnh, so sánh ẩn dụ hoặc sự liên tưởng ví von đều xuất phát từ trí tưởng tượng, không gắn liền với quan sát trực quan, càng thiếu những thực nghiệm khoa học nên càng không thể phù hợp với đặc trưng “tính trung thực”, ví dụ như mẫu quảng cáo bột giặt: “Giặt máy hiệu quả như chính tay mẹ giặt”, hoặc -天然亲夫洗衣液 ——亲夫无刺激”“天然亲夫洗衣液 亲夫无刺激”, “好爸爸天然墨香洗衣液” của sản phẩm nước giặt Kisspapa, đây là những ngôn ngữ quảng cáo vận dụng phép tu từ liên tưởng đến sự hy sinh cần mẫn, tận tụy của những bậc cha mẹ trong truyền thống đạo đức tốt đẹp của người phương đông, hết lòng chăm lo phục vụ con cái của họ, đặc biệt trong quảng cáo tiếng Trung vận dụng tinh hoạt hiện tượng quảng cáo sản phẩm tốt của

nước khoáng Lavie: “Lavie- tiền vô như nước, lộc phúc đầy nhà/ Cùng La Vie rước lộc nước/ La Vie gửi lộc xuân trao ngon khỏe (quảng cáo tết)”, những mong ước này luôn là ước mơ thường trực của cả người Việt Nam và Trung Quốc trong những ngày đầu năm mới với ước mơ phúc lộc dồi dào quanh năm, do đó quảng cáo vận dụng yếu tố văn hóa này đưa vào nội dung quảng cáo sản phẩm bán tết.

Để có một ngôn ngữ quảng cáo vừa đảm bảo tính trung thực vừa thể hiện được tính độc đáo khác biệt, đòi hỏi sản phẩm phải có tính ưu việt, lợi thế cạnh tranh thực chất và rõ nét, như trường hợp quảng cáo TH True Water: “- TH true WATER - nước uống tinh khiết chính thức duy nhất tại Hội nghị Mỹ - Triều”, “Vĩnh hảo – có từ 1928- đích thực tại nguồn”; “Danasi: Sản phẩm của công ty Coca- Cola” hoặc quảng cáo nước khoáng 崂山 tại Trung Quốc: “崂山矿泉水 – 清凉下日-健康生活.” Đây là một lợi thế cạnh tranh có được từ quá trình phấn đấu về chất lượng và đi vào các phân khúc thị trường khắc khe của sản phẩm, cũng là một thế mạnh cạnh tranh khó có thương hiệu nào theo kịp. Tương tự, quảng cáo dòng sản phẩm đặc biệt của bột giặt Tide tại Trung Quốc chuyên dụng cho giặt nội y cũng vừa phù hợp với tính trung thực, vừa thông tin tính khác biệt độc đáo của sản phẩm: “内衣专用皂- 除菌抑菌”, hoặc “可蓝 Baby 幼儿饮用水” do hiện trạng trên thị trường cũng không có sự phổ biến sản phẩm nước giặt chuyên dụng cho giặt nội y, cũng như không thấy nhiều dòng sản phẩm nước uống đóng chai dành riêng cho thể chất của trẻ em, do vậy đặc trưng trung thực này của quảng cáo có thể làm cho cho người mua có động cơ tiêu dùng mạnh mẽ, tự thân đã làm nên tính độc đáo mà không cần phải thêm các đặc trưng uyển chuyển hoặc trao chuốt về ngôn từ.

Để quảng cáo sản phẩm trở nên ấn tượng hơn và các so sánh trở nên sinh động trung thực hơn, một số nhà sản xuất số liệu hóa chất lượng, hiệu quả sản phẩm qua phương pháp tu từ cường điệu, như: “Bột giặt Tide tan nhanh gấp 5 lần so với Bột giặt thông thường. (Tide); “Nay đã có nước giặt mới, thơm mát gấp hai lần.” (Surf), chúng ta dễ dàng nhận thấy, tan nhanh gấp 5 lần so với bột giặt nào không thấy đề cập, thơm mát vốn nằm trong phạm trù cảm giác khó đo lường nên cái gọi là “thơm mát gấp hai lần thực chất cũng chỉ mang tính chất dùng số liệu như trong phương pháp tu từ nhằm cường điệu quảng bá chất lượng sản phẩm.

Đối với những nhóm hàng khác nhau, chúng ta không khó nhận thấy sứ mạng của mặt hàng đó được thể hiện nhất quán qua từ khóa được lặp lại nhiều trong các câu quảng cáo, như trong các quảng cáo bột giặt/ nước giặt cả Việt Nam và Trung Quốc đều lặp lại các từ mang chữ

“sạch”, như: “深层清洁护理洗衣液 nước giặt hỗ trợ sạch sâu” “Trắng đột phá”. Đối với nước khoáng, nước đóng chai, sứ mạng tồn tại của sản phẩm là cung cấp nguồn nước uống sạch, tự nhiên, giàu khoáng chất cho người tiêu dùng, thông điệp này được lặp đi lặp lại trong quảng cáo nước uống đóng chai qua các từ “tinh khiết”, “thuần khiết”, “thiên nhiên”, “tự nhiên”, như: “纯净, 经得起考验 Thuần khiết, vượt qua được những khảo nghiệm”, “饮用天然矿泉水” Uống nước bằng nước khoáng thiên nhiên hoặc “Vinvan-nước chứa khoáng thiên nhiên./Nước khoáng có gas tự nhiên/ Nước uống không gas tự nhiên/Vihawa-tinh khiết mát lạnh”.

4. KẾT LUẬN

Có thể nhận thấy, với bốn đặc trưng cơ bản của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo, tính có ích là đặc trưng bản chất, một quảng cáo dù có thể không đồng thời thỏa mãn tất cả bốn đặc trưng nhưng nhất định phải hướng đến tính có ích.

Về nhận định của tác giả 王军元 cho rằng: “Tính chân thật của ngôn ngữ quảng cáo và nghệ thuật quảng cáo không mâu thuẫn, càng không đối lập. Tính chân thực của quảng cáo là dùng những kỹ xảo và các phương pháp khác nhau để triển khai phương án quảng cáo đảm bảo tính: “nghệ thuật một cách trung thực”. Theo chúng tôi, để đạt được mức giới hạn lý tưởng giữa tính trung thực và tính nghệ thuật, càng đòi hỏi những ý tưởng ngôn ngữ quảng cáo sử dụng một cách nhuần nhuyễn, sao cho ngôn ngữ quảng cáo vừa đảm bảo tính nghệ thuật với mục đích kích thích trí tưởng tượng, tạo thêm ấn tượng mạnh mẽ cho người tiêu dùng chú ý và mong muốn sở hữu sản phẩm, tuy nhiên nếu quá lạm dụng ngôn từ sáo rỗng, không chú ý liều lượng đến mức giả tạo, sẽ tạo ra tác dụng ngược.

Ngoài ra, chúng tôi đồng tình với quan điểm của tác giả Đinh Kiều Châu ([5], tr. 34): “Trong chiến lược giao tiếp còn phải chú ý đến nhân tố văn hóa của người bản ngữ. Mỗi dân tộc cần quảng cáo “địa phương hóa”, có sắc thái riêng phù hợp với tư duy người bản địa. Ví dụ: đối với phương Đông thì chào mời là rất quan trọng. Dân tộc ta có câu tục ngữ “Lời chào cao hơn mâm cỗ”. Phải biết khai thác các yếu tố này. Ngôn ngữ tham gia vào chiến lược xúc tiến, trong đó các nhà ngôn ngữ học và truyền thông học đã dựa vào mô hình Marketing với khách hàng là trung tâm. Giao tiếp quảng cáo không chỉ là giao tiếp thương mại mà còn là giao tiếp xã hội. Ngôn ngữ gắn sản phẩm với bán hàng, các loại dịch vụ, các sinh hoạt xã hội”. Các quảng cáo tại Trung Quốc và Việt Nam cần đảm bảo phù hợp văn hóa người phương đông nói chung, phù hợp thói quen tư duy, thuần

phong mỹ tục của mỗi dân tộc nói riêng. Có như vậy, ngôn ngữ quảng cáo mới vừa mang lại hiệu quả thúc đẩy bán hàng, mang lại lợi ích kinh tế cho nhà sản xuất, nhà phân phối; Đồng thời, thực được trách nhiệm của giới doanh nghiệp là góp phần củng cố lan tỏa giá trị chân-thiện-mỹ cho xã hội.

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A RESEARCH ON HOW TO TRANSLATE THE VERB-OBJECT SEPARABLE WORDS IN SIMPLE STRUCTURES INTO VIETNAMESE

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ABSTRACT

This research focuses on translations of 186 Chinese verb-object separable words in simple structures into Vietnamese. The results show that there are three ways to translate: Word-for-Word, Word-for-Phrase, and Word-for-Word-Phrase. Firstly, there are three phenomena of word-for-word translations of 139 Separable Words: intransitive separable words with transitive translations, transitive separable words with intransitive translations, and separable words with either transitive or intransitive translations. Secondly, there are three structures of word-for-phrase translations of 33 separable words: the verb-object structure, the subject-predicate structure, and the subject-verb structure. Thirdly, regarding Word-for-Word-Phrase translations of 14 separable words, there are three considerable factors: grammar, semantics and pragmatics.

Keywords: *translation, separation, Verb-Object separable word, basic structure*

TÌM HIỂU CÁCH DỊCH CỦA TỪ LI HỢP KẾT CẤU ĐỘNG TÂM Ở TRẠNG THÁI “HỢP”

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Tóm tắt: Bài viết tìm hiểu 186 Từ Li Hợp (TLH) kết cấu động tâm ở trạng thái “hợp” khi được dịch sang tiếng Việt. Kết quả nghiên cứu chỉ ra có ba cách dịch: *Từ*, *Ngữ*, *Từ* và *Ngữ*. Thứ nhất, có 139 TLH được dịch thành *Từ* và xuất hiện ba hiện tượng: TLH không mang tân ngữ nhưng dịch sang tiếng Việt mang tân ngữ; TLH mang tân ngữ nhưng dịch sang tiếng Việt không mang tân ngữ; và TLH khi dịch sang tiếng Việt có thể mang tân ngữ hoặc không thể mang tân ngữ. Thứ hai, có 33 TLH được dịch thành *Ngữ* và xuất hiện ba hiện tượng: ngữ động tâm, ngữ chính phụ, ngữ chủ vị. Thứ ba, có 14 TLH được dịch thành *Từ* và *Ngữ* và để dịch đúng người dịch cần chú ý ba yếu tố: ngữ pháp, ngữ nghĩa, ngữ dụng.

Từ khóa: Cách dịch, Từ Li Hợp, Từ Li Hợp kết cấu động tâm, trạng thái “hợp”

1. MỘT SỐ NÉT ĐẶC TRƯNG CỦA TỪ LI HỢP

Lịch sử nghiên cứu TLH: Thường được phân thành hai giai đoạn: Giai đoạn một từ thập niên 40 đến cuối thập niên 70 thế kỉ 20 - còn được gọi là *giai đoạn nghiên cứu bản thể*. Đại diện tiêu biểu có Lin Handa (林汉达), Liu Zexian (刘泽先), Lu Shuxiang (吕叔湘) ... Các nhà ngôn ngữ học sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu định tính để đưa ra các lí giải về TLH, ví dụ: định nghĩa, tính chất, phân loại, quy nạp... Nhìn chung, các kết quả nghiên cứu của giai đoạn này có ảnh hưởng nhất định trong giới nghiên cứu học thuật.

Giai đoạn hai từ đầu thập niên 80 thế kỉ 20 đến nay - còn được gọi là *giai đoạn nghiên cứu ứng dụng*. Đại diện tiêu biểu có Yang Qinghui (杨庆蕙), Zhou Shangzhi (周上之) ... Đặc điểm nổi bật của các nghiên cứu giai đoạn này là sử dụng lý thuyết ngôn ngữ mới, sử dụng kho ngữ liệu để tiến hành nghiên cứu định lượng. Việc nghiên cứu nhấn mạnh tính ứng dụng của TLH, ví dụ: TLH trong giảng dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại, xử lý trên vi tính, biên soạn từ điển... kết quả nghiên cứu có ảnh hưởng sâu rộng.

Tên gọi: Ngoài cách gọi TLH được sử dụng chính thức trong giảng

dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại¹, hiện nay TLH tồn tại 20 tên gọi khác nhau. Ví dụ: Wang Li (王力) gọi là “Cụm từ” (词语), Peng Chunan (彭楚楠) gọi là “Từ có thể chia tách” (可分离词), Lu Shuxiang gọi là “Ngữ căn bản” (基本短语) v.v... Nhìn chung, giới ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc đặt tên TLH dựa vào đặc điểm có thể “li” và có thể “hợp” của nó.

Phân loại: Có sáu loại TLH. *TLH kết cấu động tâm; TLH kết cấu động bổ; TLH kết cấu chủ vị; TLH kết cấu chính phụ; TLH kết cấu liên hợp; TLH kết cấu phụ thêm.* Trong đó, *TLH kết cấu động tâm* chiếm số lượng nhiều nhất và các nghiên cứu đều thừa nhận TLH dạng kết cấu này. Tuy vậy, qua nghiên cứu các giáo trình giảng dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại, chúng tôi nhận thấy chỉ có một loại TLH kết cấu động tâm.

Hình thức kết cấu: Có hai hình thức. Hình thức cơ bản khi hai ngữ tố ở trạng thái “hợp” và hình thức mở rộng khi hai ngữ tố trạng thái “li”.

2. CƠ SỞ LÝ LUẬN

2.1 Đặc điểm ngữ pháp

Qua nghiên cứu, chúng tôi nhận xét TLH có ba đặc điểm ngữ pháp chính khi ở trạng thái “hợp”.

Thứ nhất, phần nhiều TLH không mang trực tiếp tân ngữ, vì vậy để diễn đạt ý liên quan đến đối tượng thì người nói thường sẽ sử dụng kết cấu “giới từ + tân ngữ + TLH”. Các giới từ thường sử dụng gồm “跟”, “向”, “给”, “让”, “叫”...

Ví dụ: 明天王老师跟我见面。

我室友发高烧了,我替他向老师请假。

爷爷回来了,我马上给爷爷拜年。

Thứ hai, một số ít TLH mang tân ngữ.

Ví dụ: 小明爱闯祸,所以妈妈得经常留神他。

Thứ ba, một số TLH kiêm chức năng của tính từ, danh từ, phó từ.

Ví dụ: 吃惊,出神,录音,发言,当面...

2.2 Tính chất của TLH

Tính chất của TLH là vấn đề vẫn còn tranh luận của giới ngôn ngữ.

¹ Lu Zhi Wei (1957) trong *Hán ngữ cấu từ pháp* lần đầu tiên sử dụng cách gọi TLH.

Qua nghiên cứu, chúng tôi xác định có bốn quan điểm chính về tính chất của TLH: là *Từ hoặc gần với Từ*; là *Ngữ hoặc gần với Ngữ*; là *Trạng thái trung gian giữa Từ và Ngữ*; là *Từ khi hợp, là ngữ khi Li*.

Năm 1983 Li Qinghua chủ trương trong giảng dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại nên xem TLH là *Từ* và là *Từ đặc biệt có thể mở rộng*. Quan điểm này được thừa nhận rộng rãi trong nhiều nghiên cứu TLH, đặc biệt là nghiên cứu trong giảng dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại. Chúng tôi sử dụng quan điểm này để tiến hành nghiên cứu TLH.

Như vậy, tính chất của TLH liên quan đến cả Từ và Ngữ, tức TLH vừa có đặc điểm của Từ vừa có đặc điểm của Ngữ.² Dựa theo tiêu chuẩn này, chúng tôi xác định được 186 TLH từ bảng 5.000 từ vựng của HSK. Sau đó thông qua đối chiếu cách dịch của *Từ điển Hán Việt hiện đại* của Viện Khoa học xã hội Việt Nam xuất bản năm 2001 và *Từ điển tiếng Việt* của Hoàng Phê của nhà xuất bản Hồng Đức xuất bản năm 2018 đối với 186 TLH này, chúng tôi nhận thấy tồn tại ba cách dịch: dịch thành Từ; dịch thành Ngữ; dịch thành Từ và Ngữ.

3. TLH Ở TRẠNG THÁI “HỢP” VÀ CÁCH DỊCH SANG TIẾNG VIỆT

3.1 TLH dịch thành Từ

Trong 139 TLH (chiếm 74.7%) có 15 TLH mang tân ngữ và 124 TLH không mang tân ngữ. Khi 139 TLH này được dịch thành Từ xuất hiện hai hiện tượng chính.

3.1.1 TLH mang tân ngữ

Trong 15 TLH mang tân ngữ có 10 TLH dịch sang tiếng Việt mang tân ngữ. Các TLH này phần nhiều liên quan đến hoạt động tâm lí hay chỉ hành vi động tác.

² Dẫn theo Nguyễn Lý Uy Hân (2019) *Đặc điểm của Từ Li Hợp kết cấu động tân ở trạng thái “hợp”* tại Hội thảo quốc gia liên ngành về Ngôn ngữ và giảng dạy ngôn ngữ lần thứ V. Để được xem là TLH thì kết cấu có đặc điểm: ① Có ít nhất một ngữ tố không thành từ; ② Ý nghĩa của kết cấu không thể chia tách; ③ Kết cấu có thể mở rộng (tự do mở rộng, đảo ngữ). Hai đặc điểm đầu là đặc điểm của Từ, đặc điểm thứ ba là đặc điểm của ngữ. Vậy kết cấu phải thỏa mãn ít nhất một trong hai đặc điểm đầu và có đặc điểm thứ ba. Ví dụ: 吃饭 nếu mang nghĩa “进餐或吃米饭” tức chỉ sự kết hợp đơn giản của động từ 吃 và tân ngữ 饭 thì 吃饭 không có đặc điểm ① và ②, nhưng nó có thể mở rộng, ví dụ 我吃过他夫人做的饭 thì 吃饭 có đặc điểm ③, nên nó là Ngữ; trường hợp 吃饭 mang nghĩa “泛指生活或存在” tức ý nghĩa đơn nhất và có thể mở rộng, chẳng hạn 吃银行的剩饭, tức 吃饭 thỏa mãn đặc điểm ② và ③, nó là TLH.

Ví dụ: 关心 (quan tâm); 担心 (lo lắng); 放心 (yên tâm); 绑架 (bắt cóc)...

3 TLH dịch sang tiếng Việt không mang tân ngữ. Các TLH này thường liên quan đến sự dịch chuyển.

Ví dụ: 进口 ----- nhập khẩu; 出口 ----- xuất khẩu; 移民 ----- di dân.

2 TLH tồn tại hai cách dịch sang tiếng Việt.

Ví dụ: 注意 dịch thành “chú ý” - âm Hán Việt, mang tân ngữ được; 注意 dịch thành “để ý” - từ kết hợp âm Hán Việt và phi âm Hán Việt (chúng tôi sử dụng tạm cách gọi “từ hỗn hợp”), không mang tân ngữ.

3.1.2 TLH không mang tân ngữ

Trong 124 TLH không mang tân ngữ dịch sang tiếng Việt có thể chia thành hai loại.

52 TLH dịch sang tiếng Việt mang tân ngữ và 72 TLH dịch sang tiếng Việt không mang tân ngữ. Trong đó có 12 TLH tồn tại hai cách dịch sang tiếng Việt: dịch thành từ Hán Việt và dịch thành “từ hỗn hợp”. Qua nghiên cứu chúng tôi nhận thấy, TLH được dịch thành từ Hán Việt thường mang ý nghĩa trang trọng, sử dụng trong văn viết, còn TLH được dịch thành “từ hỗn hợp” thường mang ý nghĩa khẩu ngữ.

Ví dụ: 保密 dịch thành “bảo mật” là từ Hán Việt; 保密 dịch thành “giữ kín” là “từ hỗn hợp”. Hoặc 冒险 dịch thành “mạo hiểm” là từ Hán Việt; 冒险 dịch thành “liều lĩnh” là “từ hỗn hợp”.

Ngoài ra nếu TLH chỉ tồn tại một cách dịch thành từ Hán Việt hoặc “từ hỗn hợp” thì nó sẽ được sử dụng vừa mang ý nghĩa văn viết và vừa mang ý nghĩa khẩu ngữ. Ví dụ 值班 được dịch thành từ Hán Việt “trực ban”.

3.2 TLH dịch thành Ngữ

33 TLH (chiếm 17.7%) được dịch thành Ngữ, trong đó ngữ động tân chiếm số lượng nhiều nhất. Ngoài ra còn có ngữ chính phụ và ngữ chủ vị.

Ví dụ: 表态, 出差, 招标 lần lượt được dịch thành “tỏ thái độ”, “đi công tác” và “mời thầu” là các ngữ động tân. 沾光, 着凉 lần lượt được dịch thành “thơm lây”, “cảm lạnh” là các ngữ chính phụ. 占线 được dịch thành “đường dây bị bận” là ngữ chủ vị.

Nghiên cứu chỉ ra hai lí do mà TLH được dịch thành ngữ. Thứ nhất, một số TLH ở dạng rút gọn (缩略式), nên phải dựa vào ý nghĩa chính thể của nó để dịch sang tiếng Việt. Thứ hai, một số TLH không có nghĩa tương ứng trong tiếng Việt, nên phải dựa vào ý nghĩa mặt chữ (字面意义) của

nó để dịch sang tiếng Việt.

Ví dụ: 生效 là dạng rút gọn của “发生效力” dịch thành “có hiệu lực”. 报到, 合影 lần lượt được dịch thành “báo có mặt” và “chụp ảnh chung”.

3.3 TLH dịch thành Từ và ngữ

14 TLH (chiếm 7.6%) tồn tại cả hai cách dịch thành Từ và Ngữ. Để dịch đúng, ngoài việc dựa theo quy tắc ngữ pháp của tiếng Việt thì yếu tố ngữ nghĩa và ngữ dụng cũng cần được chú ý.

Ví dụ: 免费 được dịch thành Từ “miễn phí” và Ngữ “không thu tiền”. 设计 được dịch thành Từ “thiết kế” và Ngữ “trù tính kế hoạch”.

Lưu ý, trong 14 TLH khi được dịch thành Từ sẽ xuất hiện từ đơn âm tiết và từ song âm tiết, trong đó từ song âm tiết chiếm số lượng nhiều (12 từ song âm tiết so với 2 từ đơn âm tiết).

Ví dụ: 发言, 动手, 投资, 起哄 lần lượt được dịch thành từ song âm tiết “phát ngôn”, “đánh nhau”, “đầu tư”, “trêu chọc”. 发烧, 着火 lần lượt được dịch thành từ đơn âm tiết “sốt” và “cháy”.

4. KẾT LUẬN

Đến nay trong các giáo trình giảng dạy Hán ngữ đối ngoại chỉ tồn tại một loại TLH được sử dụng như kết cấu động tân. Tuy nhiên, thời gian mỗi kết cấu động tân được sử dụng như là TLH không giống nhau và mang nặng yếu tố khẩu ngữ, nên cách sử dụng của TLH vừa đặc thù vừa đa dạng, điều này thể hiện rõ trong 186 TLH ở trạng thái “hợp” khi dịch sang tiếng Việt xuất hiện những khác biệt.

Bài viết chú ý đến hình thức dịch của TLH là dịch thành Từ, dịch thành Ngữ và dịch thành Từ và Ngữ. TLH khi dịch thành Từ cần chú ý nét khác biệt như TLH không thể mang tân ngữ nhưng khi dịch sang tiếng Việt có thể mang tân ngữ; TLH có thể trực tiếp mang tân ngữ nhưng khi dịch sang tiếng Việt không thể trực tiếp mang tân ngữ; Ngoài ra cần chú ý yếu tố TLH được dịch thành từ Hán Việt và “từ hỗn hợp”.

TLH khi dịch thành Ngữ thì ngữ động tân chiếm số lượng nhiều nhất, điều này thể hiện nét tương đồng về cấu trúc ngữ pháp của tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt. Ngoài ra, một số ít TLH còn được dịch thành ngữ chủ vị và ngữ chính phụ. Bên cạnh đó, một số TLH tồn tại ở dạng rút gọn hay tiếng Việt không có nghĩa tương ứng nên khi dịch phải dựa vào ý nghĩa chính thể hoặc phải dựa vào ý nghĩa mặt chữ.

TLH khi dịch thành Từ và Ngữ, cần chú ý kết hợp các yếu tố là yếu tố ngữ pháp, yếu tố ngữ nghĩa và yếu tố ngữ dụng để chọn cách dịch phù hợp.

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BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE IN CHINESE LANGUAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS: REALITY AND SOLUTION

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ABSTRACT

China's economic position and trade activities have been constantly rising in recent years. Against this backdrop, Chinese language undergraduate programs have modified content and teaching methods, shifting towards active learning and industry-linked training. An increasing number of universities are training Chinese Language-oriented majors in commercial Chinese or commercial interpretation, which shows that business knowledge is integrated into the curriculum. This article explores students' difficulty, and the universities' recognition of those challenges. The article is based on the reality of training Chinese industry with business knowledge, analyzing several situations to make some suggestions for the training of Chinese language with more relevant and authentic commercial content.

Keywords: *business, Chinese language*

KIẾN THỨC THƯƠNG MẠI TRONG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH ĐÀO TẠO NGÔN NGỮ TRUNG QUỐC: THỰC TRẠNG VÀ GIẢI PHÁP

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Tóm tắt

Cùng với vị thế kinh tế Trung Quốc không ngừng vươn lên trong những năm gần đây, các nước trên thế giới ngày càng quan tâm đến các thành tựu kinh tế - thương mại của Trung Quốc đã đạt được, cùng với đó là sự phát triển về việc dạy và học tiếng Trung Quốc. Việc xây dựng chương trình đào tạo Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc cũng như thay đổi nội dung, phương pháp giảng dạy của các trường đại học theo hướng tiếp cận người học, đặc biệt là đào tạo theo định hướng ứng dụng đã có sự chuyển biến trong chương trình đào tạo. Ngày càng nhiều trường đại học có đào tạo ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc theo định hướng tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại hoặc Biên phiên dịch thương mại, điều đó cho thấy kiến thức thương mại được chú trọng trong chương trình. Tuy nhiên trong quá trình giảng dạy, sinh viên - chủ thể của hoạt động học tập đã gặp những khó khăn nào? Các trường đã thực sự nhìn nhận những khó khăn đang tồn tại trong thực tế chưa? Bài viết căn cứ vào tình hình thực tế các trường có đào tạo ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc có liên quan nội dung thương mại, thử phân tích một số thực trạng để từ đó đưa ra một vài gợi ý để việc đào tạo tiếng Trung Quốc có nội dung thương mại có hiệu quả hơn.

Từ khóa: Thương mại, ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, thực trạng, giải pháp

1. ĐẶT VẤN ĐỀ.

Sự phát triển kim ngạch giao thương giữa Việt Nam và Trung Quốc không ngừng tăng lên, tính đến cuối năm 2019 kim ngạch thương mại đạt 73 tỉ USD, Trung Quốc vẫn là đối tác thương mại lớn nhất của Việt Nam.³ Bên cạnh đó, thị trường lao động Việt Nam với cơ cấu dân số trẻ và giá nhân công rẻ, đã kéo theo sự dịch chuyển cơ cấu đầu tư của các nhà đầu tư đến từ các nước và vùng lãnh thổ có sử dụng tiếng Trung Quốc tại khu vực Đông Nam Á trong những năm gần đây, điều này đã

³ <https://haiquanonline.com.vn/thuong-mai-voi-trung-quoc-dat-gan-73-ty-usd-112473.html>

khiến cho thị trường lao động sử dụng tiếng Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam cũng không đủ cầu. Nắm bắt được nhu cầu thực tế đó, các trường đại học hoặc trung tâm ngoại ngữ những năm gần đây cũng đã mở các chương trình tiếng Trung Quốc dùng trong thương mại hoặc các môn học có liên quan đến nội dung thương mại. Tuy nhiên, thực trạng dạy và học các môn tiếng Trung Quốc có liên quan đến kiến thức thương mại, vẫn còn khá nhiều vấn đề cần phải thảo luận. Trong phạm vi bài viết này, chúng tôi chỉ tập trung khái quát tình hình giảng dạy các môn tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại tại một số trường, nhằm bước đầu phân tích một số thực trạng để từ đó đưa ra một vài gợi ý cho việc đào tạo tiếng Trung Quốc có liên quan đến kiến thức thương mại đạt hiệu quả hơn.

Trước thực trạng các môn tiếng Trung Quốc có kiến thức thương mại chỉ được lồng ghép vào chương trình đào tạo ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, các kiến thức thiếu sự liên kết và hệ thống, thậm chí một số giáo trình đã lạc hậu về thông tin đã khiến cho chất lượng đào tạo không cao và người học cũng cảm thấy gặp nhiều khó khăn trong việc tiếp nhận kiến thức chuyên ngành đặc thù này. Một thực tế là trong những năm gần đây, tài liệu biên soạn để phục vụ cho việc giảng dạy tiếng Trung thương mại khá dồi dào ở Trung Quốc, nhưng vẫn chưa nhắm đến tình hình cụ thể trong ngữ cảnh đặc thù như ở Việt Nam. Tác giả Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hằng (2012) trong bài viết “Ý tưởng biên soạn giáo trình tiếng Trung Thương mại cho người Việt Nam”⁴ cũng đã đặt ra vấn đề cần phải tiến hành biên soạn các giáo trình tiếng Trung thương mại phù hợp với hoàn cảnh và đối tượng người Việt Nam. Trong luận án “Nghiên cứu về việc biên soạn giáo trình tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại cho người học Việt Nam”⁵, tác giả Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai (2016) đã khảo sát thực trạng, tìm hiểu nhu cầu thực tế, đưa ra cơ sở lý luận cho việc biên soạn giáo trình, xác định lý luận và phương pháp giảng dạy, và xác định đề cương giảng dạy...có thể nói, đây là một đề tài khảo sát lĩnh vực tương đối toàn diện về vấn đề biên soạn giáo trình phục vụ cho việc giảng dạy thực tế; trong bài viết “Phương pháp giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại trong các trường đại học ở Việt Nam” cũng của tác giả Nguyễn Thị Thanh Mai đăng trong Kỷ yếu hội thảo khoa học quốc tế Nghiên cứu và Giảng dạy chữ Hán năm 2019, tác giả bài viết cũng đã phân tích thực trạng tình hình giảng dạy tiếng Trung thương mại tại một số trường đại học ở Việt Nam, đồng thời đề xuất trên cơ sở phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung khi triển khai nội dung thương mại. Tuy nhiên, trước tình hình thực tế về chương trình đào tạo Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc tại Việt Nam vẫn còn nhiều điều đáng bàn,

⁴ Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hằng (2012), “Học báo Hán ngữ quốc tế”, 2012

⁵ 陈氏青梅 (2016). 对越商务汉语教材编写研究, (学位论文), 华中师范大学

chắc chắn vẫn còn nhiều hạn chế khi triển khai các phương pháp này, nhất là khi khối lượng môn học về nội dung kiến thức thương mại vẫn chiếm một tỉ trọng khá khiêm tốn trong tổng thể chương trình đào tạo, chúng tôi sẽ phân tích cụ thể hơn ở phần sau. Có thể nói, việc giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại ở Việt Nam vẫn là một lĩnh vực giảng dạy mới mẻ, cho nên các đề tài nghiên cứu về lĩnh vực này không nhiều, các hội thảo trong nước và quốc tế được tổ chức tại Việt Nam trong những năm gần đây dường như vắng bóng các bài tham luận về tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại. Tuy nhiên, lĩnh vực này tại Trung Quốc lại được các học giả quan tâm và nghiên cứu nhiều, như bài viết của Li Ming (2009) “Tìm hiểu về biên soạn giáo trình và đào tạo tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại dành cho người mới bắt đầu học tiếng Trung”⁶, bài viết đã chú ý đến việc dạy kiến thức ngôn ngữ và kiến thức thương mại cần phải tiến hành song song, bài viết cũng đã tìm hiểu về cấp độ từ vựng và ngữ pháp cần phải biên soạn phù hợp với trình độ của người học; hay như sách chuyên khảo “Nghiên cứu từ vựng tiếng Trung thương mại”⁷ của Wu Haiyan (2014), tác giả đã phân tích sâu sắc hệ thống từ vựng dùng trong tiếng Trung thương mại, các gợi ý để phục vụ việc biên soạn giáo trình các cấp độ cũng như phục vụ cho việc đánh giá hiệu quả qua các kỳ thi đánh giá năng lực tiếng Trung thương mại quốc tế.

2. VỊ TRÍ MÔN TIẾNG TRUNG QUỐC THƯƠNG MẠI TRONG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH ĐÀO TẠO.

Cũng như tiếng Anh chuyên ngành (ESP), tiếng Anh thương mại thuộc phạm trù ngôn ngữ học và thuộc phạm vi liên ngành, theo quan điểm của Hutchinson & Water (1987), tiếng Anh thương mại không phải là một bộ môn ngôn ngữ độc lập, đó chẳng qua là trong tiếng Anh có thêm vào một số thuật ngữ chuyên ngành.⁸ Do đặc thù chương trình đào tạo của các trường đại học, khi lồng ghép các môn tiếng Anh chuyên ngành vào giảng dạy ở giai đoạn định hướng chuyên ngành sẽ tương đối dễ thao tác, đó là do nền tảng kiến thức ngôn ngữ, kỹ năng ngôn ngữ của sinh viên đã đạt tới mức độ tương đối, khi gia tăng thêm kiến thức các môn thương mại, kinh tế, kế toán... sẽ dễ dàng tiếp nhận kiến thức hơn là sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc. Có một thực tế mà những người giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc ở Việt Nam đều biết rằng, kể từ khi đào tạo theo hệ thống tín chỉ, chương trình đào tạo đã được tinh gọn tối đa, trong khi đó phải đảm bảo chuẩn đầu ra kiến thức cần trang bị cho một cử nhân

⁶ 《海外华文教育》2009年第3期（总第52期）

⁷ 吴海燕（2014），《商务汉语词汇研究》，中国书籍出版社

⁸ Dẫn lại từ Jiang Weijie (2016), “Nghiên cứu lý luận giảng dạy tiếng Anh thương mại”, NXB Đại học Cát Lâm

tốt nghiệp ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc trong bối cảnh thời lượng đào tạo lại bị giảm đi một cách đáng kể so với đào tạo theo niên chế trước đây. Nếu như các trường tuyển sinh đầu vào là đối tượng D4, nghĩa là những sinh viên trước khi vào học ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc đã biết tiếng Trung Quốc và trình độ có thể đạt tới HSK3 hoặc HSK4, như các đối tượng học chuyên ngữ ở trung học phổ thông hoặc các đối tượng gốc người Hoa đã từng học tiếng Trung Quốc trước đó, khi vào đại học sẽ được đào tạo kiến thức trên cơ sở kế thừa nền tảng sẵn có. Tuy nhiên, đối tượng này chọn học ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc lại không nhiều, như chỉ tiêu dành cho khối D4 của trường Đại học Sư phạm TP.HCM chỉ có 1 lớp với 30 sinh viên; trong khi đó, tuyệt đại đa số sinh viên chọn học ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc đều bắt đầu từ con số không, nghĩa là vào đại học rồi mới bắt đầu học những kiến thức, kỹ năng ngôn ngữ cơ bản nhất. Điều đó ắt sẽ kéo theo hiện tượng không theo kịp chương trình yêu cầu ở giai đoạn học chuyên ngành, thậm chí một số sinh viên khi đã vào giai đoạn chuyên ngành nhưng vẫn “đọc chưa thông, viết chưa thạo”, điều này hẳn sẽ gây áp lực cho sinh viên và nếu như sinh viên không có động cơ học tập tích cực, chắc chắn sẽ gặp khó khăn, thậm chí là bỏ cuộc. Có thể nói, tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại hoặc các môn mang kiến thức thương mại chỉ là những môn học rời rạc chưa thành hệ thống, như các môn tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại 1, 2; viết thương mại, giao tiếp thương mại, biên phiên dịch thương mại, thư tín thương mại v.v... được lồng ghép vào trong chương trình đào tạo ở các năm 3 và 4, đây là giai đoạn đi vào các môn học chuyên ngành trong chương trình đào tạo, điều đó hẳn sẽ ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng đào tạo. Để có cái nhìn toàn cảnh ở một số trường có đào tạo ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, chúng ta thử tham khảo bảng sau đây:

Bảng 1

Tỉ lệ phân bố môn học có liên quan đến kiến thức thương mại⁹

Trường	Tổng số tín chỉ	Kiến thức thương mại	Tỉ lệ
Đại học Tôn Đức Thắng	138	38	27,5%
Đại học Sư Phạm TP.HCM	135	12	8,8%
Đại học KHXH&NV TP.HCM	120	9	7,5%
Đại học Mở TP.HCM	142	9	6,3%

⁹ Số liệu được tổng hợp từ các chương trình đào tạo năm 2017, 2018 do các trường công bố trên website trường.

Từ các số liệu trên cho thấy, tùy theo đặc thù đào tạo của từng trường, như ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc của trường Đại học Tôn Đức Thắng định hướng thương mại và văn hóa ngôn ngữ, ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc của Đại học Sư phạm TP.HCM và ngành ngữ văn Trung Quốc của Đại học Khoa học xã hội và Nhân văn TP.HCM đào tạo các môn tiếng Trung Quốc và Biên phiên dịch, có thể do đặc thù của trường Đại học Mở TP. HCM là đào tạo theo định hướng biên phiên dịch, nên tỉ trọng các môn có liên quan đến thương mại khá khiêm tốn. Tuy nhiên, nhìn vào chương trình đào tạo của các trường này, chúng ta đều nhận thấy ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc đào tạo định hướng ứng dụng, nên kết hợp cả hai mảng kiến thức thương mại và biên phiên dịch. Cùng với phạm vi ứng dụng rộng rãi của các môn học có liên quan đến kiến thức thương mại chúng tôi cho rằng tỉ trọng khối lượng kiến thức các môn thương mại ở các trường vẫn còn khá khiêm tốn, từ đó cho thấy các môn tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại vẫn chưa được đặt vào đúng vị trí so với mục tiêu đào tạo ứng dụng trong nghề nghiệp. Đã từ lâu, giới nghiên cứu và giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc cho người nước ngoài tại Trung Quốc đã nhận thức được vấn đề này, và họ đã không ngừng nỗ lực cân bằng lại vị thế của tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại trong chương trình đào tạo. Trong sách chuyên khảo “Nghiên cứu về chương trình tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại” của Zhang Li (2007), cũng nhận định chương trình Ngôn ngữ văn hóa văn học Trung Quốc thuộc ngành đào tạo đại học, tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại không thể độc lập trở thành một ngành trong các ngành đào tạo đại học, chỉ có thể là một hướng ngành để đào tạo kiến thức kinh tế thương mại cho người học. Từ nhận định này, chúng ta có thể thấy quan điểm của Hutchinson & Waters là phù hợp với các ngành ngôn ngữ có lồng ghép kiến thức chuyên ngành.

Và để khắc phục những khó khăn trong đào tạo kiến thức chuyên ngành cho sinh viên, các học giả người Trung Quốc đã bắt tay vào biên soạn các môn kỹ năng ngôn ngữ có lồng ghép kiến thức thương mại từ rất sớm, phải chăng họ cũng nhận ra trong quá trình rèn luyện kỹ năng ngôn ngữ thực hành, người học tiếp xúc với kiến thức thương mại càng sớm càng tốt. Một trong những bộ sách được biên soạn phục vụ cho ý đồ đó là bộ sách “Giáo trình tổng hợp tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại” gồm 6 quyển của nhà xuất bản Đại học Ngoại thương Bắc Kinh(商务汉语综合教程), bộ sách này bắt đầu xuất bản từ năm 2010, hoặc như bộ sách “Giáo trình Nghe và Nói tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại” (新商务汉语听力与口语教程) của các tác giả Deng Rubing, Lu Ying do nhà xuất bản Đại học Thanh Hoa xuất bản vào năm 2017, ngoài ra còn khá nhiều tài liệu phục vụ cho kỹ năng đọc - viết như “Giáo trình đọc - viết tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại mới” (新商务汉语阅读写作教程) do nhà xuất bản Đại

học Thanh Hoa xuất bản năm 2016, nhìn chung các giáo trình này đã tối giản hóa kiến thức thương mại, biến kiến thức chuyên ngành thành những nội dung dễ đọc hiểu nhằm tạo sự hứng thú cho người học. Đặc biệt là những nhà biên soạn sách đã chú trọng nguyên tắc “tiệm tiến” trong quá trình hướng dẫn người học tiếp cận kiến thức chuyên ngành.

3. MỐI LIÊN HỆ GIỮA TIẾNG TRUNG QUỐC THƯƠNG MẠI VÀ CÁC MÔN HỌC.

Với tư cách là một bộ môn tích hợp kiến thức ngôn ngữ và kiến thức chuyên ngành, tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại là một bộ môn mang tính chất liên ngành. Đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh các trường thiết kế lại chương trình đào tạo theo định hướng ứng dụng, thì việc giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại trong trường đại học cũng phải được chú trọng ngay từ đầu, những nhà quản lý chương trình đào tạo ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc khi thiết kế chương trình đào tạo, cần chú ý đến tính liên kết và tính kế thừa của các kiến thức trong môn học. Vì chương trình đào tạo là kế hoạch cụ thể hóa mục tiêu đào tạo, nó sẽ đảm nhận vai trò truyền thụ một cách hệ thống kiến thức ngành và kiến thức chuyên ngành cho người học, đó cũng là điểm khác biệt cho chúng ta phân biệt giữa chuyên ngành này với chuyên ngành kia. Cho nên theo Zhang Li ¹⁰, khi xây dựng chương trình cần phải đảm bảo tính hệ thống, tính ứng dụng và tính phát triển của chương trình. Từ những nhận định này khi chúng ta cụ thể hóa nó vào trong đơn vị nhỏ nhất của chương trình là môn học, chúng ta phải chú trọng đến chuẩn đầu ra, nghĩa là sau khi học xong môn học này, người học sẽ được trang bị những kiến thức gì và vận dụng nó như thế nào, và các môn học này có tính liên thông và phát huy những tác dụng gì trong bước phát triển nghề nghiệp sau này.

Chính vì vậy, các môn tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại không là một phân môn độc lập, mà có một sự liên hệ biện chứng và hỗ trợ bổ sung từ những môn kiến thức, kỹ năng khác. Ví dụ trước khi học môn Đàm phán trong kinh doanh, ở những học kỳ trước, sinh viên đã phải học các môn như Quản trị học, Nhập môn marketing, Nghiệp vụ ngoại thương, Văn hóa giao tiếp v.v... chính những môn học này sẽ là nền tảng giúp cho người học tiếp tục học tiếp những môn học chuyên ngành, phát huy được tính tích cực chủ động của người học để hoàn thành nhiệm vụ học tập. Và sinh viên sẽ không còn lúng túng khi gặp phải một khái niệm mang tính chất chuyên ngành. Vài năm trước, tác giả bài viết này được mời giảng môn Tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại 1 của một trường, đối tượng là sinh viên năm 3 học kỳ 1. Chúng tôi nhận thấy rằng việc dịch các thuật

¹⁰ Zhang Li (2007), Nghiên cứu chương trình tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại, Nhà xuất bản Thương vụ.

ngữ chuyên ngành thương mại cho sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc không khó, thậm chí các thuật ngữ này các em có thể tra cứu trên mạng hoặc tài liệu trước, nhưng để hiểu được khái niệm và nội hàm của các thuật ngữ này là cả một vấn đề, cho nên cần có sự tích lũy kiến thức nền ở những môn học trước đó. Ngoài ra, việc dạy và học hiệu quả cần phải có sự tương tác và thực hành, sinh viên tuy rất háo hức khi được nghe giảng viên giải thích nội dung thuật ngữ, sử dụng trong tình huống nào, nhưng có lẽ vì thế những hoạt động khác đã không thể triển khai được như thực hành các tình huống trong bài do thời lượng lên lớp có hạn, còn nếu chỉ dạy theo cách phiên dịch, thì sinh viên lại không hiểu gì về các khái niệm thuật ngữ chuyên ngành đó, cần sử dụng trong những tình huống nào cho phù hợp, cho nên hiệu quả giảng dạy sẽ không cao, và cũng sẽ không đạt được chuẩn yêu cầu của môn học.

Tương tự, tại khoa Ngoại ngữ trường Đại học Mở TP.HCM, môn Dịch thương mại và Dịch du lịch, Thứ tư thương mại được đưa vào giảng dạy cho sinh viên ở các học kỳ năm 3 và năm 4. Do tính chất đặc thù của hướng ngành biên phiên dịch, sinh viên vừa phải học các kiến thức, kỹ năng trong dịch thuật, vừa phải áp dụng các kỹ năng dịch này vào các văn bản dịch thương mại, vừa phải tìm hiểu khái niệm và ngữ nghĩa của các thuật ngữ chuyên ngành kinh tế thương mại, việc này ít nhiều khiến cho sinh viên cảm thấy áp lực và có tâm lý ngại khó trong học tập. Chúng tôi cho rằng, để có một văn bản dịch chất lượng, người dịch cần phải am tường các thuật ngữ chuyên ngành, biết sử dụng vào trong những ngữ cảnh cụ thể, chuyển ngữ một cách chính xác và chuyên nghiệp, mới có thể thỏa được các tiêu chí tín – đạt – nhã trong phiên dịch. Trong phạm vi khảo sát sự hài lòng về môn học Dịch thương mại dành cho khóa HV16 (32 SV) sau khi kết thúc môn học, có 92% ý kiến cho rằng những kiến thức, thông tin trong môn học rất bổ ích; 94,5% ý kiến cho rằng môn học rất thiết thực và cần thiết. Tuy nhiên, có đến 98,3% ý kiến cho rằng môn học Dịch thương mại khó, và chỉ 69 % tự đánh giá là mình đạt được yêu cầu của môn học. Từ những con số này, chúng tôi nhận thấy rằng, việc xây dựng và sắp xếp các môn học có nội dung thương mại cần phải có một sự cân nhắc khoa học trong tổng thể chương trình, nhất là trong bối cảnh đào tạo theo học chế tín chỉ, việc xác định vị trí, vai trò của môn học cần phải được so sánh, đối chiếu với khối lượng chương trình và luôn quy chiếu với mục tiêu đào tạo của chương trình, có như vậy mới có thể phát huy tối đa được vai trò của môn học, mới có thể biến những kiến thức đã được học trong các môn kinh thương thành kỹ năng vận dụng trong nghề nghiệp thực tiễn.

4. MỘT VÀI ĐỀ XUẤT KHI THIẾT KẾ VÀ GIẢNG DẠY CÁC MÔN TIẾNG TRUNG QUỐC THƯƠNG MẠI.

Từ những phân tích ở nội dung trên, để việc giảng dạy các môn học thương mại trở thành những thành tố hữu cơ gắn kết với tổng thể chương trình ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, các môn học thương mại mang lại những kiến thức hữu ích thiết thực cho người học, giúp họ phát huy được năng lực, sở trường trong thực tiễn nghề nghiệp sau này, chúng tôi xin đưa ra một số đề xuất sau đây:

- Vị trí môn học: đối với hướng ngành tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại, cần phải lựa chọn những môn học gắn kết với nghề nghiệp thực tế sau này, giúp người học có thể vận dụng những kiến thức từ giảng đường vào trong thực tiễn, không nên sử dụng tên môn học chung chung như: tiếng Trung Quốc thương mại, tiếng Hán kinh thương... mà nên cụ thể hóa tên từng môn học như: (tiếng Trung Quốc) Ngoại thương, Marketing, Thanh toán quốc tế, Thương mại điện tử v.v... dĩ nhiên mức độ và dung lượng kiến thức của các môn học này có thể ở mức độ vừa phải, không cần quá chuyên biệt như các môn học chuyên ngành nhưng vẫn phải đảm bảo tính ứng dụng và thực tiễn cho người học; còn đối với hướng ngành biên phiên dịch, để giúp người học ngoài có kỹ năng dịch thuật ra, còn được trang bị kiến thức kinh tế - thương mại để dịch chính xác các lĩnh vực này. Để thực hiện được điều này, chương trình nên thiết kế thêm các môn như: Nhập môn quản trị học, Marketing căn bản... để người học trái ngành kinh tế vẫn có những kiến thức cơ bản khi tiếp nhận các kiến thức chuyên ngành.

- Biên soạn giáo trình: Hoạt động dạy và học sẽ được cụ thể hóa khi có được những tài liệu chuyên ngành phục vụ cho việc giảng dạy, đặc biệt là các tài liệu cập nhật thông tin, phù hợp với bối cảnh thương mại – kinh tế Việt Nam và Trung Quốc, các bài giảng trong giáo trình sẽ cung cấp lượng từ vựng theo từng cấp độ, từng chuyên ngành và lĩnh vực, có áp dụng các bài tập giải quyết tình huống để hình thành kỹ năng cho người học. Tùy theo chương trình đào tạo đặc thù của các trường, các trường có thể tổ chức biên soạn các đầu sách tài liệu tham khảo có liên quan đến kiến thức thương mại mang tính nhập môn, mục đích giúp cho người học trang bị các khái niệm căn bản để làm nền tảng cho việc tiếp thu kiến thức, cũng như đa dạng hóa nguồn tư liệu tham khảo ngoại ngữ chuyên ngành, phục vụ hiệu quả cho công tác đào tạo, rút ngắn khoảng cách từ lý thuyết đến thực tiễn.

- Phương pháp giảng dạy: việc truyền thụ kiến thức một chiều từ giảng viên đến sinh viên cũng nên được thay đổi, lâu nay sinh viên đều tiếp nhận nguồn thông tin từ giảng viên, xem những kiến thức được cô

động của giảng viên là những chân lý tuyệt đối mà không kiểm chứng qua các hoạt động thực tiễn. Thiết nghĩ, khi triển khai các bài giảng có nội dung kiến thức thương mại, ngoài những phương pháp như dạy học theo nhiệm vụ, phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung v.v... còn có thể áp dụng các phương pháp dạy học theo giải quyết tình huống, tăng cường các hoạt động như làm bài tập nhóm, thuyết trình, diễn hoạt cảnh để tăng tính tương tác và hứng thú cho người học.

- Giảng viên: trong hoạt động giảng dạy, giảng viên vẫn đóng vai trò chủ đạo khi xây dựng các nội dung, hoạt động cho sinh viên. Ngoài các giảng viên trong trường có kiến thức thực tiễn, có nghiên cứu về lĩnh vực kinh thương, nhà trường hoàn toàn có thể mời các báo cáo viên, các chuyên viên có phương pháp giảng dạy đến từ doanh nghiệp để có những buổi báo cáo chuyên đề, những buổi thuyết trình mang tính thiết thực mà không nặng về hình thức và mang tính nghi thức. Đặc biệt, đối với các giảng viên giảng dạy chuyên ngành biên phiên dịch có liên quan đến nội dung kiến thức thương mại, có thể dẫn sinh viên đến tham dự các hội nghị có quy mô để học hỏi, phân tích chất lượng dịch thuật tại hiện trường; đưa sinh viên tham quan các nhà máy sản xuất để sinh viên cọ xát với thực tế.

5. KẾT LUẬN.

Tổng kết lại những vấn đề đã trình bày ở trên, việc giảng dạy kiến thức thương mại trong chương trình đào tạo ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc tại các trường đại học ở Việt Nam cần phải có sự thay đổi về chất, điều đó cũng đặt ra những thách thức vô cùng to lớn cho những nhà quản lý, những người làm công tác giảng dạy ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, nhất là khi đa số chỉ bó hẹp trong phạm vi kiến thức chuyên ngành của mình. Việc cập nhật kiến thức thường xuyên cũng như mở rộng tìm hiểu thêm các kiến thức trái ngành là cần thiết trong bối cảnh hiện nay. Dù biết rằng còn có nhiều vấn đề cần phải tháo gỡ để việc dạy và học ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc mang lại hiệu quả, nhất là phải có sự chuyển dịch từ chất lượng giảng viên, phương pháp giảng dạy, học liệu cho đến động cơ học tập của sinh viên. Có như vậy, mới đào tạo ra đội ngũ sử dụng thành thạo ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc và am tường các kiến thức thương mại, cống hiến tài năng và trí tuệ của mình cho đất nước trong quá trình hội nhập kinh tế thế giới.

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A STUDY OF ELEMENTARY CHINESE LISTENING TEACHING MODEL BASED ON CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

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ABSTRACT

Listening is a difficult skill for Chinese learners, especially for elementary learners, requiring them to accumulate the knowledge of certain languages. This is a difficult skill for elementary students. Based on Content-based instruction, we study the model of elementary Chinese listening teaching to improve the listening skills of students. This model consists of three stages: before you listen (includes reviewing, teaching and practice activities), while you listen (listening activity) and after you listen (speaking activity).

Keywords: *Chinese listening, elementary, content-based instruction*

BƯỚC ĐẦU XÂY DỰNG MÔ HÌNH GIẢNG DẠY KĨ NĂNG NGHE TIẾNG TRUNG QUỐC GIAI ĐOẠN SƠ CẤP TRÊN CƠ SỞ PHƯƠNG PHÁP GIẢNG DẠY DỰA VÀO NỘI DUNG

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TÓM TẮT

Nghe là kĩ năng tương đối khó đối với người học tiếng Trung Quốc, đặc biệt là với người học ở giai đoạn sơ cấp, yêu cầu người học phải tích lũy được một lượng kiến thức ngôn ngữ nhất định. Chúng tôi nghiên cứu xây dựng mô hình giảng dạy kĩ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc giai đoạn sơ cấp trên cơ sở phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung, nhằm nâng cao kĩ năng nghe của sinh viên giai đoạn này. Mô hình này gồm ba giai đoạn: giai đoạn trước khi nghe (bao gồm các hoạt động ôn tập, giảng giải và luyện tập), giai đoạn trong khi nghe (hoạt động nghe) và giai đoạn sau khi nghe (hoạt động nói).

Từ khóa: giai đoạn sơ cấp; kĩ năng nghe; phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung; tiếng Trung Quốc

1. MỞ ĐẦU

Nghe là kĩ năng ngôn ngữ được sử dụng rộng rãi và thường xuyên nhất trong đời sống hàng ngày, là phương tiện quan trọng để thu nhận ngôn ngữ. Nghe là khả năng xác định và hiểu những gì người khác nói. Điều này bao gồm việc hiểu cách phát âm của người nói, từ vựng, ngữ pháp và văn hoá của họ. Những người nghe tốt thường có khả năng thực hiện bốn nội dung này cùng một lúc. Có thể nói, nghe là kĩ năng tương đối khó đối với người học ngoại ngữ nói chung, sinh viên ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc nói riêng.

Tại Trung Quốc, đã có không ít công trình nghiên cứu về việc giảng dạy kĩ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc như một ngôn ngữ thứ hai. Song, các kết quả nghiên cứu này vẫn chưa được ứng dụng nhiều trong thực tế giảng dạy tại Việt Nam. Theo nghiên cứu của Ruan Shi-hui (阮氏惠) (2012, tr.1), mô hình giảng dạy kĩ năng nghe phổ biến ở Việt Nam hiện nay vẫn là mô hình “giảng từ vựng – nghe ghi âm – đối chiếu đáp án”. Đây

là mô hình giảng dạy đơn điệu và lạc hậu, tạo sự nhàm chán nơi người học. Qua đó cho thấy, việc cải tiến phương pháp giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc là vô cùng cần thiết.

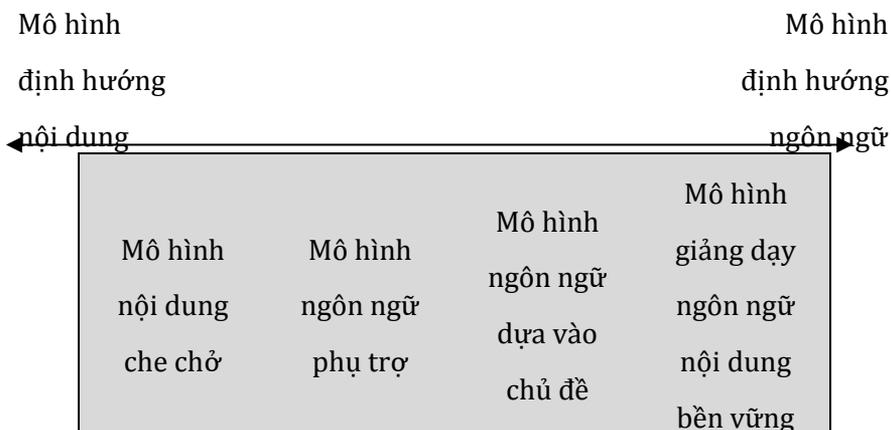
Hiện nay, phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung (Content-based instruction) ngày càng được áp dụng phổ biến trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh như một ngôn ngữ thứ hai (Lê Thị Phương Loan, 2016, tr.32). Những năm gần đây, cũng đã có một số công trình nghiên cứu về việc áp dụng phương pháp này trong giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc như một ngôn ngữ thứ hai, như Cao Xian-wen (曹贤文) (2005, tr.7-11), Wang Ya-fang (王亚芳) & Nan Chao (南潮) (2017, tr.111-113) ... Song, cơ sở dữ liệu CNKI cho thấy, vẫn chưa có công trình nào đề cập đến việc vận dụng phương pháp này vào việc giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc.

Trong bài viết này, chúng tôi vận dụng phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung để xây dựng mô hình giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc giai đoạn sơ cấp.

2. PHƯƠNG PHÁP GIẢNG DẠY DỰA VÀO NỘI DUNG

Phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung ra đời vào giữa thập niên 80 của thế kỷ XX. Phương pháp này có chủ trương giảng dạy kết hợp ngôn ngữ và nội dung, nghĩa là không chỉ dạy cho sinh viên ngôn ngữ mà còn dạy cho sinh viên các kiến thức khác (Brinton, 2003, tr.201). Trong lĩnh vực giảng dạy ngoại ngữ, phương pháp này tập trung xoay quanh nội dung hoặc thông tin mà sinh viên học được (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, tr.204). Nội dung... là việc sử dụng các chủ đề cho mục đích giảng dạy ngoại ngữ. Đó có thể là những chủ đề mà người học ngoại ngữ có hứng thú hoặc cần thiết (Snow, 2001, tr.303).

Phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung có 3 mô hình tương đối phổ biến là: mô hình ngôn ngữ dựa vào chủ đề (theme-based language instruction), mô hình nội dung che chở (sheltered content instruction) và mô hình ngôn ngữ phụ trợ (adjunct language instruction) (Brinton, Snow, and Wesche, 1989, tr.14-16). Ngoài ra, còn có mô hình giảng dạy ngôn ngữ nội dung bền vững (sustained-content language teaching) được xây dựng và phát triển trong thời gian gần đây (Brinton, 2003, tr.205). Các mô hình này có sự khác biệt về vai trò của ngôn ngữ và nội dung, xem Hình 1.



Hình 1: Các mô hình của phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung

(Mô phỏng theo mô hình của Met, 1998, tr.41)

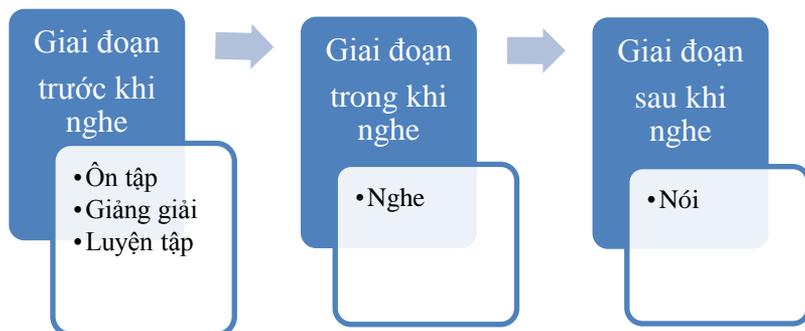
Phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung có sáu nguyên tắc sau: (1) quyết định dựa trên nội dung hơn là các tiêu chuẩn ngôn ngữ, (2) tích hợp các kỹ năng, (3) làm cho sinh viên tích cực trong tất cả các giai đoạn của quá trình học tập, (4) lựa chọn nội dung phù hợp với cuộc sống, sở thích và mục tiêu học tập của sinh viên, (5) lựa chọn những văn bản và nhiệm vụ xác thực, (6) làm nổi bật các đặc điểm ngôn ngữ (Brinton, 2003, tr.205-209).

Các hoạt động thường gặp trong phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung bao gồm làm việc theo nhóm, khoảng cách thông tin, trò chơi ghép hình, tổ chức đồ họa, thảo luận và tranh luận, đóng vai, nhiệm vụ khảo sát, viết quy trình, giải quyết vấn đề, trình tự, xếp hạng, làm rõ giá trị (Brinton, 2003, tr.209-211).

3. MÔ HÌNH GIẢNG DẠY KỸ NĂNG NGHE TIẾNG TRUNG QUỐC GIAI ĐOẠN SƠ CẤP TRÊN CƠ SỞ PHƯƠNG PHÁP GIẢNG DẠY DỰA VÀO NỘI DUNG

Nghe một văn bản ghi âm bằng tiếng Trung Quốc thường là một sự thử thách đối với nhiều sinh viên, đặc biệt là sinh viên giai đoạn sơ cấp. Bởi vì, khi nghe văn bản theo kiểu này, sinh viên không có những gợi ý trực quan như từ vựng, ngữ pháp, văn hoá... có liên quan đến bài nghe. Vì vậy, các hoạt động trong giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe cần phải dựa vào nội dung của bài nghe, cung cấp cho sinh viên các kiến thức ngôn ngữ và văn hoá có liên quan. Để kỹ năng nghe được giảng dạy một cách có hiệu quả, cần phải chia thành ba giai đoạn: giai đoạn trước khi nghe, giai đoạn trong khi nghe và giai đoạn sau khi nghe (Sheils, 1993, tr.28). Trên cơ sở

đó, chúng tôi xin đưa ra mô hình giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc giai đoạn sơ cấp theo phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung như sau:



Hình 2: Mô hình giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc giai đoạn sơ cấp theo phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung

Mô hình giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe giai đoạn sơ cấp theo phương pháp giảng dạy dựa vào nội dung của chúng tôi được chia làm 3 giai đoạn (giai đoạn trước khi nghe, giai đoạn trong khi nghe và giai đoạn sau khi nghe) với 5 hoạt động (ôn tập, giảng giải, luyện tập, nghe và nói). Trong đó, các hoạt động ôn tập, giảng giải, luyện tập và nói đều được thiết kế dựa trên nội dung bài nghe.

3.1. Giai đoạn trước khi nghe

Mục đích của giai đoạn trước khi nghe là giúp sinh viên ôn tập bài cũ, làm quen với chủ đề của bài nghe, cung cấp các từ vựng, ngữ pháp và văn hoá liên quan đến bài nghe. Giai đoạn này có 3 hoạt động: ôn tập, giảng giải và luyện tập. Giảng viên sẽ căn cứ vào nội dung của bài nghe, lựa chọn và thiết kế nội dung hoạt động phù hợp.

3.1.1. Hoạt động 1: Ôn tập

Ôn tập là cầu nối giữa bài cũ và bài mới. Trong học phần kỹ năng nghe, hoạt động ôn tập vô cùng quan trọng, không chỉ có thể giúp sinh viên củng cố các nội dung đã được học ở các bài trước, mà còn có thể kiểm tra việc làm bài tập về nhà của sinh viên. Hoạt động này sẽ mang lại hiệu quả cao nếu giảng viên có kế hoạch và mục đích ôn tập cụ thể, rõ ràng. Khi đọc kỹ các giáo trình kỹ năng nghe, giảng viên sẽ dễ dàng nhận thấy, người biên soạn rất chú ý đến tính liên kết giữa các bài trong giáo trình. Vì vậy, giảng viên có thể tiến hành ôn tập bài cũ cho sinh viên bằng cách nhấn mạnh lại trọng tâm, tổng kết lại cách dùng, quy luật, biên soạn các bài tập bổ sung...

Ví dụ:

Bài 3 “看，我们一家人”， bài 4 “我的一天” và bài 5 “姐姐的时间表” trong quyển I (tr.19-43) của giáo trình “Nghe sơ cấp tiếng Trung Quốc đại học” (大学汉语初级听力) do tác giả Huang Yi-qian (黄益倩)¹¹ biên soạn, đều đề cập đến việc sử dụng con số trong các chủ đề về số lượng, tuổi tác và thời gian. Giảng viên có thể tổng kết cách dùng, cách đọc và những mẫu câu thường gặp của con số tiếng Trung Quốc trong giáo trình. Qua đó, sinh viên có thể xây dựng được tính liên kết giữa ba bài này, từ đó nắm vững hơn việc sử dụng con số tiếng Trung Quốc.

3.1.2. Hoạt động 2: Giảng giải

Mục đích của học phần kĩ năng nghe là thúc đẩy sự phát triển năng lực nghe của sinh viên. Học phần này không chỉ yêu cầu sinh viên nghe hiểu, mà còn yêu cầu sinh viên phải vận dụng được các kiến thức từ vựng, ngữ pháp mà sinh viên thu nhận được khi nghe. Nói cách khác, kĩ năng nghe không còn đơn thuần là học phần giảng viên hướng dẫn sinh viên nghe, sinh viên tiếp nhận bài nghe một cách thụ động, mà đã trở thành học phần giúp sinh viên nghe hiểu và vận dụng được các kiến thức được học trong bài nghe. Hoạt động giảng giải trước khi nghe là một hoạt động quan trọng, đặc biệt là ở giai đoạn sơ cấp.

Trong giai đoạn này, việc giảng giải từ vựng, ngữ pháp, văn hoá xuất hiện trong bài nghe sẽ rất hữu ích cho hoạt động nghe của sinh viên. Khi chuẩn bị bài giảng, giảng viên cần xác định những từ vựng, ngữ pháp trọng tâm của bài nghe, những khó khăn sinh viên sẽ gặp phải khi nghe... Như thế, sẽ sử dụng hiệu quả quỹ thời gian trên lớp, việc nhấn mạnh trọng tâm sẽ giúp sinh viên biết được mình cần nắm những kiến thức nào trong bài nghe, có định hướng cụ thể khi tiến hành nghe. Giảng viên có thể đa dạng cách giảng, song không nên chiếm quá nhiều thời gian và cần tập trung vào giảng trọng tâm.

a. Giảng giải kiến thức từ vựng, văn hoá

Giảng viên có thể sử dụng hình ảnh, đoạn phim, đồ vật trực quan, sinh động trong giảng giải từ vựng, văn hoá, giúp sinh viên hiểu, nhớ và dự đoán nội dung sắp được nghe.

Ví dụ:

Giảng viên có thể cho sinh viên xem các đoạn phim giới thiệu về

¹¹ Các ví dụ trong bài viết này đều được dẫn từ quyển I và quyển II của giáo trình này.

các địa danh như Bắc Kinh, Thượng Hải, Quảng Châu, Nội Mông Cổ, Sơn Tây, Vân Nam, Tây Tạng, Tân Cương, Cổ Cung, Bắc Hải, Di Hoà Viên, Trường Thành... khi giảng bài 1 “我们的旅行计划”, bài 3 “在中国的城市旅行——北京、上海” và bài 4 “梦中的香格里拉” (quyển II, tr.1-4, 10-19). Hoặc, giảng viên cũng có thể sử dụng các hình ảnh để giảng về các từ chỉ bộ phận của cơ thể người và các loại bệnh tật, triệu chứng có liên quan khi giảng bài 6 “一次去医院的经历” (quyển II, tr.24-28).

Giảng viên còn có thể sử dụng phương thức dùng kiến thức cũ dẫn nhập kiến thức mới để giảng dạy từ vựng, như quy loại từ ngữ, kết hợp từ ngữ, biểu đạt đoạn văn...

Ví dụ:

Sau khi giảng giải xong từ vựng, giảng viên có thể cung cấp một đoạn văn ngắn với một số chỗ trống, có nội dung tương tự nội dung bài nghe khi giảng bài 9 “谈天气” (quyển I, tr.60-65). Sau đó, yêu cầu sinh viên đọc to và điền từ thích hợp vào chỗ trống. Đây là bước chuẩn bị cho việc tiếp nhận bài nghe, tạo hứng thú cho sinh viên.

Ngoài ra, trước khi tiến hành hoạt động nghe, giảng viên còn có thể cho sinh viên thảo luận các vấn đề liên quan đến nội dung sắp nghe.

Ví dụ:

Khi giảng bài 10 “说说你的爱好” (quyển I, tr.66-71), giảng viên có thể cho sinh viên thảo luận về sở thích, giúp sinh viên hiểu trước nội dung sẽ nghe, khơi gợi mong muốn được nghe của sinh viên.

b. Giảng giải ngữ pháp

Nội dung kĩ năng nghe ở giai đoạn sơ cấp thường đề cập đến các chủ đề như thăm hỏi, con số, thời gian, mua sắm, giao thông, ẩm thực, sở thích, vị trí, chỗ ở, y tế, thời tiết... Kiến thức ngữ pháp trong giáo trình thường được chia làm hai loại: chú thích và cấu trúc ngữ pháp cơ bản. Đối với các cấu trúc ngữ pháp cơ bản, cho dù sinh viên đã được học hay chưa được học, giảng viên vẫn phải giảng dạy các cấu trúc này, đồng thời cung cấp cho sinh viên các mẫu câu xoay quanh chủ đề.

Ví dụ:

Trong bài 7 “美味的中国菜” (quyển I, tr.50-54), giảng viên giảng giải và cung cấp cho sinh viên những cấu trúc và mẫu câu thường dùng khi dùng cơm tại nhà hàng của người Trung Quốc. Sau đó, yêu cầu sinh viên đọc to các mẫu câu, đồng thời tiến hành luyện tập, giúp sinh viên ghi nhớ cấu trúc vừa học. Điều này sẽ rất hữu ích cho việc nghe của sinh

viên.

Ngoài ra, giảng viên cũng cần giảng giải và phân tích các câu dài, khó hiểu xuất hiện trong bài.

Ví dụ:

Trong bài 8 “中国学生的‘高考’故事” (quyển II, tr.33-37) có loại câu phức nhân quả “因为……, 所以……”. Loại câu phức này vừa có dạng đầy đủ là “因为……, 所以……”, vừa có dạng rút gọn là “因为……, ……” và “……, 所以……”. Giảng viên nên giảng dạng đầy đủ trước, sau đó giảng các dạng rút gọn, đồng thời kết hợp với các ví dụ.

因为……, 所以…… 因为下星期有考试, 所以我只能在图书馆好好学习。
习。

……, 因为…… 我只能在图书馆好好学习, 因为下星期有考试。

……, 所以…… 下星期有考试, 所以我只能在图书馆好好学习。

3.1.3. Hoạt động 3: Luyện tập

Sau khi giảng giải các kiến thức từ vựng, văn hoá, ngữ pháp, sinh viên có thể đã hiểu những kiến thức này nhưng chưa biết sử dụng. Nếu ngay sau hoạt động giảng giải, giảng viên cho sinh viên tiến hành hoạt động nghe, có thể các kiến thức mà giảng viên vừa giảng giải đó sẽ ảnh hưởng đến khả năng nghe hiểu của sinh viên. Theo chúng tôi, cần có hoạt động luyện tập ngay sau khi giảng giải, giúp sinh viên nắm vững và biết sử dụng các kiến thức được học. Các bài nghe ở giai đoạn sơ cấp thường có độ dài tương đối ngắn. Các cấu trúc ngữ pháp và những mẫu câu tương đối dài có thể sẽ gây khó khăn cho sinh viên khi nghe, vì vậy việc luyện tập thuần thục hai nội dung này vô cùng quan trọng. Cách thức luyện tập có thể linh hoạt và đa dạng, như thay thế, mở rộng, sắp xếp các từ, điền vào chỗ trống, trả lời câu hỏi, hoàn thành đối thoại... Giảng viên cần căn cứ vào tình hình lớp học để chuẩn bị số lượng bài tập cần thiết cho sinh viên luyện tập.

3.2. Giai đoạn trong khi nghe

Qua hoạt động giảng giải và luyện tập các kiến thức từ vựng, ngữ pháp, văn hoá trước khi nghe, tích cực trong học tập của sinh viên đã được khơi dậy. Lúc này, giảng viên cho sinh viên nghe và hướng dẫn một số kĩ thuật khi nghe.

Giảng viên cần chú ý đến số lượng bài nghe, việc tiếp nhận bài nghe của sinh viên, cũng như những biểu hiện trên lớp của sinh viên. Với những bài nghe sinh viên chỉ cần nghe một lần là có thể hoàn thành các bài tập, thì không cần cho sinh viên nghe lại, nếu không sẽ khiến sinh viên mệt mỏi và nhầm chán.

Trong giai đoạn này cũng cần giảng giải, giảng giải trong giai đoạn này chủ yếu tập trung vào các vấn đề cụ thể có trong bài nghe, ví dụ như ngữ khí, ngữ điệu, từ mới, ngữ dụng, phong cách văn bản... Trường hợp sinh viên nghe hiểu bài nghe, nhưng làm sai các bài tập, giảng viên cần phán đoán xem khó khăn của sinh viên khi nghe có liên quan đến các vấn đề trên không. Lúc này, giảng viên cần giảng giải các vấn đề liên quan và nhấn mạnh các điểm quan trọng trong câu, đoạn văn. Nếu điều kiện cho phép, giảng viên có thể cho sinh viên luyện tập lần nữa.

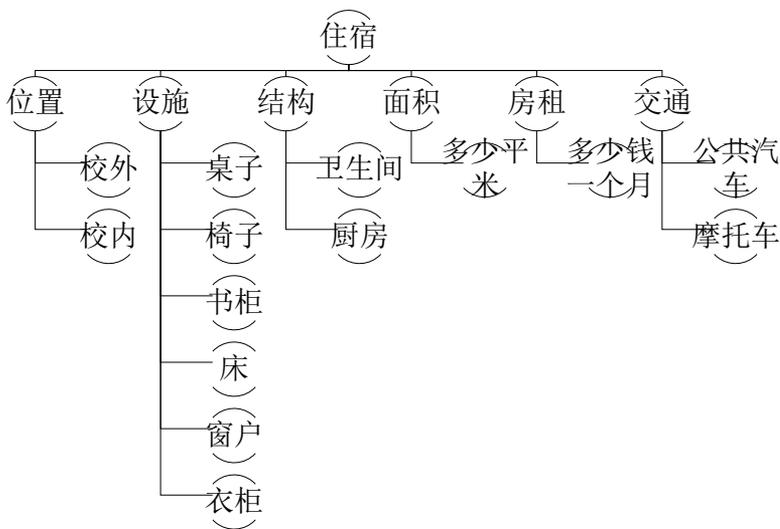
3.3. Giai đoạn sau khi nghe

Giai đoạn sau khi nghe thường có mục đích là củng cố lại hay phát triển tiếp những gì sinh viên đã được nghe ở giai đoạn trong khi nghe, hoặc liên hệ bài nghe với cuộc sống.

Trong giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe, Li Hong-yin (李红印) & Chen Li (陈莉) (1998, tr.144-155) cho rằng, nên kết hợp nội dung nghe và nói, nghe trước, nói sau. Chúng tôi cũng cho rằng, mục đích chính của hoạt động nghe trong kỹ năng nghe chính là giúp sinh viên ôn tập kiến thức cũ, học được kiến thức mới, có thể tiến hành các hoạt động giao tiếp. Thông qua hoạt động nghe, sinh viên tiếp nhận thông tin, sau đó phản hồi những kiến thức mình đã nghe hiểu bằng hoạt động nói. Hoạt động nói trong giai đoạn sau khi nghe khá đa dạng như trả lời câu hỏi, khái quát nội dung bài nghe, thảo luận về đề tài được nghe, thuật lại nội dung bài nghe... Các hoạt động nói trong giai đoạn sau khi nghe sẽ giúp sinh viên có nhiều cơ hội vận dụng các kiến thức từ vựng, ngữ pháp, văn hoá đã được học để biểu đạt suy nghĩ của mình, tăng cường sự giao lưu giữa các sinh viên trong lớp.

Ví dụ:

Chủ đề của bài 6 “去乔尼的宿舍” (quyển I, tr.44-49) là chủ đề mà sinh viên rất quan tâm. Giảng viên có thể tóm tắt lại các từ ngữ mà sinh viên đã học trong bài này và bổ sung thêm một số từ ngữ liên quan theo trường ngữ nghĩa “住宿” như hình 3.



Hình 3: Trường ngữ nghĩa “住宿”

Sau đó, giảng viên yêu cầu sinh viên chia nhóm thảo luận các nội dung xoay quanh chủ đề của bài nghe như: Nên ở kí túc xá của trường hay thuê nhà trọ bên ngoài? Khi thuê nhà, bạn quan tâm điều gì nhất? Giảng viên cũng có thể chuẩn bị trước một số câu hỏi mở có liên quan đến chủ đề của bài, yêu cầu sinh viên trả lời. Qua đó, sinh viên sẽ có cơ hội thể hiện những suy nghĩ về chủ đề được học.

Sau hoạt động nói trong giai đoạn sau khi nghe, sinh viên sẽ hiểu rõ hơn nội dung bài học, có tự tin hơn trong giao tiếp.

4. MỘT SỐ LƯU Ý

Khi sử dụng mô hình giảng dạy kỹ năng nghe tiếng Trung Quốc giai đoạn sơ cấp này, giảng viên cần lưu ý hai vấn đề sau:

Thứ nhất, tất cả các hoạt động giảng dạy trong mô hình đều phải được thiết kế theo nội dung của giáo trình, giúp sinh viên nắm vững các kiến thức trong bài. Giảng viên cần nghiên cứu kỹ giáo trình khi chuẩn bị bài giảng, đưa ra các nội dung trọng tâm của bài, tạo cơ hội cho sinh viên sử dụng tiếng Trung Quốc trên lớp.

Thứ hai, xử lý tốt mối quan hệ giữa các hoạt động giảng giải, luyện tập và nghe. Các hoạt động giảng giải, luyện tập của giảng viên rất hữu ích cho sinh viên trong việc dự đoán nội dung sẽ được nghe. Không chỉ vậy, các hoạt động giảng giải và luyện tập còn giúp làm giảm độ khó của việc nghe, nỗi sợ phải nghe của sinh viên, làm giảm căng thẳng của không

khí lớp học và làm tăng hứng thú học nghe của sinh viên. Song, giảng viên cần lưu ý về tỉ lệ thời gian giữa các hoạt động giảng giải, luyện tập và nghe. Các hoạt động giảng giải, luyện tập được thiết kế để phục vụ cho hoạt động nghe. Qua hoạt động nghe, giúp sinh viên nâng cao năng lực từ vựng, ngữ pháp và văn hoá.

5. KẾT LUẬN

Nghe là kĩ năng tương đối khó đối với người học tiếng Trung Quốc, đặc biệt là với người học ở giai đoạn sơ cấp. Nhằm nâng cao kĩ năng nghe của người học ở giai đoạn này, trên cơ sở phương pháp giảng dạy theo nội dung, chúng tôi đưa ra mô hình giảng dạy kĩ năng nghe giai đoạn sơ cấp. Mô hình này chỉ là những suy nghĩ bước đầu của chúng tôi. Mô hình này có thực sự phù hợp với sinh viên ở giai đoạn sơ cấp hay không, mang lại những hiệu quả như thế nào, còn cần phải tiến hành kiểm nghiệm từ trong thực tiễn giảng dạy.

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TEACHING JAPANESE

INVESTIGATING SELF-STUDY AWARENESS OF JAPANESE FRESHMEN WHILE STUDYING GENERAL JAPANESE 1: CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In order to fulfill the important role of education, both efforts of teachers and cooperation of learners are two essential requirements. Many studies have shown that learning attitudes, especially self-study awareness of students plays an important role in improving learning efficiency. This study aims to (1) show the current challenges of Japanese freshmen while studying General Japanese 1 at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, (2) analyze the causes, and (3) identify the determining factors directly affecting students' self-study awareness through a quantitative questionnaire. From these results, the author will make suggestions to address the situation as well as the recommendations to improve and guide students with the right attitudes towards learning, contributing to the development of the quality of education and training of the university.

Keywords: *awareness, self-study, Japanese, General Japanese 1*

KHẢO SÁT Ý THỨC TỰ HỌC MÔN TIẾNG NHẬT TỔNG HỢP 1 CỦA SV NĂM NHẤT NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ NHẬT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ TP.HCM: THỰC TRẠNG VÀ GIẢI PHÁP

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TÓM TẮT

Để hoàn thành tốt vai trò quan trọng của giáo dục, không chỉ đòi hỏi sự nỗ lực ở người dạy mà quan trọng hơn cả là cần có sự hợp tác của người học. Nhiều nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra rằng, thái độ học tập, đặc biệt là ý thức tự học của sinh viên (SV) đóng vai trò quan trọng trong việc nâng cao hiệu quả học tập. Nghiên cứu này nhằm mục đích chỉ ra thực trạng về ý thức tự học môn tiếng Nhật tổng hợp 1 (TNTH 1) của SV năm nhất ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật trường đại học Mở TP. HCM và tiến hành phân tích nguyên nhân, xác định những yếu tố tác động đến ý thức tự học của SV thông qua bảng câu hỏi định tính. Từ kết quả đó đưa ra những đề xuất để giải quyết thực trạng cũng như những kiến nghị cần thiết nhằm cải thiện, định hướng cho SV những thái độ đúng đắn với việc học, góp phần nâng cao chất lượng Giáo dục - Đào tạo của Nhà trường.

Từ khóa: *Ý thức, tự học, ngôn ngữ Nhật, tiếng Nhật tổng hợp 1*

1. ĐẶT VẤN ĐỀ

Tiếng Nhật là một ngôn ngữ được nhiều người chọn để học và nghiên cứu, song tiếng Nhật từ trước đến nay vẫn được đánh giá là một ngôn ngữ khó học nên người học gặp không ít khó khăn trong quá trình học tập, nghiên cứu. Đối với sinh viên năm nhất, vì vẫn chưa quen với cách học theo quy chế tín chỉ, lấy SV làm trung tâm, đòi hỏi SV phải có ý thức tự học cao ở bậc Đại học nên trong thực tế, với thời lượng học tập ở trên lớp có hạn, nhiều sinh viên gặp khó khăn khi học môn TNTH 1. Đây là môn học ở cấp độ đầu tiên dành cho người chưa biết tiếng Nhật nên nội dung chủ yếu là những kiến thức cơ bản và nền tảng nhưng phạm vi kiến thức khá rộng vì bao gồm cả bảng chữ cái, từ vựng, ngữ pháp, Hán tự. Hơn nữa, kết quả học tập môn TNTH 1 còn ảnh hưởng trực tiếp đến kết quả học tập tới các môn học liên quan cùng kỳ như Môn Kỹ năng Nghe – nói và kết quả học tập của những môn học kế tiếp như Tiếng Nhật tổng hợp 2. Vì vậy để đảm bảo sinh viên năm nhất có thể học tốt môn học này, ngoài những giờ học trên lớp, đòi hỏi sinh viên năm nhất phải có ý thức tự học để học tập, nâng cao chất lượng học tập. Để tìm ra hướng giải quyết cho vấn đề này, người viết tiến hành nghiên cứu ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV năm nhất để tìm hiểu về thực trạng và đề xuất những giải pháp nhằm khắc phục vấn đề.

2. CƠ SỞ LÝ LUẬN

2.1. Tự học là gì?

Về khái niệm tự học, có nhiều tác giả đưa ra những nhận định khác nhau. Tác giả Nguyễn Cảnh Toàn (1997) cho rằng: “Tự học là tự mình động não suy nghĩ, sử dụng các năng lực trí tuệ cùng các phẩm chất khác của mình, cả động cơ và tình cảm, thế giới quan để chiếm lĩnh một lĩnh vực hiểu biết nào đó thành sở hữu của mình. Có thể nói một cách ngắn gọn tự học là quá trình tư duy độc lập để khám phá và sáng tạo.”

Theo tác giả Thái Duy Tuyên (2002), “tự học là hoạt động độc lập chiếm lĩnh kiến thức, kĩ năng, kĩ xảo về kinh nghiệm lịch sử loài người và của chính bản thân người học”.

Theo Đặng Thành Hưng (2012), “tự học là chiến lược học tập cá nhân độc lập, không phụ thuộc trực tiếp vào người dạy hay học chế nhất định, do người học tự mình quyết định và tự nguyện tiến hành học tập kể từ mục đích, nội dung, cách thức, phương tiện, môi trường và điều kiện học tập cho đến kế hoạch và nguồn lực học tập.”

2.2. Môn Tiếng Nhật tổng hợp 1

Môn TNTH 1 là môn học đầu tiên trong chương trình học của Sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Nhật, cung cấp kiến thức nền tảng cơ sở cho chuyên ngành. Học phần trang bị cho sinh viên những kiến thức cơ bản ban đầu của tiếng Nhật như các bảng chữ cái, ngữ pháp, từ vựng căn bản dùng trong đời sống. Sinh viên có thể sử dụng những kiến thức đã học được từ môn học này để ứng dụng trong giờ học nghe - nói với giáo viên bản xứ. Đây cũng là môn học cung cấp cho sinh viên kiến thức cơ sở căn bản để sinh viên học những môn học tiếp theo.

Môn Tiếng Nhật tổng hợp I được học vào đợt 1 của học kỳ I năm nhất. Đây là môn học 4 tín chỉ, gồm 60 tiết lý thuyết và 120 tiết thực hành.

3. PHƯƠNG PHÁP NGHIÊN CỨU

3.1. Phương pháp nghiên cứu

Để có được những kết quả khách quan và chính xác, người viết đã sử dụng phương pháp khảo sát bằng bảng câu hỏi định tính để thu thập ý kiến của SV. Sau khi thu thập được thông tin, sử dụng phương pháp phân tích để tổng hợp theo từng vấn đề cụ thể:

- Các hình thức tự học môn TNTH 1
- Tình hình tự học và ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1
- Khó khăn trong quá trình tự học môn TNTH 1
- Tự đánh giá ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1

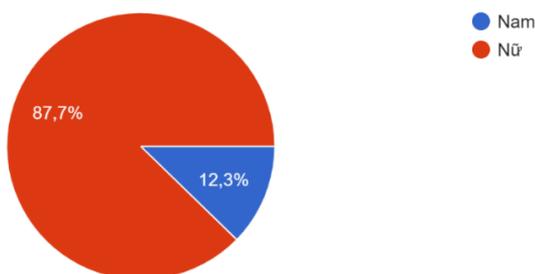
Sau khi tổng hợp các thông tin, người viết tiến hành xử lý thông tin theo số liệu phần trăm, sử dụng phương pháp định lượng để khái quát lại thực trạng, các yếu tố có thể ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học của SV thông qua kết quả khảo sát, cùng những ý kiến bổ sung và phần tự đánh giá của SV trong bảng hỏi.

Nội dung phiếu điều tra bao gồm các câu hỏi về lý do, động lực học của SV và những câu hỏi liên quan đến tình hình tự học của SV, những khó khăn ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học của SV và câu hỏi tự đánh giá ý thức tự học của SV.

3.2. Dữ liệu nghiên cứu

Đối tượng nghiên cứu: Sinh viên năm 1 khóa 2019 ngành Ngôn Ngữ Nhật, Trường Đại học Mở TP. HCM.

Đề tài đã thu được 130 phiếu trả lời hợp lệ. Hình 1 cho thấy độ chênh lệch tương đối lớn về giới tính của SV ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật. Trong 130 phiếu khảo sát có đến 114 phiếu (chiếm 87,7%) là nữ, còn lại 16 phiếu (chiếm 12,3%) là nam. Đây cũng là một nét đặc thù không chỉ của SV ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật mà còn là của SV thuộc khối ngành xã hội như Ngoại ngữ.

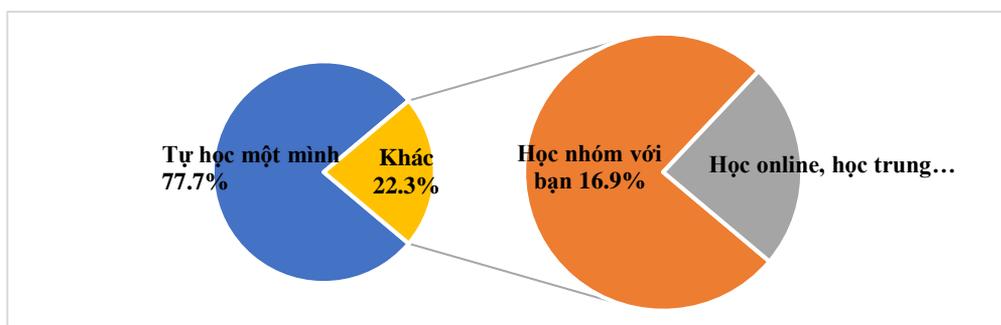


Hình 1: Thông tin dữ liệu nghiên cứu

4. KẾT QUẢ VÀ THẢO LUẬN

4.1. Thực trạng

4.1.1. Các hình thức tự học môn TNTH 1



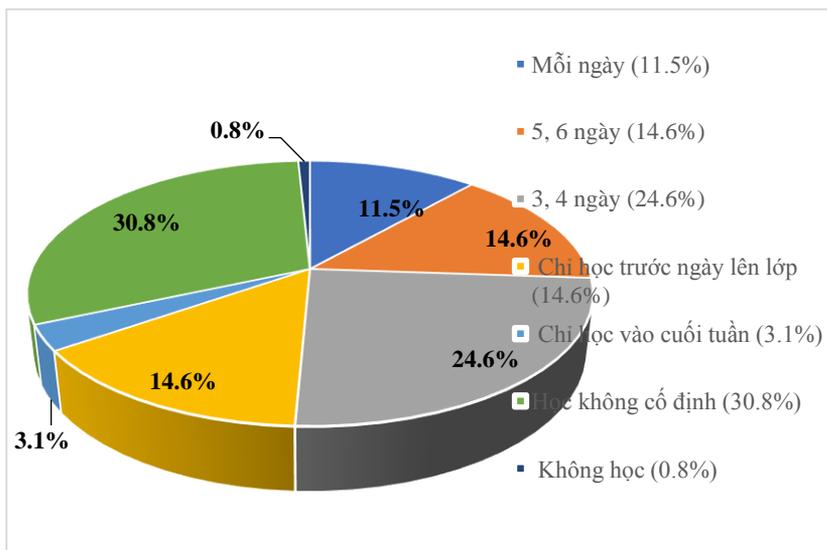
Hình 2: Các hình thức tự học của SV

Phần lớn SV năm nhất ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật TP. HCM đều lựa chọn hình thức tự học một mình. Theo thống kê, 77,7% SV tham gia trả lời câu hỏi khảo sát đều tự học môn TNTH 1 một mình bằng sách, tư liệu sẵn có; 22,3% SV có tổ chức tự học với các hình thức như, học nhóm với bạn bè, học online, học qua ứng dụng học tập hoặc học thêm ở trung tâm. Tuy

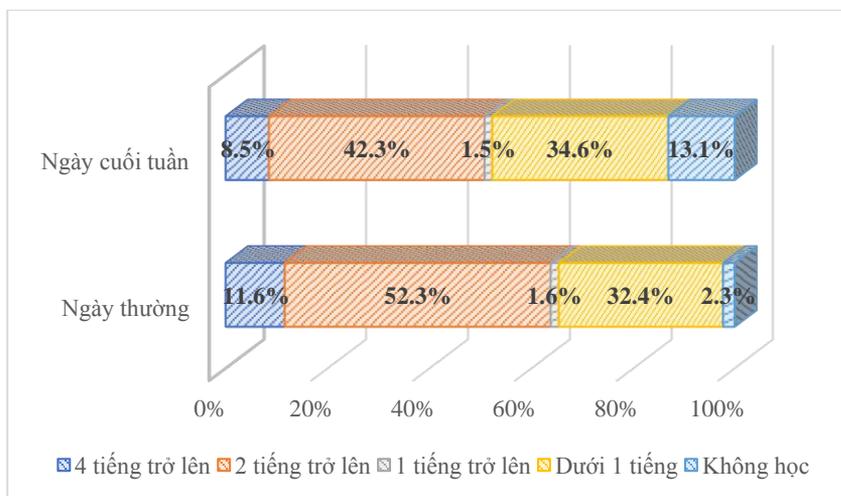
SV mà cách tiếp thu kiến thức cũng như năng lực tiếp thu kiến thức khác nhau, tuy nhiên nhiều nghiên cứu đã chỉ ra rằng, khi học ngoại ngữ, so với việc học một mình thì việc học nhóm giúp tăng khả năng tiếp thu và ghi nhớ kiến thức hơn rất nhiều lần. Theo A.T. Francisco (1993) định nghĩa: “*Học tập nhóm là một phương pháp học tập mà theo phương pháp đó học viên trong nhóm trao đổi, giúp đỡ, và hợp tác với nhau trong học tập*”. Tức có nghĩa, học nhóm là hình thức học mà các thành viên cùng hợp tác nâng cao chất lượng của từng thành viên thông qua việc học hỏi từ bạn bè trong quá trình trao đổi và chia sẻ kiến thức, nhờ đó mà người học có được những kết quả học tập tiến bộ về nhiều mặt. Tuy nhiên, bên cạnh một số SV có xu hướng thích học một mình vẫn còn nhiều SV chưa chủ động tìm kiếm đối tượng để học cùng vì chưa ý thức được tầm quan trọng của việc học nhóm cũng như chưa xem trọng việc tự học.

➔ *Nhiều SV vẫn chưa ý thức được tầm quan trọng của việc tự học nên vẫn chưa chủ động tìm hiểu thêm các hình thức tự học hiệu quả, không chủ động xây dựng nhóm học tập.*

3.1.1. Tình hình tự học và ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1



Hình 3: Thời gian tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV tính theo tuần (7 ngày)



Hình 4: Thời gian tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV vào ngày thường và vào cuối tuần

Kết quả ở trên cho thấy, có 11.5% SV mỗi ngày đều dành thời gian để học môn TNTH 1, hơn 39% SV dành hơn 3 ngày trong tuần để học. 14.6% SV chỉ học trước ngày có môn học, 3.1% SV chỉ học vào cuối tuần, 30.8% SV học không cố định và 0.8% SV không học (1 SV). Khảo sát về số giờ trung bình SV dành cho việc học tiếng Nhật phân theo ngày thường và ngày cuối tuần thu được kết quả:

Ngày thường: có 11.6% SV dành hơn 4 tiếng mỗi ngày để tự học môn TNTH 1, hơn 52% SV chỉ dành ra 2-3 tiếng, 1.6% SV tự học trên 1 tiếng và hơn 32% SV chỉ học dưới 1 tiếng, thậm chí còn có 2.3% SV không dành thời gian để tự học môn TNTH 1 vào ngày thường.

Ngày cuối tuần: 8.5% SV dành hơn 4 tiếng mỗi ngày để tự học môn TNTH 1, trong số đó cũng có SV trả lời có lúc học quên cả thời gian. 42.3% SV tự học trên 2 tiếng, hơn 34% SV học dưới một tiếng và 13.1% SV hoàn toàn không học vào ngày cuối tuần.

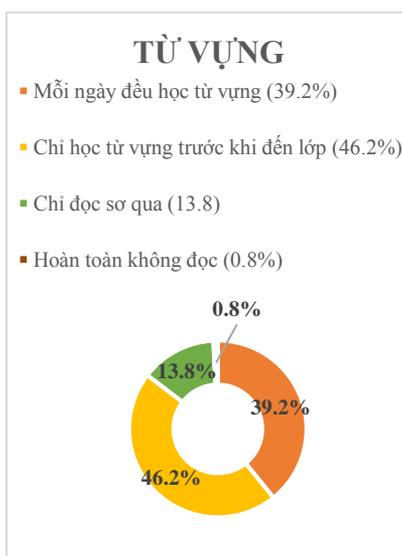
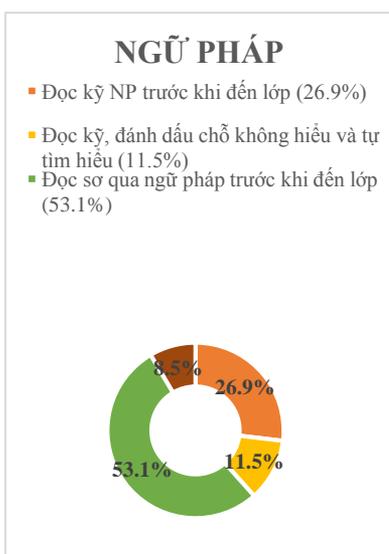
Môn TNTH 1 là môn học có 4 tín chỉ, tương đương 60 tiết học tập trên lớp và 120 tiết tự học. Trung bình mỗi ngày SV phải dành 2-3 tiếng cho việc tự học. Kết quả trên cho thấy khoảng 50% SV đều dành ra khoảng 2, 3 tiếng để tự học, nhưng bên cạnh đó số SV chỉ dành thời gian dưới 1 tiếng để học tiếng Nhật mỗi ngày cũng khá nhiều. Vào ngày cuối tuần, SV dành ít thời gian cho việc tự học ít hơn so với ngày thường, thậm chí số SV không dành thời gian cho việc tự học chiếm đến 13.1%. Khối lượng kiến thức của môn TNTH 1 khá lớn, hơn nữa kiến thức môn học này còn ảnh hưởng đến khả năng học tập của những môn học liên quan như Môn

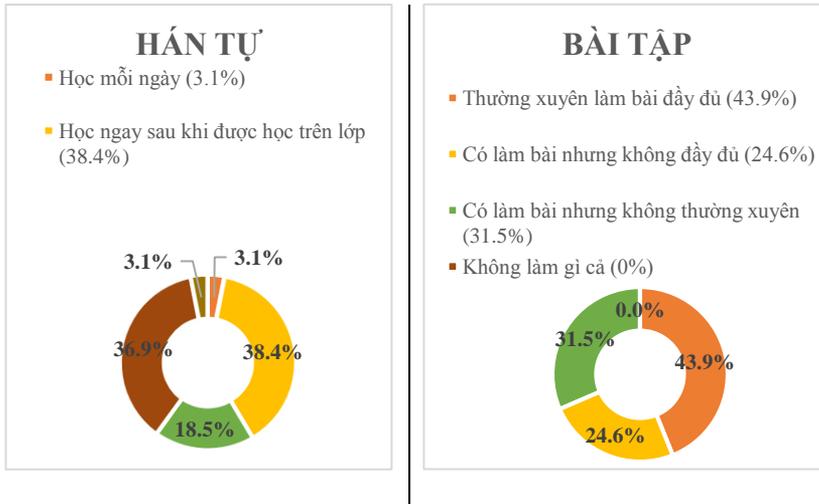
nghe - nói. Được biết có khoảng 60% SV vẫn tự lên kế hoạch học tập cho môn TNTH 1 nhưng với kết quả thu được ở đây có thể thấy SV vẫn chưa thật sự biết cách sắp xếp thời gian sao cho hợp lý giữa việc học, công việc làm thêm và giải trí. Đồng thời, nhiều SV vẫn chưa có ý thức đầu tư thời gian cho việc tự học.

Về tình trạng học bài và làm bài, hơn 70% SV biết tự hệ thống lại kiến thức đã học. Để làm rõ tình trạng thực tế, người viết đã tiến hành khảo sát theo từng nội dung yêu cầu SV phải chuẩn bị như sau:

Ngữ pháp: Có 37.4% SV đọc kỹ ngữ pháp, trong đó có 11.5% SV đọc kỹ, đánh dấu những phần chưa hiểu và chủ động tìm hiểu thêm. Hơn một nửa số SV chỉ đọc sơ qua và 8.5% SV không hề đọc trước. Về việc đọc trước ngữ pháp, có giáo viên yêu cầu sinh viên đọc trước để hiểu sơ qua nội dung bài học, nhưng cũng có giáo viên không bắt buộc để tránh trường hợp sinh viên đọc và hiểu sai, dẫn tới tình trạng sinh viên không tiếp thu được kiến thức đúng khi giáo viên giải thích lại trên lớp.

Từ vựng: Vì ở lớp giảng viên giảng bài bằng tiếng Nhật nên giảng viên yêu cầu SV phải học từ vựng trước khi đến lớp và phải thường xuyên tra dồi, củng cố, ôn tập lại vốn từ vựng sau khi học. Kết quả khảo sát thu được cho thấy có 39.2% SV học từ vựng mỗi ngày, 46.2% SV học trước khi đến lớp, 13.8% SV chỉ đọc sơ qua và không có SV nào không học trước từ vựng. Tuy nhiên, trong số SV có học từ vựng, có SV đã trả lời mặc dù có học từ vựng nhưng không thể nhớ hoặc mau quên.





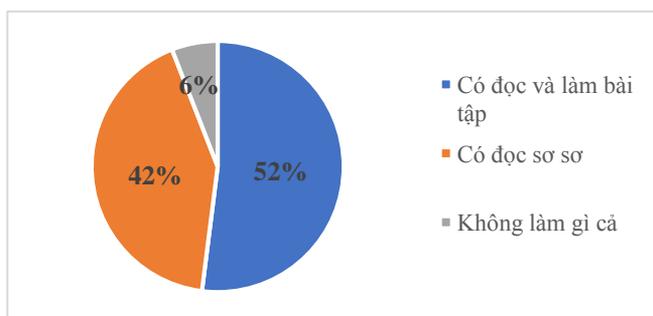
Hình 5: Tình trạng học bài làm bài tập môn TNTH 1

Hán tự: Nhiều SV cho rằng đây là phần kiến thức khiến SV dễ nản vì không biết phương pháp học, học khó nhớ, mau quên. Tuy nhiên, số SV học thường xuyên chỉ chiếm 3.1%, 38.4% SV học thuộc ngay sau khi được học ở lớp, 18.5% SV chỉ học trước khi kiểm tra hoặc trước khi thi, gần 40% thỉnh thoảng mới học và 3.1% SV không học Hán tự.

Bài tập: Có 43.9% SV thường xuyên làm bài tập đầy đủ, gần 25% SV có làm bài tập nhưng không làm hết nội dung giáo viên giao, 31.5% SV làm đầy đủ bài tập được giao nhưng không thường xuyên làm.

➔ *Hầu hết SV có ý thức trong việc chuẩn bị bài, học bài và làm bài tập giáo viên giao. Tuy nhiên chỉ dừng lại ở mức làm cho có chứ chưa thật sự xuất phát từ ý thức muốn học, phải học cho bản thân. Dù đã ý thức được bài học nhiều và khó nhưng vẫn không dành nhiều thời gian cho việc tự học, gần 50% số SV chưa đạt số giờ tự học chuẩn (120 tiết tự học). Môn TNTH 1 là môn học có lượng kiến thức ngữ pháp, từ vựng, Hán tự được học trong một buổi khá nhiều, nếu không học trước từ vựng ở nhà SV sẽ không theo kịp bài giảng, dẫn tới tình trạng không hiểu bài và không muốn tự học. Hơn nữa, vì chưa thật sự muốn tự học nên nhiều SV vẫn chưa dành đủ thời gian để học tự học hoặc không sắp xếp thời gian hợp lý khiến việc tự học không diễn ra thuận lợi, dẫn đến việc nhiều SV chuẩn bị bài vẫn còn sơ sài, học bài và làm bài không đầy đủ cũng như không thường xuyên. Ngoài ra, kết quả trên cũng đã cho thấy việc không tiếp thu được nhiều kiến thức do không biết cách học hoặc học khó nhớ, dễ quên khiến SV chán, ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học của SV.*

Bên cạnh việc học bài và làm bài tập trong những tài liệu, giáo trình có sẵn, có hơn 65% SV chủ động tìm kiếm thêm tài liệu tham khảo, còn lại SV chỉ sử dụng những tài liệu có sẵn. Trong số 65% SV đã từng kiếm thêm các nguồn tài liệu khác cũng có SV không tìm được nguồn tài liệu thích hợp. Đối với những SV đã có tài liệu tham khảo, người viết đã tiến hành khảo sát cách sử dụng TLTK của SV và thu được kết quả như sau:



Hình 6: Cách sử dụng tài liệu tham khảo của SV

Hơn 50% SV có đọc và làm bài tập trong tài liệu tham khảo, hơn 40% chỉ đọc sơ sơ, không nghiên cứu kỹ cũng như không làm các bài tập có trong tài liệu và 6% SV có tài liệu nhưng không sử dụng. Kết quả trên cho thấy vẫn còn SV chưa biết cách tìm kiếm tài liệu thích hợp cho việc học cũng như chưa biết cách sử dụng tài liệu sao cho hiệu quả.

➔ *Nhiều SV có ý thức trong việc cần phải tăng cường vốn kiến thức của bản thân, tuy nhiên vì chưa biết cách tìm kiếm tài liệu cũng như chưa biết cách sử dụng tài liệu sao cho hợp lý đã ảnh hưởng đến chất lượng tự học và khiến ý thức tự học ở mức độ tự mở rộng kiến thức thông qua tài liệu của SV suy giảm.*

Giải thích cho lý do vì sao không thường xuyên học bài và làm bài tập đầy đủ, nhiều SV đã đưa ra lý do vì không hiểu bài. Sau khi tiến hành khảo sát cách SV thường áp dụng nhất khi không hiểu bài người viết đã thu được kết quả được thể hiện trong bảng 1:

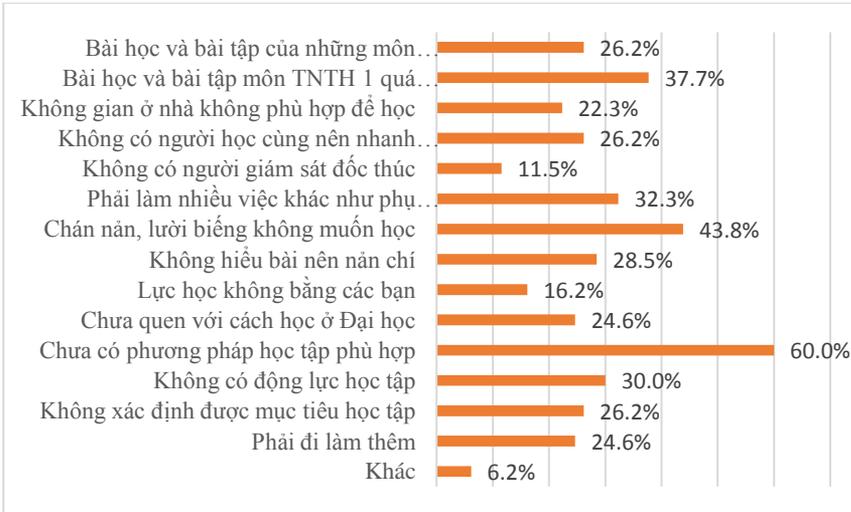
Cách giải quyết khi gặp vấn đề không hiểu	Hỏi người khác		Tự tìm hiểu	Bỏ qua
	Hỏi giáo viên	Hỏi bạn bè hoặc người quen biết tiếng Nhật	40.8%	0%
	8.4%	50.8%		

Bảng 1: Cách giải quyết của SV khi gặp vấn đề không hiểu

Kết quả cho thấy người học có xu hướng tự tìm hiểu (hơn 40%) hoặc hỏi bạn bè, người quen (hơn 50%). Ít trường hợp SV chủ động liên hệ với giáo viên để nhờ giải đáp thắc mắc. Điều này ít nhiều phản ánh mức độ gắn kết giữa giáo viên và SV.

4.1.2. Khó khăn trong quá trình tự học môn TNTH 1

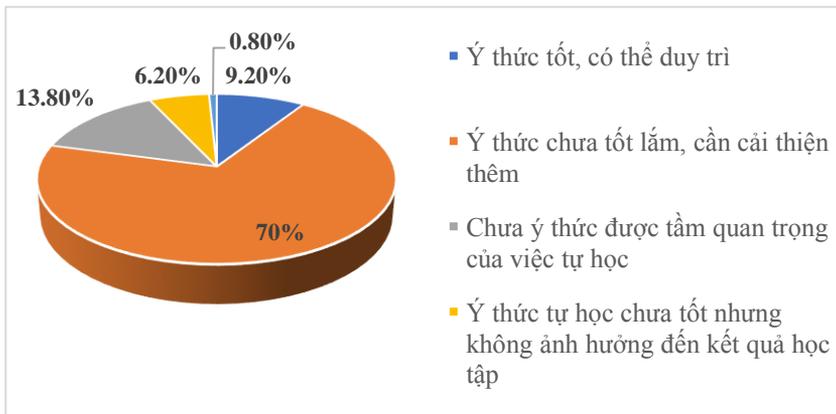
Để làm rõ nguyên nhân ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV năm 1 ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật, người viết đã tiến hành khảo sát lấy ý kiến đóng góp của SV về những vấn đề khó khăn SV đang gặp phải cũng như ý kiến của SV về việc tự học môn TNTH 1. Kết quả cho thấy, đa phần SV đều cảm thấy việc chưa có phương pháp học tập phù hợp với hình thức học tập tại Đại học khiến nhiều sinh viên thấy khó khăn khi tự học. Tốc độ dạy của giáo viên và lượng kiến thức ngữ pháp, từ vựng, Hán tự phải học trong một buổi khá nhiều khiến những SV có lực học trung bình không theo kịp nên không hiểu bài dẫn đến chán nản, lười biếng không muốn tự học. Nhiều ý kiến khác cũng cho rằng khối lượng bài tập và bài học của môn TNTH 1 cũng như của các môn học khác quá nhiều, hạn nộp bài quá dồn dập khiến SV không thể hoàn thành hết được nên có xu hướng bỏ, không muốn làm hoặc không học bài, làm bài đầy đủ, thường xuyên. Có không ít SV còn bị hạn chế về mặt thời gian do phải đi làm thêm, hoặc do phải phụ giúp gia đình làm việc. Điều này cũng vì SV chưa biết cách sắp xếp thời gian sao cho hợp lý dẫn đến thiếu hụt thời gian cho việc tự học. Việc không có động lực và mục tiêu học tập cũng khiến SV cảm thấy mù mờ phương hướng khi học. Ngoài ra còn những khó khăn khác như, giáo trình hiện tại là sách tiếng Anh nên những bạn yếu tiếng Anh gặp nhiều khó khăn khi học từ vựng, ngữ pháp; gia đình không ủng hộ, không có người học cùng; Không hiểu bài giảng trên lớp; Học không bằng bạn bè; không có người đốc thúc, kèm cặp, không có không gian học phù hợp....



Hình 7: Những khó khăn ảnh hưởng đến việc tự học

4.1.3. Nhận thức về vấn đề tự học môn TNTH 1

Khi cho SV tự đánh giá về ý thức tự học của bản thân, người viết đã thu được kết quả được tổng hợp trong sơ đồ hình 8.



Hình 8: Tự đánh giá ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV

4.2. Nguyên nhân

Từ kết quả thu được từ khảo sát, có thể thấy được những nguyên nhân ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV xuất phát từ gia đình, Nhà trường và từ chính bản thân SV.

4.2.1. Nguyên nhân từ phía gia đình:

Nhiều gia đình còn chưa ủng hộ, tạo điều kiện cho SV tự học ở nhà. Khiến nhiều SV rơi vào tình trạng khó khăn vì phải tự đi làm kiếm tiền đóng học phí, phải phụ giúp gia đình buôn bán, làm việc nên không còn thời gian và sức lực để tự học. Từ đó ý thức muốn tự học của SV cũng bị giảm dần do áp lực và tinh thần.

4.2.2. Nguyên nhân từ phía Nhà trường:

- Chưa sâu sát đến tình trạng tự học thực tế của SV để đưa ra những phương án cải thiện kịp thời.
- Còn thiếu giáo trình, tài liệu tham khảo ở thư viện để SV tiện tìm kiếm, sử dụng.
- Chưa tổ chức các buổi lắng nghe ý kiến của SV từng ngành, từng khóa để nắm được vấn đề của SV liên quan đến việc học ở trường và tự học.
- Chưa tổ chức các buổi tọa đàm, chia sẻ các thông tin về các phương pháp học cho SV.
- Khối lượng bài học, bài tập SV phải làm khá nhiều khiến SV bị áp lực.
- Giáo viên còn xa cách với SV khiến SV chưa thể mở lòng cũng như tìm đến giáo viên khi gặp vấn đề khó khăn trong việc học.

4.2.3. Nguyên nhân từ phía SV:

- Không ý thức được việc tự học là kỹ năng mỗi SV phải có.
- Tính tự giác không cao, còn thụ động trong việc học.
- Chưa nắm được phương pháp học tập khiến việc học tù vưng, Hán tự trở nên khó khăn, học hoài không nhớ dẫn tới lười, chán nản, không muốn học.
- Chưa biết cách sắp xếp thời gian hợp lý khiến thời gian chơi, học tập, công việc và những việc khác không cân bằng, thời gian tự học không đủ để hoàn thành bài học và bài tập, dẫn đến tình trạng SV cảm thấy quá sức, không muốn cố gắng nữa hoặc chỉ làm cho có để đối phó.
- Chưa xác định được mục tiêu học tập nên chưa ý thức được tầm quan trọng của việc học do đó chưa ý thức được việc bản thân

cần phải tự học.

- Chưa làm quen với hình thức học ở bậc Đại học, còn quen với lối học ỷ lại vào sự kèm cặp của giáo viên như bậc phổ thông nên chưa ý thức được việc bản thân phải tự học để bổ sung kiến thức.
- Chưa chủ động tìm hiểu thêm các phương pháp học tập chủ động, các hình thức tự học khác ngoài giờ lên lớp nên khả năng tiếp thu và lực học không bằng các bạn hoặc học nhiều không có hiệu quả, dẫn đến tình trạng chán học, không muốn cố gắng nữa.

Ngoài những nguyên nhân trên, lý do và động lực học tiếng Nhật cũng là một trong những yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học của SV. Các nhà nghiên cứu về tâm lý học đã chỉ ra rằng động lực có một vai trò quan trọng trong quá trình hoạt động của con người, động lực là một quá trình nội tại, giúp thúc đẩy, định hướng và duy trì hành động liên tục (Murphy & Alexander, 2000; Pintrich, 2003; Schunk, 2000; Stipek, 2002). Động lực là một quá trình tâm lý cơ bản, cùng với nhận thức, tính cách, thái độ và học tập, động lực là một yếu tố rất quan trọng của hành vi (Adeyinka Tella et al., 2007). Vì vậy, lý do và động lực học tập được xem là yếu tố ảnh hưởng khá nhiều đến ý thức tự học của SV.

Kết quả khảo sát cho thấy khoảng 60% SV khi lựa chọn ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật xuất phát từ lý do tích cực, chẳng hạn như vì yêu thích tiếng Nhật, vì cơ hội nghề nghiệp của ngành tiếng Nhật cao. Nhưng có khoảng 40% SV đưa ra lý do tiêu cực như học vì không có sự lựa chọn nào khác do thi rớt, hoặc học đại, do gia đình định hướng hoặc ép buộc. Khi hỏi về động lực học, kết quả cho thấy có hơn 49% SV trả lời không có động lực học. Điều này khiến SV bị mất phương hướng khi học, không xác định được mục tiêu để khiến SV bị nản, không có ý chí quyết tâm và không thể tiếp tục cố gắng.

4.3. Một số giải pháp nhằm cải thiện ý thức tự học môn TNTH của SV năm nhất trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh

4.3.1. Về phía gia đình

Nên lắng nghe, ủng hộ và tạo điều kiện cho con em có thêm thời gian tự học ở nhà. Không nên đè nặng áp lực về những vấn đề khác khiến SV bị xuống tinh thần, không thể tự học. Nên ủng hộ về mặt tinh thần để SV có ý chí vươn lên trong việc học. Có thể hợp tác cùng nhà trường trong công tác hỗ trợ SV học tập.

4.3.2. Về phía Nhà trường

Nhà trường cần tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, chuyên đề bàn về phương

pháp giảng dạy môn TNTH 1 của giảng viên để nâng cao chất lượng giảng dạy, thường xuyên tổ chức các buổi hướng dẫn phương pháp học tập Ngữ pháp, Hán tự, từ vựng cho SV; Mở các lớp ôn luyện kiến thức cho SV. Tổ chức các buổi tọa đàm định hướng cho SV về nghề nghiệp tương lai, giúp SV xác định đúng phương hướng khi học tập tại trường;

Tạo kênh thông tin chung để SV có thể liên lạc, trao đổi với giáo viên, nhờ giáo viên giải đáp khi có thắc mắc về vấn đề học tập, gắn kết mối quan hệ giữa Thầy và trò để SV có thể tin cậy và dễ dàng chia sẻ với giáo viên.

Cố vấn học tập của các lớp cần thường xuyên kiểm tra tình trạng học tập của SV, đốc thúc SV học tập. Lắng nghe những chia sẻ của SV để nắm được tình hình của SV, theo đó có thể kịp thời nhắc nhở, khuyến khích SV nâng cao ý thức tự học cũng như có thể cùng các giáo viên phụ trách các môn học điều chỉnh lại phương pháp giảng dạy, nội dung học tập, thời hạn bài tập sao cho phù hợp với lực học của SV.

Giáo viên phụ trách môn TNTH 1 cần thường xuyên kiểm tra từ vựng, Hán tự và ngữ pháp, đốc thúc SV học bài và làm bài đầy đủ trước khi đến lớp; Nên căn chỉnh khối lượng bài học và bài tập cho SV để SV không bị nản hoặc choáng ngợp dẫn đến mất tinh thần học tập. Để sinh viên không bị rối giữa kiến thức tự tìm hiểu và kiến thức giáo viên dạy ở lớp, giáo viên phụ trách không cần phải bắt buộc sinh viên phải đọc trước phần ngữ pháp ở nhà để sinh viên có thêm thời gian học từ vựng, Hán tự. Vì phần lớn SV đều gặp vấn đề khi học từ vựng và Hán tự, do đó giáo viên phụ trách nên dành nhiều thời gian ở những buổi học đầu để hướng dẫn SV những phương pháp học từ vựng và Hán tự sao cho hiệu quả và không bị chán. Chia sẻ cho SV những kinh nghiệm khi học môn TNTH 1 cũng như các kỹ năng tìm kiếm thông tin trên mạng như cách tra cứu Ngữ pháp, các trang mạng hỗ trợ việc học ngữ pháp, Hán tự hoặc các tài liệu tham khảo liên quan đến kiến thức về từ vựng, Hán tự, ngữ pháp để SV có thể tự chủ động tìm kiếm, rèn luyện được kỹ năng tự học. Hướng dẫn SV tạo nhóm học tập, hoặc các phương pháp tự học ở nhà hiệu quả.

4.3.3. Về phía SV

Môn TNTH 1 là một môn học tổng hợp các kiến thức cơ bản đầu tiên của tiếng Nhật về từ vựng, Hán tự, Ngữ pháp. Muốn học tốt những môn học khác trong chương trình học, trước hết SV cần nắm vững kiến thức trong môn học này. Thời lượng mỗi buổi học trên lớp không đủ để giảng viên có thể truyền tải hết toàn bộ kiến thức phải học, do đó mỗi SV cần phải chủ động tự học. Trên thực tế, mặc dù các yếu tố khách quan như Nhà trường, giảng viên, giáo trình, môi trường học tập, .v.v. có thể ảnh hưởng đến ý thức tự học của SV, nhưng việc tự học vẫn là do bản thân SV quyết

định. Do đó SV cần tổ chức tốt việc học của mình sao cho có thể phát huy tối đa năng lực tự học của bản thân, tinh thần chủ động sáng tạo. Để cải thiện và phát huy ý thức tự học cũng như chất lượng của việc tự học, người viết xin đề xuất một số ý kiến như sau:

- Trước hết SV cần phải xác định rõ mục tiêu học tập của bản thân, xác định nghề nghiệp muốn làm trong tương lai để có thể đi đúng hướng, không bị nản trong quá trình học, giúp bản thân ý thức được ý nghĩa của việc học.
- Rèn luyện tính tự giác, chủ động trong việc học.
- Xác định được tầm quan trọng của môn TNTH 1 để đốc thúc bản thân phải cố gắng tự học.
- Phải xây dựng kế hoạch tự học sao cho có thể cân đối thời gian học các môn, công việc làm thêm và những việc khác để không ảnh hưởng đến thời gian tự học môn TNTH 1.
- Để tránh trường hợp vì không biết phương pháp học tập đúng hoặc không hiểu bài dẫn tới chán nản việc tự học, SV cần chủ động liên hệ với giáo viên phụ trách môn học hoặc với cố vấn học tập khi gặp vấn đề trong việc học, khi có thắc mắc về bài học hoặc khi cần được hướng dẫn về phương pháp học.
- Nên xây dựng nhóm học tập để cùng nhau học bài, làm bài hoặc để trao đổi thêm về kiến thức môn học, kèm cặp nhau và cùng động viên nhau cố gắng trong học tập.

5. KẾT LUẬN

Tự học là kỹ năng mà mỗi SV thời nay đều phải trang bị. Để nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học môn TNTH 1, mỗi SV cần phải hoàn thành tốt nhiệm vụ tự học. Nhìn chung SV năm nhất ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật đều có ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1, tuy nhiên mức độ ý thức không như nhau và vì nhiều lý do khách quan lẫn chủ quan khiến ý thức tự học của một bộ phận SV chưa cao hoặc có xu hướng giảm dần. Vì vậy, để có thể kịp thời cải thiện và nâng cao ý thức tự học môn TNTH 1 của SV cần có sự hợp tác tích cực từ phía Nhà trường trong công tác phát triển cơ sở vật chất, xây dựng chương trình đào tạo phù hợp với tình hình của SV, điều chỉnh lại phương pháp giảng dạy theo hướng có thể thu hút được giảng viên cùng với sự hỗ trợ SV về mặt tinh thần từ phía gia đình và đặc biệt là sự hợp tác của chính SV trong việc tự giác lại nhiệm vụ của bản thân, xác định tầm quan trọng của việc học để có thể khắc phục khó khăn, nâng cao ý thức tự học.

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INVESTIGATING FIRST-YEAR JAPANESE LANGUAGE MAJOR STUDENTS' DIFFICULTIES IN LEARNING KANJI

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ABSTRACT

Chinese characters (Kanji) have always been a concern of Japanese language students. Competency in using Kanji for different specializations is a compulsory requirement. There are many Kanji learning resources nowadays. However, practical suggestions and teaching methods to overcome challenges that students face, especially for Japanese-majored students, are limited. On the basis of teaching practice, this article explains first-year students' difficulties when they first learn Kanji. Thereby, it suggests some suitable teaching methods for these students, which aim to improve student learning capability and teaching efficiency of lecturers.

Keywords: *Kanji, Kanji learning methods, Japanese language, Chinese characters*

KHẢO SÁT KHÓ KHĂN KHI HỌC HÁN TỰ CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM NHẤT NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ NHẬT VÀ MỘT VÀI KIẾN NGHỊ GIẢNG DẠY

ThS. Phạm Minh Tú

Trường Đại Học Mở Tp. Hồ Chí Minh

TÓM TẮT

Hán tự (Kanji) luôn là nỗi trăn trở của sinh viên học tiếng Nhật, nhất là ở những chuyên ngành thì việc sử dụng Hán tự thành thạo lại là một yêu cầu mang tính cấp thiết. Hiện nay, giáo trình học Hán tự có khá nhiều nhưng đề xuất những phương pháp mang tính thiết thực một cách có chủ đích, nhằm tháo gỡ những khó khăn cho sinh viên trong quá trình học, đặc biệt là sinh viên chuyên ngành thì vẫn còn khá khiếm tốn. Trên cơ sở thực tiễn giảng dạy, bài viết trình bày những khó khăn của sinh viên năm nhất khi mới học Hán tự. Qua đó, đề ra một số giải pháp giảng dạy phù hợp với đối tượng này. Từ đó nâng cao năng lực học tập của sinh viên và hiệu quả giảng dạy của giảng viên.

Từ khoá: *kanji; phương pháp học Kanji; tiếng Nhật; Hán tự*

1. ĐẶT VẤN ĐỀ

Trong ngôn ngữ Nhật có sử dụng đến 47% chữ Hán (Kanji), loại ký tự có cấu tạo nhiều nét đã vô tình gây khó khăn cho sinh viên Việt Nam, vốn tiếp xúc và chỉ quen với loại hình chữ la-tinh. Theo Ishida (1995), trong môi trường không sử dụng chữ Hán thì việc sử dụng chữ Hán càng khó khăn hơn. Người học phải nhớ số lượng lớn chữ Hán và các từ được cấu tạo từ các chữ Hán đó. Hơn nữa, sinh viên cần phải nhớ cả 3 yếu tố của một chữ Hán: cách viết, cách đọc và nghĩa. Tuy Việt Nam được coi là thuộc Khu vực văn hoá chữ Hán (漢字文化圈), nghĩa là lượng từ vựng có nguồn gốc từ chữ Hán tương đối lớn nhưng Việt Nam vẫn không thuộc môi trường sử dụng chữ Hán. Do đó, chữ Hán cũng chính là rào cản gây khó khăn cho sinh viên Việt Nam khi học tiếng Nhật.

Để có được phương pháp giảng dạy phù hợp, tạo hứng thú cho sinh viên khi học, chúng tôi tiến hành khảo sát, điều tra và phân tích thông qua các số liệu có được để tìm ra kết quả khoa học và khách quan nhất, nguyên nhân khiến cho sinh viên ngại học môn học này, cũng như tìm ra các giải pháp tích cực giúp cho sinh viên trong khoảng thời gian có hạn

có thể nhanh chóng, hiệu quả tiếp thu được các kỹ năng rèn luyện chữ viết, tạo một môi trường ngôn ngữ “thân thiện”, khơi dậy tính chủ động tích cực của sinh viên,

Chúng tôi cho rằng, chỉ khi sinh viên khắc phục được các khó khăn trong việc học chữ Kanji, mới tiếp tục có hứng thú và đưa ra động cơ học tập đúng đắn cho các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ như Nghe, Nói, Đọc, Viết, từ đó mới có khả năng hoàn thành nhiệm vụ học tập ở mức độ cao nhất.

2. ĐIỀU TRA KHẢO SÁT KHÓ KHĂN CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM NHẤT NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ NHẬT KHI HỌC HÁN TỰ

2.1. Thông tin điều tra khảo sát

Thông tin khảo sát được tiến hành tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ, ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật, Trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Đối tượng khảo sát là sinh viên năm nhất đã hoàn thành xong 2 học kỳ của năm thứ nhất, tích lũy được khoảng 300 chữ Hán. Số lượng sinh viên tham gia khảo sát là 65 sinh viên. Trong đó có 03 sinh viên đã có chứng chỉ năng lực N3 trước khi vào học tại Trường. Để kết quả được chính xác và do mục đích chúng tôi đi tìm hiểu khó khăn ở phạm vi là người mới bắt đầu học tiếng Nhật nên chúng tôi đã loại 03 bài khảo sát của sinh viên có chứng chỉ N3 và số phiếu khảo sát thực tế thống kê là 62 phiếu.

Bản điều tra được chia thành 2 phần. Phần 1 gồm những thông tin cá nhân, trình độ tiếng Nhật... Phần 2 gồm những khó khăn mà sinh viên đang gặp phải với những câu hỏi dự đoán: nhiều âm đọc nên không nhớ khi ghép chữ; không nhớ thứ tự nét; Không nhớ bộ thủ; Khó nhớ và dễ quên, dễ nhầm; lượng chữ học quá nhiều; phương pháp học. Phương thức trả lời là chọn 1 gợi ý hoặc nhiều gợi ý. Ngoài ra có phần tự luận về những đề xuất khác từ sinh viên ngoài các gợi ý được đưa ra.

2.2. Kết quả khảo sát

Với câu hỏi “So với việc học các môn học khác, việc học Hán tự với bạn có khó hay không?” số lượng sinh viên trả lời Hán tự là môn học khó chiếm khá cao 58.1% (36/62 sinh viên) và 38.7% (24/62 sinh viên) nhận xét là rất khó.

Với câu hỏi “Bạn gặp những khó khăn gì khi học Hán tự”, kết quả khảo sát cho thấy các khó khăn gợi ý nêu ra trong bản hỏi đều có lựa chọn của sinh viên. Như vậy, có thể nói những khó khăn sinh viên gặp rất đa dạng và hầu hết các sinh viên đều gặp khó khăn trong việc học Hán tự. Trong những khó khăn đó, nổi bật ở 3 vấn đề chính với khoảng 53.2% sinh viên cho rằng không thể ghép âm khi đọc văn bản vì âm ON (音読

み) và âm KUN (訓読み) nhiều nên không thể nhớ hết, khoảng 58% cho rằng khó nhớ, dễ quên, dễ nhầm và 43,5% cho rằng khó khăn ở phần viết chữ. Khó khăn ở việc ghi nhớ bộ thủ chỉ có 17.8%.

	Khó khăn	Số lượng sinh viên	Tỷ lệ
	1. Không ghép âm để đọc được vì nhiều âm	33	53.2%
	2. Không nhớ nét	27	43.5%
	3. Không nhớ bộ thủ	11	17.8%
	4. Khó nhớ, dễ quên, dễ nhầm lẫn	36	58%
	5. Lượng chữ học quá nhiều	6	9.7%
Tổng số sinh viên: 62			

Bảng 2.1: Những khó khăn khi học Hán tự của sinh viên năm nhất ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật

Chúng tôi cũng tìm hiểu thêm về phương pháp học Hán tự của sinh viên, khảo sát thu được kết quả như sau:

	Phương pháp học	Số lượng sinh viên	Tỷ lệ
	1. Làm nhiều bài tập	15	24.2%
	2. Viết nhiều lần	45	72.5%
	3. Học âm on, âm kun	30	48.4%
	4. Học và ôn theo bộ	25	40.3%

Bảng 2.2: Phương pháp học Kanji của sinh viên năm nhất ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật

Bản khảo sát cho thấy, phương pháp viết đi viết lại nhiều lần chiếm cao nhất 72.5%, học và ôn theo từ ghép là 48.4%, học và ôn theo bộ là 40.3% và làm nhiều bài tập chỉ có 15 sinh viên chiếm 24.2%. Chúng tôi cho rằng phương pháp học của sinh viên có liên quan đến những khó khăn mà sinh viên đang gặp phải nêu trên. Phương pháp viết đi viết lại nhiều lần là phương pháp học phổ biến không chỉ có sinh viên trường đại học Mở chọn mà đây cũng là cách học của sinh viên học tiếng Nhật các

trường khác tại Việt Nam và trên thế giới. Cách học này không sai vì khi sự lặp đi lặp lại sẽ giúp người học in sâu vào não bộ hơn nhưng nếu sinh viên chỉ “học vẹt” viết đi viết lại mà không có sự phân tích logic, viết theo trật tự các nét của chữ thì sẽ rất khó nhớ chính xác và dễ viết sai. Việc học âm on, âm kun của từng chữ cũng vậy sẽ khiến sinh viên mau quên và sẽ nhanh chóng nản chí vì chương trình ở năm nhất sinh viên có khoảng 500 Hán tự phải học, yêu cầu đối với sinh viên là phải nhớ được ý nghĩa, cách viết, âm on, âm kun của 500 Hán tự đó. Nếu tính ra thành từng phần thì đây là một lượng không nhỏ. Do vậy, phương pháp học âm on, âm kun của từng chữ thật sự chưa phải là phương pháp thích hợp nhất và sinh viên sẽ thật sự có cảm giác khủng khiếp khi nói đến học Hán tự. Phương pháp học theo bộ là một phương pháp được đánh giá là phương pháp học khoa học vì bản chất của bộ thủ là bảng chữ cái của Hán tự. Khi viết được bộ thủ và miêu tả được Hán tự nghĩa là viết được Hán tự đó. Ngoài ra, phương pháp làm nhiều bài tập cũng được xem là phương pháp rất hiệu quả cho việc học Hán tự, trong khi đó phần trăm ở phương pháp học này lại chiếm ít nhất, chỉ có 24.2% trả lời là làm nhiều bài tập.

Kết quả khảo sát cũng cho thấy, hầu hết sinh viên chỉ học và luyện tập gói gọn theo phần giáo trình học trên lớp khi chỉ có 29% sinh viên trả lời có tìm tài liệu học tập bên ngoài, chiếm 71% trả lời không tìm tài liệu học tập bên ngoài. Sinh viên chưa chủ động trong việc học còn phụ thuộc rất nhiều vào giáo viên. Vì vậy, đã có 58% sinh viên đề xuất tổ chức buổi hướng dẫn phương pháp học Hán tự (36sv), sinh viên yêu cầu được giáo viên hướng dẫn chi tiết hơn trong giờ học chiếm 37% (23 sv), cũng có những sinh viên có nguyện vọng được học giờ học Hán tự riêng chiếm 17.7% (11sv).

Chúng tôi cũng thu được rất nhiều ý kiến và cảm nghĩ của sinh viên về việc học Hán tự trên lớp. Ý kiến chiếm tỷ trọng nhiều nhất là thời gian học Hán tự trên lớp quá ít nên không nhớ được nhiều với 48.4%, giáo viên tạo động lực học cho sinh viên chiếm 40.3%. Cũng có ý kiến nhận xét cho rằng bài giảng của giáo viên còn sơ sài (6.5%) và cũng có những sinh viên không có ý kiến về giờ học (19.5%). Điều đáng ngạc nhiên là khi có 13% cho rằng Giáo viên không kiểm tra mỗi buổi học nên sinh viên không học, không nhớ Hán tự.

	Cảm nghĩ của sinh viên	Số lượng sinh viên	Tỷ lệ
	1. Giáo viên tạo động lực học	25	40.3%
	2. Giáo viên giảng bài sơ sài	4	6.5%
	3. Giáo viên không kiểm tra mỗi buổi học	8	13%
	4. Giờ học Hán tự trên lớp quá ít	30	48.4%
	5. Không ý kiến	12	19.5%

Bảng 2.3: Cảm nghĩ của sinh viên về việc học Hán tự trên lớp

2.3. Đề xuất giải pháp

Căn cứ trên những cứ liệu đã thu thập được, chúng tôi xin đề xuất một vài ý kiến nhằm khắc phục thực trạng như sau:

- Cần giúp người học khi mới bắt đầu tiếp xúc với Hán tự với một tinh thần học thật thoải mái. Cần giúp sinh viên “giảm bớt gánh nặng với Hán tự”, những suy nghĩ cho rằng “Hán tự rất khó”, “Ai cũng nói Hán tự khó học”...là cần loại bỏ. Kaiho (2002), cho rằng giáo viên cần phải xem xét cảm giác của người học đối với Hán tự như thế nào và cần phải giảm gánh nặng cho người học. Giảng viên nên giúp sinh viên chuyển ý nghĩ tiêu cực thành tích cực “Hán tự rất thú vị” chỉ cần hiểu đúng về Hán tự và có phương pháp học thích hợp với từng giai đoạn là thành công. Kaiho (2008) đã nhấn mạnh để cho sinh viên tìm được hứng thú khi học thì nên hướng dẫn sinh viên từ những chữ là chữ tượng hình. Hán tự có thể được phân thành bốn loại: Shokei-moji: chữ Hán biểu thị hình ảnh, Shiji-moji: chữ Hán mang ý chỉ định, Kairi-moji: chữ Hán mang ý tổng hợp, Keisei-moji: chữ Hán biểu thị âm thanh. Chữ Hán biểu thị hình ảnh (Shokei-moji) là chữ được tạo ra từ hình ảnh của các đối tượng thực tế hoặc hiện tượng tự nhiên. Chữ Hán chỉ định (Shiji-moji) thể hiện các khái niệm trừu tượng bao gồm các khái niệm về số và vị trí. Chữ Hán mang ý tổng hợp (Kairi-moji) được hình thành bằng cách kết hợp các ký tự hình ảnh. Những đặc điểm này của Hán tự có thể thu hút sự hứng thú, khơi gợi sự hiếu kỳ của người mới học Hán tự.

- Để sinh viên có thể tái hiện lại ký ức về chữ đã học khi tiếp xúc

với văn bản hoặc khi viết, theo chúng tôi sinh viên cần làm bài tập thật nhiều, thường xuyên ôn tập, đọc thật nhiều các bài đọc phù hợp với trình độ của bản thân. Khi học cần phải học từ bộ thủ trước và tạo ra một cách ghi nhớ cho riêng mình bằng cách phân tích, kết hợp các hình ảnh theo trí tưởng tượng của bản thân hay tổng hợp theo ý nghĩa các chữ đã học rồi mới viết, như vậy sẽ viết đúng được thứ tự các phần trong chữ và nhớ lâu hơn.

- Mỗi chữ Hán có thể có nhiều âm on hay âm kun và có nhiều cách ghép khác nhau. Do vậy, sinh viên cũng cần phải lưu ý và nhớ ứng với mỗi trường hợp để có cách đọc chính xác. Giáo viên cũng cần lưu ý cho sinh viên những trường hợp đặc biệt.

- Vói đề nghị nên có giờ học chuyên về Hán tự hay ý kiến sinh viên cho rằng vì giờ học Hán tự trên lớp quá ít nên không nhớ được nhiều hay vì không có bài kiểm tra mỗi buổi học nên không học dẫn đến không nhớ Hán tự là một ý kiến chưa thích hợp cho rằng với những lý do này làm ảnh hưởng đến kết quả học tập của sinh viên. Từ niên khoá 2009, khi thực hiện chủ trương đào tạo theo học chế tín chỉ, lấy người học làm trung tâm thì việc tự học, tự nghiên cứu của sinh viên đã được tính vào nội dung và thời lượng của chương trình. Môn học Hán tự được thiết kế là một phần học của môn học Tiếng Nhật tổng hợp. Giáo viên sẽ dành ra 1 tiết học cho mỗi buổi học để thực hiện giảng và lưu ý và hướng dẫn sinh viên chuẩn bị bài. Phần ôn và luyện tập để ghi nhớ sau giờ học là nhiệm vụ của sinh viên. Sinh viên phải tự giác và phải hiểu đúng tinh thần học theo hệ thống tín chỉ. Do vậy, phía giáo viên phụ trách môn học cần phải giới thiệu môn học, làm rõ cho sinh viên hiểu được yêu cầu tính tự học cao ở sinh viên ngay từ năm nhất.

- Ngoài ra, giáo viên cũng nên chú ý đến cách giúp sinh viên có thể học nhớ ngay chữ Hán tự trên lớp bằng cách khuyến khích sinh viên cùng mô tả, phân tích kết cấu của một chữ Hán khi dạy trên lớp.

3. KẾT LUẬN

Chữ Hán với đặc trưng là nhiều nét, nhiều âm và nhiều nghĩa nên luôn là một trở ngại lớn cho người học chọn tiếng Nhật là ngoại ngữ thứ hai. Tuy là một môn học khó nhưng người học vẫn có thể khắc phục những khó khăn và “chiến thắng” chữ Hán. Muốn đạt được mục đích ấy, sinh viên cần phải luyện tập thật nhiều và có phương pháp học thích hợp với từng giai đoạn, đặc biệt là cần tìm thêm nguồn bài tập để làm và nâng cao ý thức tự học. Bên cạnh sự nỗ lực của bản thân, sinh viên cũng cần rất nhiều sự tiếp sức để có động lực học, sự hướng dẫn các phương pháp học tập, những chữ Hán dễ nhầm từ giảng viên. Đặc biệt đối với sinh viên

năm nhất, các em vẫn còn những bỡ ngỡ khi tiếp xúc với môn học như Hán tự.

Cách học và khả năng ghi nhớ của sinh viên rất khác nhau. Tùy vào mỗi đối tượng người học mà có những cách khắc phục thích hợp. Những đề xuất trong bài là chúng tôi dựa trên kết quả khảo sát thực tế. Tuy bài viết vẫn còn những hạn chế nhưng người viết hy vọng những đề xuất có thể góp phần nhỏ vào việc khắc phục thực trạng học tập môn Hán tự cho sinh viên tại trường, góp phần nâng cao phương pháp giảng dạy môn học Hán tự cho sinh viên để môn học Hán tự dần trở thành môn học nhẹ nhàng hơn đối với người học lẫn người dạy.

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