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HO CHI MINH CITY OPEN UNIVERSITY



**PROCEEDINGS OF THE 9<sup>TH</sup> OPENTESOL  
INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2021  
LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN CHALLENGING TIMES:  
DESIGNING DIGITAL TRANSFORMATIONS**

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# EDITORIAL

The Covid-19 pandemic is here to stay when reports of the new outbreak arrive on a daily basis. Teachers, students and families in Vietnam and across Asia have been dealing with disastrous Covid variants.

Amid the pandemic, OpenTESOL is committed to sustaining teacher learning to organize this year's virtual 2021 conference. We aim to support the hard work and recognize the professionalism of educators and researchers spanning diverse contexts in Vietnam, Philippines and India.

Against that backdrop, we are honored to highlight 30 selected conference papers, which present findings and voices in response to the following challenges:

- How can teachers transform digital approaches and implement emergency remote teaching?
- How can teachers tap into learner motivation, interaction, and autonomy in various digital platforms?
- How can teachers design and deliver synchronous and asynchronous tasks?
- How can teachers embrace social media to engage a new generation of learners?
- How can teachers evaluate their teaching quality and monitor students' learning?

Beyond TESOL, local practitioners and scholars also share their pedagogical approaches relating to Chinese, Japanese and Vietnamese linguistics and education studies.

The organizing committee and the editors of OpenTESOL are grateful for the reviewers for their valuable contribution in reading and giving constructive comments on the authors' manuscripts.

We believe that the just-in-time publication of this proceedings will be necessary for your meaningful learning.

Best regards,

OpenTESOL Editors

*opentesolconference@ou.edu.vn*

Dr. Thu Thi Thanh Le, Ho Chi Minh City Open University

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Tien Minh Mai, Ho Chi Minh City Open University

# **SELECTED CONFERENCE PAPERS**

# COVID-19 RESPONSE

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# Redesigning ELT During the Pandemic: A Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Beliefs

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**Ma. Joahna M. Estacio**

De La Salle University, Philippines  
*ma.joahna.mante@dlsu.edu.ph*

## **Abstract**

*“What adjustments and changes are needed to effectively teach English as a second language during the pandemic?”* is a question that warrants a timely discussion. Among stakeholders, the teachers are the ones who are accountable in ensuring that English learning still thrives. With this background, the study presents the beliefs of the teacher-participants on how English teaching should be executed during the pandemic. Defined by Borg (2011) as “propositions consider(ed) to be true, have a strong evaluative and affective component, are resistant to change (p.370), teachers’ beliefs need to be understood especially now in order to help the educators in their present enormous task. Thematic analysis with open coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was employed to identify emerging patterns from the participants’ written reflections. Results reveal seven themes underlying the teachers’ beliefs on what adjustments are necessary to make English language learning as effective as possible in the current teaching and learning set-up. Examples of the themes identified are: *Affective factors take the major importance now in teaching, There is no excuse in not attempting to develop reflective and metacognitive learners, and More than ever, the home environment, especially the parents, play a crucial role in English language learning.*

**Keywords:** *teacher’s beliefs, English language learning*

# INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) declared on January 30, 2020 the 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) (Wargadinata, W., Maimunah, I., Dewi, E., and Rofiq, Z., 2020). One institution which was hardly hit by the pandemic's many effects is every country's educational system. Classes in both public and private schools that cater to the youngest to the oldest learners were halted, and soon after that, teaching and learning became remote.

In the Philippines where the current study was conducted and where this researcher has been teaching for more than 25 years, the shift appeared to be swift to manageable for some schools, while it was observed to be problematic and plodding for others. Most private educational institutions took a few months to do three major tasks associated with the change: 1) training their teachers for the changes, particularly in using the school-approved educational platforms and applications; 2) preparing modules and other learning materials which were subsequently uploaded in the schools' learning management systems; 3) modifying and creating some school policies to fit the new modality which were echoed to the stakeholders, particularly the students and their parents. The bigger private institutions were noticed to have done all these quicker than the smaller schools mainly due to the costs entailed by these undertakings. On the other hand, the government which manages the public schools in the country (and where majority of the low-earning parents send their children) could not easily cope with the needed changes. Public schools did not go fully online: those students who have internet access and gadgets at home had synchronous and asynchronous sessions with their teachers while those who do not have the technology received printed learning modules from their schools. These modules are returned on specific dates to the teachers who will check the written outputs of the students. The students could also inquire about their lessons by

sending SMS to their teachers. The country's Department of Education also requested some television companies to give airtime to recorded demonstration teachings of certain lessons across the grade levels as supplementary source of learning to the students.

Among the stakeholders, the teachers are the ones who are accountable in ensuring that English learning still thrives despite the current dilemma. It is therefore interesting and important to find out the different thoughts, impressions, and ideas of ELT teachers related to pandemic teaching. With this background, the study attempts to identify and describe the various beliefs of the teacher-participants on how English teaching should be executed with the current set up.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Teacher's beliefs**

One important construct that is expected to reveal interesting findings along the area of teacher cognition is teacher's beliefs. Borg (2011) defines teachers' beliefs as "propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action, and are resistant to change... which are a key element in teacher learning and have become an important focus in research" (pp. 370-371). Moreover, beliefs can help teachers become active decision-makers (Borg, 2006), and "can inform educational practice in ways that prevailing research agendas have not and cannot" (Pajares, 1992, p. 307; Fives & Buehl, 2008) due to their established impact on how they affect classroom practices.

As beliefs and knowledge are closely related constructs, it is worthwhile to mention The Model of Teacher Knowledge by (Grossman, 1990). This framework identifies four areas of Teacher Knowledge, and these are: 1) General Pedagogical Knowledge, 2) Subject Matter Knowledge, 3) Knowledge of Context, and 4)

Pedagogical Content Knowledge. General Pedagogical Knowledge refers to the knowledge of the general methods in running the class while Subject Matter Knowledge is the understanding of the strategies specific to a discipline. Knowledge of Context refers to the understanding of the school, school environment, and community. On the other hand, the area on which the current study is focused, Pedagogical Content Knowledge, includes the beliefs, values, and purpose for teaching the subject, with a consideration of the best instructional strategies for teaching that subject.

Studies on teachers' beliefs started in the 1990s (Torff, 2005) and presented important and striking results on how teachers teach or how they intend to teach, teachers' perceptions and judgments of their practices, the conflicting images of teachers, and how teachers interpret new information about learning and teaching (Johnson, 1994).

Fairly recent studies on teacher's beliefs reveal the application of multiple data gathering methods to reveal the nuances of teachers' beliefs. For instance, Farell (2016) worked on Canadian ESL teachers' belief system using metaphor analysis. He conducted interviews and group discussions and reported that most beliefs are about learner-centeredness, societal structure, and changes. Using semi structured interviews and observations, Kaymakamoğlu (2018) used semi-structured interviews and structured observations and found that some Turkish EFL teacher-participants have varied beliefs about Constructivist and Traditional teaching and learning. While the interview data indicated that they favor Constructivist learning and teaching, the observational data showed more preference to Traditional practice.

### **Studies on teaching during the pandemic**

As far as how the on-going pandemic has affected the teaching and learning situations in various contexts, there have been documented reports and studies on how teaching and learning thrive in the current set-up. There are those that explain how the

COVID-19 school closure affected English language teaching (ELT) and how teachers responded (Yi, Y. & Jang, J., 2020). The researchers interviewed two non-native English-speaking teachers who shared their pandemic teaching practices. It was revealed during the interviews that the teachers and their Grades 4 to 6 students exemplified translanguaging orientation to communication and language learning in class. This practice of using transliterated words is considered effective, if not needed, during the asynchronous sessions where the teachers used mostly videos as teaching materials. It was also reported that the teachers, both the native English-speaking (NES) and nonnative-English-speaking (NNES) teachers in EFL contexts are collaborating in lesson and material preparation.

There are those studies that describe the knowledge, attitudes, anxiety, coping strategies, and attitudes of students toward virtual teaching (Baloran, 2020; Khuram, S., Hussain, J., Sadaf, N., Sarwat, S., Ghani, U., and Saleem, R. (2020), Baloran (2020) discussed the students' unwillingness to undergo online-blended learning, and their difficulty in cope up with mental health challenges during the pandemic. On the other hand, Khuram, et al. (2020) reported the positive feedback of Pakistani students on the use of Virtual Teaching. The students acknowledge the need to migrate to this mode of teaching, and they find some lessons to be interesting when taught this way. However, they cite other cases when face to face teaching is better than Virtual Teaching.

There is also research on the various teaching activities and challenges at present (Atmojo, A. & Nugroho, A., 2020). According to the researchers, EFL teachers in Indonesia have carried out both synchronous and asynchronous classes using different applications and platforms. Still, they experience problems mainly due to lack of preparation and planning.

Note that majority of teachers, while working as teachers at home, are also fulfilling their duties as mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers

among other roles in their respective families. Because they are at the forefront of these changes, teachers' thoughts on matters related to how teaching and learning happen now need to be heard and reported as well.

Despite its importance, it seems that the area of teacher's beliefs has not been researched a lot a year into the pandemic. This is based on the very small sample of studies revealed by the search undertaken by the present researcher using various databases.

The studies to be reviewed at this point are the very few ones on teacher's beliefs during the pandemic. Still, the teacher-participants in the studies offer interesting ideas on how ELT could still be manageable, if not successful, even in the unstable situation in most countries at present.

Lailatun et al., (2021) conducted semi structured interviews and analyzed lessons plans of three EFL teachers in the basic education to identify their beliefs related to the use of Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK). During the individual semi structured interviews, the teachers expressed their beliefs that using technology is a practical and necessary way to teach writing in English during the pandemic. Examples of technology that they are currently using are PowerPoint, Google Forms, laptops, smartphones, Zoom, Google Meet, e-books. This belief was confirmed when they shared their lesson plans with the researchers. In the beginning, the teachers felt nervous when they were using Zoom and they thank their school heads for giving them training before they were asked to use the said platform in their classes. The respondents also expressed their thoughts on why creativity is essential especially now. They see to it that there are fun activities and brainstorming in their lessons to make learner enjoyable to the learners. To stimulate student discussion and individual learning, the teachers mention Whats App as a useful tool they use now. However, it was reported too that the extent to which they use technology still differ among the three teachers.

Another belief that the participants revealed is about the affect of their learners. They believe that students are not motivated and focused to learn at the moment, so teachers must exert a lot of effort to make the students attend their classes. They shared that they really go out of their way to make the learners feel at ease during online class. They also allow private chats after the class from students who are shy to ask questions during the class.

Similar results were reported by Cardullo et al. (2021) who surveyed 141 K-12 teachers in the USA to identify their self-efficacy beliefs in teaching during the pandemic. They cited the problem of internet connection among students, emotional uncertainty and interactions between the students and the teachers, and teacher proficiency with technology as those that affect how they teach during the pandemic.

These studies stress the different modifications being made by the teachers while teaching English at present. The changes are primarily done to address the needs of the learners, as the teachers themselves have expressed.

The current study hopes to add empirical data on this important topic on teacher's beliefs. This case study aims to answer the important question *What are the various beliefs of the teacher-participants on the essential changes and modifications needed in the teaching of English now that we are in a pandemic?* Moreover, to see the results more meaningfully, the study will present the beliefs under themes that reflect the connections among the learner, language, and context factors of language learning.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants and Setting**

Participants in this case study are from a Graduate Studies class on English Language Teaching composed of 15 students (8 local teachers teaching ESL and 7 EFL teachers from Myanmar, China,

and Vietnam). All of them are K-12 teachers with different years of experience ranging from 1-15 years. The class was delivered online by the researcher from October 2020 to February 2021.

### **Data Collection**

Each student was asked to write an essay to answer the question *In the current context of online distance learning, what do you believe to be the necessary adjustments in teaching English considering the various learner, language, and context factors which we have discussed in class?* as one of their class requirements. The students encoded and submitted their essays during one synchronous class session. After the term ended, the researcher solicited the students' consent to use their essays as source of data for the current study.

### **Data analysis**

After reading the essays several times, the researcher employed thematic analysis with open coding strategy (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify and emerging patterns from the participants' written outputs. The codes and the subsequent patterns were then classified using the three main factors in language teaching (learner, language, and context). Moreover, the analysis is guided Grossman's (1990) four general areas of Teacher Knowledge, particularly the Pedagogical Content Knowledge (PCK). This area includes the beliefs, values, and purpose for teaching the subject, with a consideration of the best instructional strategies for teaching that subject.

The researcher focused on this area to identify the participants' beliefs on the modifications needed in ELT currently as it can be argued that it is in this area where teachers' thoughts on the purposes of teaching a subject, the need to understand a student's understanding, conceptions and misconceptions of the subject matter, and instructional strategies and representations for teaching particular topics are best identified and discussed.

Also, to establish consistency and validity of the analysis, two inter coders were requested to independently see the codes and the patterns with extracts from the participants' essays. The two agreed on most points while making clarifications on two codes which were addressed by the researcher.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Presented below are the seven (7) emerging themes grouped under the three main factors of language learning (learner, language, context) that reflect the teacher-participants' beliefs on the necessary adjustments in redesigning the teaching of English in the current online distance learning situation.

### **Learner Factor Themes**

1. *Affective factors should take the major importance now that we are trying to teach during the pandemic.*

The teacher-participants unanimously agree that any attempt to make teaching and learning meaningful to the learners these days needs to focus on the students' mental health condition that has an effect on their learning attitudes, levels of their learning anxiety and motivation. Some of them cited the common scenario where the students are mostly silent during synchronous sessions, hardly participating during group works, but are asking a lot of questions to the teacher about the lessons and requirements through asynchronous chats. When these happen, the teachers remind themselves that they need to exert more patience and understanding so that students would open up, share their thoughts, and ultimately learn in the current set up. Moreover, activities that will sustain the learners' attention, establish rapport among students and between students and the teacher should be prepared by the teachers to make the learners comfortable. The teachers further claimed that they need to be more compassionate by listening to the learners more, by giving feedback more often, and by making these remarks more individualized and kinder, if possible.

2. *More consideration and valuing of individual differences is needed.*

Acknowledging the value of individual differences, the participants also believe that it is important to maximize the use of the learners' learning styles when preparing activities. They cited a solution common among them which is to create modules with self-paced lessons which are almost customized according to the nature of the particular classes and learners they have. Moreover, the teachers also claim that various ways of assessment in these self-paced modules must be reflected on to further appreciate the differences among the learners.

3. *There is no excuse in not attempting to develop reflective and metacognitive learners.*

Despite the challenges of online teaching and learning, the teacher-participants believe that they should still try to teach the process of reflection and metacognition among their learners. They suggest providing questions for self-reflection at certain points in the lesson to achieve this. These beliefs reflect the importance given by the teachers to higher and deeper learning revealed through reflection and metacognition.

### **Language Factor Theme**

1. *This is a time when the teaching of grammar and vocabulary should be explicit, more relatable, and practical. It should also employ all available technology.*

Online teaching appears to be overwhelming to teachers especially when one considers the number of lessons to be taught in a perceived constricted situation. Although the basic educational curriculum of the country has been modified, the fact remains that the unfamiliar platform mandated to be used requires the teachers to recalibrate and to redesign their English lessons. While majority of the learners in the country are considered ESL, it is still the school (through the teachers) which handles the formal teaching of

the language. In the present set up where there is shortened synchronous sessions, the teachers have less time to finish the list of topics, thereby challenging their ability to combine, prioritize, and revisit the scope and sequences of their lessons.

In connection with these points, some beliefs mentioned by the majority of the teacher-participants pertaining to language are on the necessity of teaching grammar that employ available technology; the teachers expressed the importance of online videos, e-books, radio and other media as tools in executing lessons that will most likely appeal to the interests of learners. They also believe that the teaching of vocabulary has to be fast-paced and interactive but needs to have a multi-sensory appeal to the learners. Moreover, grammar and vocabulary lessons should be made explicit, relatable, and practical in real life although the teaching and learning is being done online.

### **Context Factor Themes**

1. *Effective and efficient use of technology-assisted methodology and techniques is the key in sustaining teaching and learning during the pandemic.*

Among the three main factors of learning, it is the set of context factors which is obviously the most affected by the shift to online learning. From the change in the mode of delivery including the use of different applications and platforms to the modified role of the home (parents and caregivers in particular), teachers are at the forefront of these redesigning responsibilities. In all of these, the teacher-participants believe that to sustain successful teaching and learning, they must know the available technology that can help them deliver their lessons. This includes the various applications and platforms like *Padlet, Seesaw, Kahoot, Pear Deck, Nearpod, jam board* which are being used by many of them. As context factors will always be connected with learner factors, they also believe that technology helps them prepare asynchronous group activities that allow students to enjoy learning in breakout rooms and in using the

chat function in Zoom which allow teachers to talk to specific students who might need individualized instructions or pep talk. Despite all these, the participants also believe that because of poor internet connection in many areas, the learning goals are not always achieved.

2. *More than ever, the home environment, especially the parents, plays a crucial role in ELL.*

The participants expressed the importance of the home (especially the parents) in the online learning mode. As learners stay at home these days, parents and/or guardians should be able to monitor their performance and assist the teachers in creating a better L2 environment as an important stakeholder in the educational process.

3. *Humane teaching extends to how teachers make adjustments in scoring tests.*

This last belief of the teacher-participants is very specific to one essential task of teachers: assessing learners. While the earlier-mentioned beliefs are about teaching and learning, this one pertains to an “after teaching” component which is not frequently discussed as a teaching-learning area needing modifications too. The participants expressed the need to adjust testing and scoring during online teaching mainly to send a message to the learners that their teachers understand their limitations, and that what should be highlighted is the learning that still transpired despite their difficulties.

The results of the current study reveal teachers’ wide range of beliefs from what should be prioritized when teaching at this time, how to address learner’s difficulties, how to present lessons to be interesting and meaningful to the learners, why testing (and not just teaching) has to be modified as well, and the acknowledgement that this current situation especially calls for a strong partnership between the school and parents in order to assist the learners.

From these beliefs, it can be inferred that the teacher-participants are aware of the many factors that affect language learning. Moreover, they are conscious of the need to constantly redesign their overall L2 teaching while we are still in the pandemic. Most of the beliefs they expressed focus on their learners and the unique circumstances happening in online teaching and learning. These beliefs express the importance of the learners as the center of the teaching process and the role of the teachers in making learning flourish despite the challenges.

Comparing the current results with the results of the studies reviewed earlier, there are some similar findings worth noting. The focus on the learner, especially on their needs and current difficulties is evident. The lessons and activities are also designed to make learning more enjoyable. Adjustments in content is also noted. The teachers have likewise expressed the importance of using various technologies in teaching their English lessons; this also entails learning and training how to use different applications and platforms for their students. Furthermore, new findings are revealed by the current study: The teachers believe that the parents play an important role in assisting their children while trying to learn these days. Similarly, the current participants express the importance of adjusting assessment to lessen the difficulty of the learners. The researcher argues that the use of LEARNER-LANGUAGE-CONTEXT triangulation in the analysis made these contributions possible.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The current pandemic challenges all the stakeholders to exert more effort in delivering quality teaching and learning despite all the limitations. Being a case study that used only one set of data, the results of the present study should not be hastily generalized. Still, the results allow for some inferences to be made. It can be inferred that based on their self-reported beliefs, the teacher-participants

are ready to make necessary adjustments to ensure learning to happen since the learners' welfare and development remains their utmost priority. It is therefore important for teachers to be provided with the necessary professional development trainings to develop their skills which they need in the current teaching and learning set up. In this regard, the immediate school, to the community, until the national leadership should assist teaching attain the needed proficiencies. Lastly, studies on teacher's beliefs in the different macro skills are needed to get a more complete picture and a deeper assessment on how teachers view the present educational situation. This way, they could be understood better and assisted more whenever possible. It may also be a good idea to do research describing and comparing teachers' and learners' beliefs teachers' coping strategies.

## **AUTHOR**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ma. Joahna M. Estacio is currently the College Assistant Dean for Research and Advanced Studies, De La Salle University. She teaches English courses in the senior high school, undergraduate, and graduate levels.

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# A Survey on Teachers' Perceptions of Their Emergency Remote English Teaching

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**Hien Thi Phan**

University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam  
*pt.hien@ufm.edu.vn*

**Hien Thi Thu Duong**

University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam  
*dtt.hien@ufm.edu.vn*

**Hang Thi Nguyen**

University of Finance and Marketing, Vietnam  
*nt.hang@ufm.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

Due to the sudden Covid-19 pandemic, classrooms at universities have left empty since most teaching and learning have been carried out over the Internet. This emergency remote teaching (ERT) has attracted many researchers all over the world, and several studies have examined ERT in the field of ELT in different international contexts. However, not much research into this topic has been conducted to describe the landscape of English language teaching and learning in Vietnamese universities. This study was thus conducted to investigate teachers' experience of virtual classrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic and factors affecting their teaching process and then to suggest useful remedies for their emergency on-distance lectures. To obtain these objectives, an online survey using a questionnaire was delivered to 54 instructors teaching non-English majors at some tertiary institutions in HCMC. Additionally, to gain an in-depth understanding of how to enhance the online teaching and learning, a follow-up interview was done with nine randomly chosen respondents. For data analysis, descriptive statistics from the questionnaire responses were

calculated in terms of frequency and percentages via Microsoft Forms. All the qualitative data were transcribed, collated and put into themes. The results show that the abrupt transition to online teaching went relatively smoothly. However, the participants reported they experienced unstable Internet connections, low student engagement, and lack of interactions with students and among students themselves. The research proposed that a triangle model is fundamental for more effective remote classes in unexpected situations.

**Key words:** *emergency remote teaching, online teaching and learning, remote teaching*

## INTRODUCTION

The year 2020 witnessed the cancellation of the educational system followed with school closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This unprecedented event also resulted in the transition from in-person teaching to an online teaching environment, and different attempts were made to develop alternative delivery modes to migrate the classes remotely. In this context, the term emergency remote teaching (ERT) was used world-wide with great importance and consideration to refer to the prompt shift from face-to-face to virtual education (Hodges et al., 2020). Thanks to the advancement of technology with newly employed platforms, remote education can be beneficial to the participants of the teaching and learning process. (Jung & Rha, 2000); however, the smoothness of this process is questionable since the time for preparedness is considered inadequate for both teachers and learners. So far, there have been many studies into ERT and ELT in many countries around the world. However, just few research papers have been done to explore the remote teaching landscape in Vietnamese universities. This study, thus, was conducted to offer further research on innovative strategies, virtual teaching experiences, factors affecting the teaching process, and the transition from the physical classroom into an emergency remote education

environment during the pandemic. In order to understand the ways that the Covid-19 outbreak has impacted teachers and their teaching process, the following research questions were addressed:

R1. How have teachers experienced the remote teaching during the Covid-19 pandemic?

R2. What factors have affected the remote English teaching in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic?

The study provides an overall picture of the changes in English teaching and learning during the abrupt transition, discovers the hindrances that teachers encountered in their remote teaching and puts forward some recommendations on teaching, learning and infrastructure useful for lecturers, educational institutions and language learners to have better preparation for future emergencies.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Emergency Remote Teaching**

#### 1. Definition

The term *Emergency Remote Teaching* was used widely during the pandemic as a short-term solution for the problem of school closures (Hodges et al., 2020; Bozkurt et al., 2020; Golden, 2020). It is often considered as an equivalent to online teaching or distance teaching (Abdalellah et al., 2020). In this type of educational offering, teachers often use a variety of tools and programs via the Internet to help students understand the lesson or improve the interactions between students and teachers or among students themselves.

#### 2. Difference between ERT and Online Learning

The most vital difference between ERT and online learning or distance learning is the former is obligatory whereas the latter is optional – which offers flexibility for both teachers and learners. On the other hand, ERT refers to an unavoidable solution to deal with school

closures in the middle of the pandemic outbreak (Hodges et al., 2020; Riggs, 2020). Golden (2020) also adds that ERT can be an immediate and temporary way to resolve the problem which is happening.

According to Hrastinski (2008), two commonly used models to teach online are asynchronous and synchronous. He also stated that in the first type, teaching and learning was made through media including electronic mail or forums or discussion board; this offers a chance for students to use the materials any time they like or to discuss learning topics with teachers and peers. The second type he mentioned is about teaching sessions with the interaction between teachers and learners in real time through a chat or conference program. Both of them have benefits and limitations, however, in our Vietnamese context; the aim of this study is to focus on the teaching process in real time, which involves synchronous e-learning.

### **ERT-Related Studies**

The issue of ERT has been the concern of researchers around the world and a plethora of research papers have been done in different countries and in different levels in academic institutions to explore different aspects and characteristics of this issue in order to shed light to enhance the e-teaching and learning.

It is admitted that teachers and students can take advantage of a variety of supporting programs to continue their educational interactions (Means et al., (2014); Bryson & Andres (2020)) without being at the same place during difficult situations such as the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure safety for both teachers and learners in order to avoid being contaminated by the new Corona virus. It also evokes creativity, activeness and collaboration in teachers and learners (Yi & Jang, 2020).

However, it is inevitable that online educators may encounter some problems (Reich J. et al., 2020). Firstly, technical issues become a concern since instructors may not have appropriate and fully functioned devices such as compatible smart phones or laptops to

carry on Internet-based education. Teachers may also struggle with the compatibility between tools and programs needed to facilitate online learning (Lederman, 2020). In other studies, the results show that there were the lack of administrative support and poor access to infrastructure (Chuah, 2020); poor preparation and planning (Atmojo et al., 2020, Bozkurt et al., 2020); technical and pedagogical issues (Hazaea et al., 2021, Mohmmed et al., 2020).

Another problem can be the teaching setting where noise or distractions can hinder the teaching process (Eder, 2020). Besides, having an online experience means adapting to a new educational platform, and when face-to-face interactions cannot be made, and teachers need to communicate with students and arrange activities through a screen, which can be hard to maintain students' focus on the lessons.

From students' perspectives, during the shift from offline to online classes, students encountered many problems including a lack of formal orientation and training, of instant access to internet connectivity, and of financial unpreparedness (Amin et al., 2020); academic and communication (Mahyoob et al., 2020). Another study showed that the Master of TESOL students in HCMC struggled with improper attention in the online study; poor internet connectivity, inappropriate learning environment at home and lack of training for virtual study (Le, 2020). Besides, other problems included students' low digital literacy, low English literacy, late assignment submission, low awareness on the online learning (Bozkurt et al., 2020).

With such hassles faced by both educators and learners while applying internet-based education, numerous researches have been conducted to give useful suggestions for educators to deliver more effective distant teaching. According to Mohmmed (2020), instructors need to "attain the pedagogic creativity" when working on redesigning activities in response to the new context and students' feedback. This leads to more attention needed paying to the interactions in virtual classroom and the instructor's weariness

of making presentation files and other teaching materials (Bryson & Anders, 2020). From there, instructors strategically combine a variety of resources that they have to adapt to new online teaching environment and solve the newly occurring issues raised by teaching online (Bhattarai, 2020). Toquero (2020) also emphasized that due to the ongoing school suspension, teachers need to be flexible in adapting different teaching strategies to provide effective lessons based on the real situation so that the learning process can be maximized. teachers could use television and radio in low technologically developed countries; integrate virtual classes into the traditional teaching and learning practices (Hazaea et al., 2021); or continue embedding distance education into their normal lesson after the outbreak (Durak et al., 2020).

Another researcher – Durak (2014) listed the following points to have a successful online teaching sessions including following the principles in designing online courses, maximizing the student-student and student-teacher interactions, offering easy access to learning materials, giving feedback for learners promptly, providing students with motivation, guidance and support both socially and educationally, integrating both synchronous and asynchronous teaching, giving adequate time and necessary tools for teachers to prepare their lessons, and choosing the appropriate time for learners to have lessons online. This list demonstrated all the necessary requirements for a successful online teaching and learning. However, in an urgent context, it is not an easy task for teachers, learners and academic institutions to take all of these in consideration.

From students' side, it is vital that they can get more financial support to access to internet connectivity, instructional and emotional support from academic staff (Amin et al., 2020); a feeling of pleasure and a sense of self-efficacy (Cicha et al., 2021), consistency in course schedule, task and exam submission; and more support to be engaged in teaching and learning activities (Tanjung and Utomo, 2021). Some students also agreed on the

positive impact of the usefulness of video conferencing tools in distance education (Pho et al., 2020).

To have an in-depth understanding about the emergency remote teaching from educators' perspectives, the reporters employed the conceptual framework proposed by Ali, Uppal, & Gulliver (2018). This framework including technological, individual, pedagogical, and enabling conditions, resulted from many research studies dated between 1990 and 2016. While individual and pedagogical conditions refer to issues related to students and teachers, technological and enabling conditions can be used under an umbrella term - infrastructure.

## **METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This study was conducted to explore teachers' perceptions on their teaching during the abrupt move to remote education, so a questionnaire and an interview were used to collect data.

Convenience sampling was employed in selecting 7 public universities with synchronous education. Particularly teachers in charge of general English classes in each university were selected with some assistance from the researchers' acquaintances.

An online questionnaire (see Appendix 1) via Microsoft Forms was delivered to collect data from teachers at tertiary level regarding their experiences of shifting to emergency remote teaching. Between January 5th and February 20th, a total of 54 teachers from 7 public universities (University of Finance and Marketing, n = 8; University of Natural Science, n = 6; Saigon University, n = 6; Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology, n = 6; University of Transportation and Communications, n = 7, University of Industry, n = 6; Open University, n = 5) filled out the survey.

The questionnaire was written in Vietnamese so that the subjects can understand it thoroughly and was divided into two main parts. The first part including 4 questions was about personal information. The second part containing 17 items was about teachers' experiences of their English remote teaching. Questions

5-9 aimed to get information on teaching platforms and technology-related problems. Questions 10-11 focused on teaching facilities while questions 12-14 were about teachers' digital skills and technical preparation. Questions 15 - 16 inquired about teachers' flexibility in classroom management and late assignment submission. Question 17 was about teachers' after-class support, whereas questions 18-21 aimed at obtaining student-related data.

In terms of the interview (see Appendix 2) 17 educators from 7 universities were invited to join the follow-up interview. Particularly, there are 4 participants from University of Finance and Marketing and 1 participant from Open University. There are 6 participants from University of Transportation and Communications, Saigon University and Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology with each University accounting for 2 teachers. University of Industry and University of Natural Science have the same numbers of educators participating in the interview (3 teachers). These participants were asked about their perceptions about teaching and learning infrastructure (questions 1-2) and their renovations in distant teaching to improve student engagement (questions 3-5). The interviews were made through telephone and recorded for later analysis.

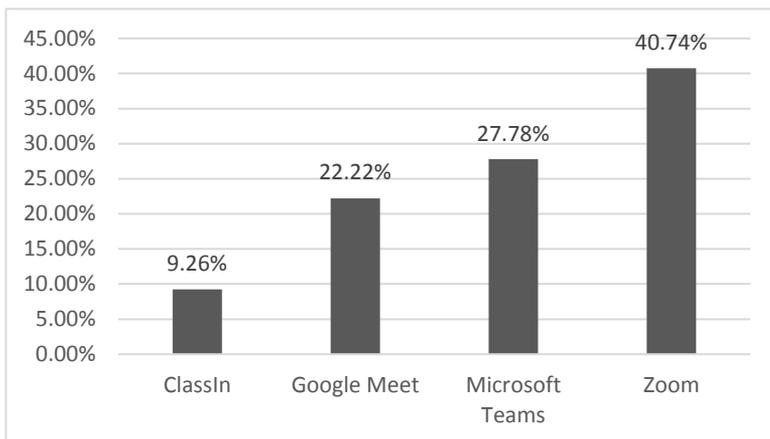
## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Teachers' positive reaction to the abrupt move to ERT**

The research findings showed that in the midst of the Covid 19 pandemic, both tertiary institutions and their educators were active when changing from teaching in person to web-based education. According to teachers, the teaching and learning platforms they employed to give virtual instructions (*see Figure 1*) are Zoom ( $n = 22$ ; 41%), Microsoft Teams ( $n = 15$ ; 28%), Google Meet ( $n = 12$ ; 22%) and Class In ( $n = 5$ ; 9%), which were told by 74% of these teachers that they were financially subsidized by their university and that they and their students could get adequate training in how to use these applications (74% and 61%

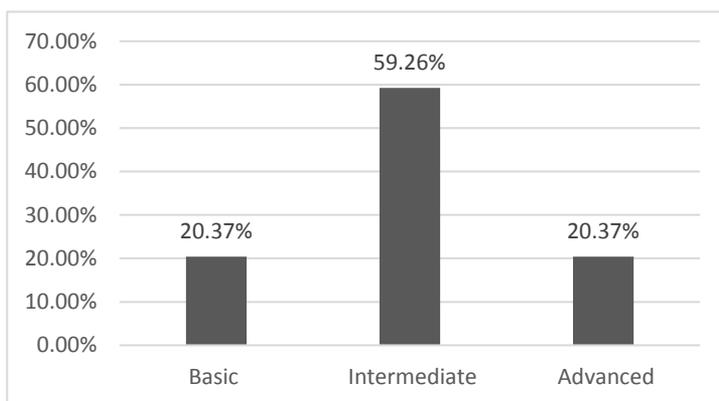
respectively). Essentially, most educators (61%) felt either satisfied or absolutely satisfied with their institutional policies on distant teaching such as technical supports.

**Figure 1** *Platforms used for online teaching*



From teachers' side, most participants stated they could give smooth remote teaching via educational apps since they were technology-literate with 60% of the teachers at intermediate level and over 20% at advanced (see Figure 2). Particularly, they sometimes (57%) or rarely (30%) encountered technical issues, whereas a few participants (9%) claimed they usually had difficulty using the platforms due to technical malfunctions.

**Figure 2** *Teachers' level of digital skills*



Furthermore, the teachers prepared for their online teaching in this urgent situation. For example, they learned from colleagues (n = 30; 70%), employed currently used materials/resources (n = 30; 56%), joined a teaching/technology community (n = 24; 44%) and attended workshops/webinars (n = 19; 35%).

Many participants also used software such as PowerPoint to give presentations in their virtual classes (Mean = 4.3). In order to create a positive classroom atmosphere, educators in these tertiary institutions sometimes (Mean = 2.85) used free game-based learning platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz in their classes. (see Table 1)

**Table 1.** Frequency of each activity employed in online teaching

	<i>Giving presentations via PowerPoint</i>	<i>Employing free game-based learning platforms</i>	<i>Asking students to give presentations</i>	<i>Having students work in pairs/groups</i>
Mean	4.3148	2.8518	2.2407	2.4629
Median	4	3	2	2
Mode	4	3	1	2
Range	2	4	4	4
Minimum	3	1	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5	5
Sum	233	154	121	133
Count	54	54	54	54

The educators also manifested their flexibility in the assessment of students' absenteeism and late submission of coursework. 43% of the respondents would judge the reliability of student's reasons while about 26% would give absentees some opportunities to make up missed classes. 56% would extend the deadline if their students experienced serious or unpreventable events whereas 20% would

allow students to hand in their assignments late but with a reduction in their marks.

To facilitate the learning process, all teachers supported their students after class by usually answering students' questions via messaging websites such as Email, Zalo and Facebook Messenger (Mean = 4.07), sending extra references to students (Mean = 3.74) or recording their lectures for students' later revisions (Mean = 3.4). (see Table 2)

**Table 2** Activities employed to support students after class

	<i>QAs via messaging platforms such as Zalo, Facebook Messenger</i>	<i>Recordings for later revisions</i>	<i>Sending extra references to students</i>
Mean	4.0741	3.4074	3.7407
Median	4	3	4
Mode	4	3	4
Range	3	4	4
Minimum	2	1	1
Maximum	5	5	5
Sum	220	184	202
Count	54	54	54

### **Factors having impacted teachers' productive synchronous education**

#### 1. Technical hassles

The process of teaching and learning during the whole transition process shows teachers struggled with digital hassles including students' unreliable connections (n = 48; 89%), bad quality of

sound transitions from multimedia files (n = 41; 76%), and limited effectiveness in conducting interactive activities (n = 26; 48%). Another technical challenge is that teachers did not manage to exploit the role of cameras in virtual classes. In fact, only 19 out of 54 teachers admitted that they did require their students to turn on cameras while attending online lessons, 28 teachers said they paid no attention to the usefulness of cameras during their lecture.

## 2. Lack of an effective LMS

Although most of the respondents to the questionnaire showed confidence in their digital ability and satisfaction with technical support from their tertiary institutions, approximately half of the interviewees accounting for 47% confessed that they did not feel pleased with the platforms they were using because these applications were neither user-friendly nor specialized for teaching and learning purposes. Surprisingly, 2 participants revealed that they did not have a private Zoom account but had to share it with some other colleagues, and thus encountered difficulty in taking control over their virtual classes.

When being questioned about their expectations for more assistance related to the infrastructure for online teaching and learning from the school administrators, some teachers proposed very interesting ideas for improving ERT in the field of ELT. They suggested that each university should build their own all-in-one learning management system which is packed with useful features for teachers and students. These lecturers claimed that this built-in platform can serve different purposes. Firstly, it can facilitate administrative management where academicians can easily monitor the teaching and learning of virtual classrooms. Second, it can offer better assessment tools for teachers when it can grade students' answers, and analyze results so that teachers can spend time on renovating teaching materials using an embedded virtual library instead of on tedious tasks like marking student's assignments and recording them. Besides, it can shorten the time of

receiving results for students. This platform can also offer mobility for students in their own learning when they can learn anytime at their own pace. A few participants mentioned Skype as an efficient application that can connect people to others from across the world. Therefore, as those teachers optimistically assured, not only does Skype have sufficient features for an online teaching platform, but it can also give ESL students with tremendous opportunities to communicate with foreigners, especially with native English speakers, which is pretty useful in enhancing students' communication skills.

### 3. Lack of interactive activities

The survey's findings showed that not many educators utilized interactive activities when delivering Internet-based lectures. The information from the questionnaire indicated that although the frequency the teachers asked their students to do pair work or group work (Mean = 2.46) was a little higher than the number of times they required their students to give a talk or make a presentation in front of their classmates (Mean = 2.24), both of the activities were the least popular ones in virtual classes (*see Table 2*). The data from the interview also revealed the similar tendency. For example, only 4 out of 17 teachers reported that their lessons usually involved interactive activities to encourage learners' collaborative learning and to check their understanding about what had been taught. In contrast, a large majority of participants (n = 13; 76%) reported that individual tasks seemed to outweigh interactive activities in their online lectures. These educators also admitted that their web-based lessons tended to focus more on contents that would be tested such as grammar points, vocabulary, and writing. In addition, 11 lecturers (65%) confessed that teacher talking time in online classes was far longer and their instructional pace was much slower than in their offline classes.

### 4. Teachers' lack of digital skills

Despite the fact that most of the respondents to the questionnaire

considered themselves as digitally competent (*see Figure 2*), 7 out of 17 interviewees revealed that they did not know how to break different virtual rooms for pair work and group work, so when delivering Internet-based lectures of language skills, they rarely employed interactive activities. Thus, it is understandable that one of the reasons for low level of teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction may be derived from the lecturers' inability to apply various functions of the teaching and learning platforms necessary for holding interactive activities.

#### 5. Lack of online teaching materials

Another factor having a significant impact on the interviewees' virtual instruction is that they did not have sufficient teaching resources which were useful for platform-based teaching procedure. This problem is shown in a question on suggesting an effective online classroom model. 12 out of 17 teachers (71%) reported that they did not have enough time or could not search for any helpful teaching and learning models. Some participants (n = 4; 24%) even confessed that they had made very little or no variation in their online teaching procedure. These teachers explained that what they were doing was just an abrupt response to the pandemic control policy and they supposed everything would go back to normality after the emergency state. Although a small number of interviewees (n = 3; 18%) mentioned the flipped classroom as an innovative model for English teaching and learning in the period of disruption, they admitted that this model of teaching and learning requires a high degree of autonomy and responsibility from learners; in addition, to have a sufficient supply of materials teachers need tremendous support from their colleagues, technical teams and authority figures.

#### 6. Low level of student engagement

It is obvious that the quality of remote English teaching also depends on students' cooperation. However, according to the respondents in the questionnaire most of the learners were not

really active when taking part in online classes. Particularly, half of the participants reported that their students were passive while 33% of them revealed that their students were at mixed level of engagement. Similarly, 65% of the interviewees (n = 11) reported that students attending virtual classes were more passive than they were when studying face-to-face. The teachers revealed that they had to address students by their names or give them bonus marks to encourage their involvement in online activities. The reasons for this low level of engagement, according to these lecturers, were really diverse.

The first reason why so many students did not actively take part in virtual lessons came from the ineffective infrastructure for online learning. Over half of the participants (n = 9; 53%) said that their students did not have a private place for online learning and were frequently disturbed by background noise and unstable Internet connection.

The second reason, as the educators revealed, was due to the length of an Internet-based class. The lecturers maintained that a session lasting for 3 or more hours was too long for students to get involved and that they tended to lose their concentration after about 2 hours staring at the screen. Therefore, they suggested that the period of time for each online class should be shortened to 1 – 1.5 hours.

Students' attitude was another reason for their low level of engagement. The lecturers claimed that some students tended to ignore their study when their teachers appeared not as strict with them as they used to be in traditional classes. With some misperceptions about online learning, some students seemed too relaxed when studying from home.

In addition, students' learning style and academic level also affected the way they participated in web-based activities. In fact, as 3 teachers explained, some students did not want to take part in interactive activities because they preferred reading, writing and working on their own. Besides, one teacher said that students

whose entry grades for university were higher tended to be more active in both online and onsite classes.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

From the research findings, recommendations can be withdrawn so that virtual education can be successfully delivered.

### **Infrastructure**

Instead of a “brick-and-mortar” classroom, the first thing online education needs is a learning management system (LMS). This system would provide a multi-purpose platform where interactive educational activities can be conducted smoothly. This platform would allow teachers to conduct video meetings easily, send notes or materials for students to have better preparation or further practice after class. Besides, this platform can have assignment management tools so that teachers can assign, collect and give feedback on assignments online, track student progress; students can receive prompt comments on their work without delay; and administrative staff can track teaching schedules.

Internet connection stability is definitely another key issue during synchronous courses. With a poor connection, students struggle to attend classes, let alone participate in interactive activities conducted by language instructors. To deal with this problem, educational institutions can provide their students with financial aid so that they can afford a better connection. This is not a cheap solution in terms of budget but it can be feasible in the abrupt transition to online learning if universities can coordinate with Internet providers to make internet access cheaper and more accessible for students, especially for the less-privileged students.

In addition, according to some interviewees, when things come back to normal, online education should be integrated into normal teaching schedule. In that case, teachers and students can get acquainted with both ways of teaching and have better preparation;

when there is a need to emergency remote teaching and learning, the transition would be easier.

## **Teachers**

Although most educators could conduct classes via video conferencing, many of them seemed incapable of utilizing various functions of the platforms to conduct interactive activities or to make students engage in their virtual lessons. Therefore, in order to optimize the use of the provided technology, lecturers should improve their digital literacy by consulting experts or attending workshops, webinars, and communities applying technology in virtual teaching.

With regard to the lack of online teaching materials, the importance of colleague collaboration should be counted. Actually designing activities for online lessons is a very time-consuming job especially during the abrupt transition, hence it is advisable that teachers who are responsible for the same courses share tasks suitable for cyber classrooms as well as cooperate in creating and adapting materials for eLearning. With sufficient digital teaching and learning resources, we optimistically suspect that more interactive activities will be carried out virtually and students, as a result, will become more engaged in Internet-based lectures.

Another suggestion is that teachers should apply suitable teaching methodology and strategies in online classrooms. For example, teachers can employ flipped classroom as a very good model for enhancing virtual classroom participation during remote learning. This teaching model allows students to access lectures at home via pre-recorded videos, and encourages students to join discussions and solve problems.

## **Students**

The study's results show that student engagement in virtual classrooms was lower than that in physical ones. Therefore, some

student-related recommendations are given here to contribute to the effectiveness of internet-based education.

Firstly, students should have reliable internet connection to catch up with virtual activities by, for example, allocating some of their personal budget to buy a sim card with the Internet connection. With stable access to the platform, students can follow the flow of teaching and will be encouraged to make their contribution to interactive activities.

Secondly, students should have positive attitude towards their virtual learning. Instead of lying down in bed wearing pajamas, students should sit at their desk wearing uniforms or formal clothes to attend virtual classrooms. In addition, when listening to teachers' online speech, learners should actively take notes, express ideas, make questions for better acquisition and more frequently take part in group discussions.

Thirdly, it is by far better if students can self-study. Thanks to technology advancement, students can become autonomous learners with teachers' aid. For instance, they can learn through references or recorded video of lessons and google useful information related to their lessons after class to broaden their knowledge and to increase level of academic confidence. With learner autonomy, students will become more confident in group cooperation.

Finally, students ought to have suitable learning strategies while joining online classrooms instead of insisting on their preferred learning styles such as Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing Preference, and Kinesthetic. When preparing lesson plans, teachers tend to prioritize interactive activities to intensify student engagement, but they can't tailor numerous activities that suit students' favorite learning modes, for there are at least 40 students in a class with about 40 learning styles. Thereby, learners' building new strategies for their own learning which well-match with teachers' teaching styles is extremely vital to contribute online

teaching and learning success, since their effective learning methods allows them to access information they are provided with, and hence they have higher level of interaction.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study has uncovered several findings. Regarding the administration, tertiary institutions were active in dealing with the crisis by providing suitable platforms for virtual teaching, adequate training in how to use the platforms and prompt technical assistance. Besides, the survey indicated that educators were really flexible, enthusiastic and actively engaged in the sudden shift from brick-and-mortar to cyber classrooms. When it comes to hindrances to the remote teaching, we found that technical problems, lack of an effective LMS, a shortage of interactive activities, teachers' limitation of digital skills, an insufficiency of online teaching materials and low student engagement were among the factors negatively impacting the productive synchronous education.

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research**

The results of the study could not be validly interpreted without a clear understanding of its limitations.

The study explored English teachers' experience on the remote teaching process. Therefore, the information collected about different aspects including students' obstacles or learners' engagement was viewed from teachers' perspectives. For further research, students' opinions about the abrupt transition should be taken into consideration to have a clearer picture of the whole teaching and learning landscape during school closures.

When comparing to the total of public universities in Ho Chi Minh City, the number of tertiary institutions whose participants were involved in the survey is considered rather small-sized. For a

larger-scale research, more universities including public and private sectors should get involved in the study.

Another delimitation of this study is that it just focused on the universities delivering virtual teaching synchronously. Therefore, researches in the future should cover both asynchronous and synchronous training.

## **AUTHOR**

Hien Thi Phan is a lecturer of English at the University of Finance and Marketing and has been teaching English for over 10 years. Her major areas of interest include CALL, project-based learning, English teaching and learning approach, and English linguistics. Email: pt.hien@ufm.edu.vn

Hien Thi Thu Duong is currently a lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Finance and Marketing. Her areas of teaching are English skills, pronunciation and Business English. Her research areas of interest are mainly in second language acquisition, pronunciation and phonology, and language education. Email: dt.hien@ufm.edu.vn.

Hang Thi Nguyen is a lecturer of English at the University of Finance and Marketing and has been teaching English for more than 10 years. Her major areas of interest include CALL, English Language Testing, and English teaching and learning approach. Email: nt.hang@ufm.edu.vn

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# Appendix 1

## Questionnaire

### “A Survey on Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Emergency Remote English Teaching”

#### Section 1 – Personal Information

1. What college / university do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your gender?                      a. Male                      b. Female
3. How old are you?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. How long have you been teaching English?  
\_\_\_\_\_

#### Section 2 – Information on Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Emergency Remote English Teaching

##### TECHNOLOGY/TRANING

5. What/which platform do you use to teach online?
  - a. Microsoft Teams
  - b. Zoom
  - c. Google Meet
  - d. EZtalk
  - e. Google classroom
  - f. Others
6. Is the platform you use
  - a. free-of-charge?
  - b. financially supported by your educational institution?
7. Have you been trained to use the online teaching platform(s)?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

8. How often are you confronted with the following technical problems while using the online platform?

- a. Never
- b. Rarely
- c. Sometimes
- d. Usually
- e. Always

9. How satisfied do you feel with the technical support?

- a. Absolutely dissatisfied
- b. Dissatisfied
- c. No idea
- d. Satisfied
- e. Absolutely satisfied

## **INFRASTRUCTURE**

10. Do you do your online teaching

- a. at the university?
- b. at home?
- c. at other places

11. Do you think your room is suitable for online teaching?

- a. Yes
- b. No

## **TEACHERS/TEACHING**

12. How do you assess your digital skills?

- a. Basic
- b. Intermediate
- c. Advanced

13. How have you prepared for your online teaching? (You can select more than one option.)

- a. Attended workshops/webinars

- b. Learned from colleagues
- c. Joined a teaching/technology community
- d. Employed currently used materials/resources
- e. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

14. How often do you use the following activities in your online teaching?

List of activities	Frequency of each activity employed in online teaching				
	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
giving presentations using software such as PowerPoint					
employing free game-based learning platforms such as Kahoot, Quizizz					
asking students to give presentations					
having students work in pairs/groups					

15. How do you deal with absenteeism?

- a. Students' attendance grade will be marked down regardless of excuses.
- b. Penalty depends on the reliability of student's excuses.
- c. Students will be given a reasonable opportunity to make up missed classes.
- d. No penalty is required.
- e. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

16. How do you deal with late submission of coursework?

- a. Extension is not accepted for whatever reasons.
- b. Deadline will be extended, but marks will be reduced.
- c. Deadline will be extended regarding serious or unpreventable events.
- d. Deadline will be extended regardless of excuses.
- e. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

17. How often do you use the following to support your students after class?

List of activities	Frequency of each activity employed to support students after class				
	never	rarely	sometimes	usually	always
QAs via messaging platforms such as Email, Zalo, Facebook Messenger					
recordings for later revisions					
sending extra references to students					

## STUDENTS

18. Do your students get adequate training in the online platform you use?

- a. Yes
- b. No

19. Are your students required to turn on their camera while learning?

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Yes. But students complain they can't.

20. Which problems have you been faced with while delivering online lessons? (You can select more than one option.)

- a. Students' Internet connection lags.
- b. Students cannot listen to audio or video files clearly.
- c. It is not easy for students to work in pairs or in groups especially for speaking activities.
- d. Others (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

21. What are the levels of student engagement in your lessons?

- a. Highly engaged
- b. Mixed
- c. Passive

We'd like to send you a collection of games and English teaching and learning materials we have gathered as a thank-you gift for your help with our research. Could you please include your email below so that we can send it to you as soon as possible? Thank you.

## Appendix 2

### Interview for Teachers

#### A. Teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning infrastructure

1. Do you feel satisfied with the teaching and learning infrastructure at your university? Why (not)?
2. What do you expect to be supported from the institution?

#### B. Teachers' perceptions about teaching and learning activities

1. What changes do you make to your teaching procedure when you shift to online lectures?
2. Which effective online classroom model do you think of?
3. Do you think that your students actively engage in the learning activities? Why (not)? If not, what recommendations do you make to students?

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# Educational Nudge: Field Interventions to Enhance Students' Engagement in the English Classrooms during the Sars-Cov-2 Pandemic

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**Quang Tan Nguyen**

University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
*quangnguyentan@ueh.edu.vn*

**Ngan Hoang Kim Vo**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*ngan.vhk@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

The paper aims to investigate the effect of nudging in education on enhancing students' engagement and motivation in the classroom and online activities in the context of Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam. A field intervention was conducted with two nudging approaches: loss aversion and temptation. In order to test the effect of the experiment, it is divided into 2 phases. In phase 1, *the same* group of students received 3 treatments: intent-to-test, loss-aversion and temptation whereas in phase 2, *each* group of students received *each* treatment with "no treatment", "loss-aversion" and "temptation". Due to the outbreak of Sars-cov-2 virus, the experiment in phase 2 had to switch to online instead of offline as initially intended. The result shows that loss aversion has more effect on students' engagement and testing result than temptation. Besides, the gap of final test result in the loss aversion group and temptation group in online classrooms is higher than that of offline classrooms.

# INTRODUCTION

English has long been playing a tremendous role in Vietnam's economy and is considered as a strategic investment to attract foreign investment and hold the country a competitive advantage in the "economic and political arenas" (Phan, 2021). Therefore, improving English proficiency has remained a key part in the country's educational sector. Despite excessive effort and recent improvement in the country's English proficiency level, Vietnam still holds a moderate position in Asia in terms of English proficiency (EF api, 2020). As illustrated in the table below, it ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in the whole continent, lower than other underprivileged countries such as Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh. As students get older, normally at the age of 19-24, their passion to learn seems to shrink. Therefore, maintaining university students' motivation and engagement in the classes has always been a concern of educators (Lumsden, 1994). The outbreak of Sars-Cov-2 virus has shouldered the burden of lecturers, which had already been heavy long before. A promising and emerging new approach to improve learning effects in education is the implementation of various nudges in the classroom (Thaler and Sunstein 2008; see Damgaard and Nielsen 2018 for a relatively exhaustive review of nudging interventions in education). Significant advantages of nudges over other types of interventions are their feasibility and affordability in implementation (as they only require to slightly alter the environment of choice).

## Research questions

The paper aims to answer the following questions:

1. Are nudge approaches / interventions effective in online English classrooms in universities in Ho Chi Minh City?
2. If yes, how effective are these approaches?
3. In terms of differences, is the loss-aversion system more effective than the temptation system?

## **Literature review**

### **Nudges, temptation and loss aversion approaches**

“Nudge” is a very important concept in the field of Behavioral Economics and widely applied in other fields. Thaler and Sunstein (2008) broadly mentioned nudging as a way that “alters behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options”. Another significant discussion of nudge can also be found in Hausman and Welch (2010) as an approach to influence people’s choice “without limiting the choice set”.

The most successful example of nudge should be the case of Amsterdam Schiphol airport urinals. The urinals in Schiphol airport in Amsterdam have become famous with a sticker of a fly on it. With this little step, it is reported that the spillage reduction has reached 80% (Evans-Pritschard, 2013), which saved the airport a lot of money and effort for clearing it.

As defined in Businessballs (2010), the temptation could be understood as the “inability to gratification” or the “urge to satisfy aspiration, ego, etc....”. Being nudged by this approach, people tend to be biased to short-term gains and “against long-term reward”. Besides, they also have a tendency to go for easy options and choose whatever to make their lives easier. Also, in Businessballs (2010), loss aversion could be understood as the tendency that people value their current possessions than making changes.

### **Nudges in education**

One of the most significant paper is the case of Chicago school intervention to improve their teachers’ performance in the academic year of 2010 and 2011 with a gain and loss treatment (Fryer et al., 2012). Whereas the gain group still received financial incentives at the end of the year if their student achievement is high. The other group would have to give the money back if their students did not meet the target. Although teacher quality was

improved. The results between loss aversion and temptation groups were not much different.

### **Nudges in ELT context**

Currently, there has been a shortage in the research of nudges in English teaching. However, in the field of ELT, exhaustive. According to Harmer (1991), motivation could be divided into extrinsic and intrinsic factors. With regards to the former, language learners have the tendency to be motivated by extrinsic factors such as rewards, prospective career or high studying outcome. Intrinsic factors, on the other hand, are rooted from the students themselves rather than any rewarding purposes. The definition of extrinsic factors could be comparable with temptation and loss aversion approaches in the nudges approach in the sector of behavioral economics. Therefore, this paper aims to be a pioneering study on this approach in the field of nudges in ELT and contributes to this limitation.

### **Methodology**

The paper will conduct an experiment in English classrooms. Quantitative approach will be employed. After collecting data, results will be decoded and analyzed. Microsoft Excel and R software employed for data analysis and plotting.

### **Setting and participants**

The experiment was conducted on 308 students in 7 different English classes at College of Foreign Economic Relation and University of Economics Ho Chi Minh city with 2 phases. Students were randomly chosen in different classes. Students in phase 1 and phase 2 were 2 different groups. In phase 1, 108 students in 3 classes participated in the experiment whereas in phase 2, 230 students participating in the experiments were from 6 classes. The subject was English for Business Studies for all groups of students.

Students in 2 phases were divided into 3 different groups: temptation – loss-aversion and no treatment groups.

The experiment was repeated in phase 2. However, in phase 1, all 3 groups of students received the same treatment. In specific: the first 4 sessions of the course, we conducted *intent-to-test* treatment, the next 4 sessions were for temptation and the last 4 sessions were for loss-aversion.

In phase 2, we repeated the experiment. However, there were 2 differences: (1) each 2 classes received 1 treatment for the whole course and (2) we replace the intent-to-test treatment into no-treatment.

The reason for this difference is to test the consistency of the experiment in whether in the *same* group and *different* groups. Besides, the reasons for us to conduct 2 different phases is to test whether the result is long-lasting or it is just a short-term/ happens incidentally. In other words, if the findings of the 2 phases are similar, then it's possible to conclude the long-lasting effect of the treatment. Otherwise, the result of the test may be incidental. For this difference, in phase 1, we just compared the percentage of improvement after each treatment whereas in phase 2, we compared the mid-term test result of the 3 different group

In the no treatment group, we conducted normal lesson with no pre-test or post-test.

In the loss aversion and temptation group, students would then pre and post-test at the beginning and the end of the class, which helped them to measure their learning outcome of the class. The pre and post-tests were the *same* tests. In details, at the beginning of the lesson, students were assigned a pre-test with the content of the upcoming lesson in order to check their knowledge acquisition. After receiving the lesson, the students had to do a post-test which exactly was the same as the pre-test in order to check their understanding of the lesson. In this experiment conducted in our

English Business Studies class, we designed the tests based on the topic of each lesson such as Marketing, Management, Cross-Cultural Management, Brands, Planning.

However, to the loss-aversion group, if their improvement was under 40%, they would receive a small malus on their attendance grade.

In the temptation group, there is a *bonus* system: if their improvement was higher than 60%, they will get a small *bonus* on their attendance grade.

The reason for me to choose the attendance grade is that according to our regulation, teachers are freely to decide the rule of their attendance grade. Besides, this grade just accounts for 10%, a small bonus or minus on this grade would not heavily affect students' final result.

The reason for us to decide the scale of under 40% is *under average* according to the school marking system scale. Likewise, achieving more than 60% is considered to be *higher than average* according to the school marking system.

For measuring the percentage of improvement of students, I proposed the following formula:

- Their improvement is the difference of mark between pre-test and post-test
- $\varphi_t = \beta_t - \alpha_t$
- $\varphi_t$  : is the difference between pre and post-test of day t
- $\alpha$  : the result of pre-test
- $\beta$ : the results of post-test
- $\theta$ : the maximum improvement that students can get after the lesson

- $\theta_t = 100 - \alpha$
- Learner's improvement into percentage:
- $\sigma_t = \left(\frac{\theta_t}{\theta_t}\right) \times 100$
- Learners' total improvement was counted as follows:
- $\gamma = [(\sum \sigma_{(2)} \sigma_{(3)} \sigma_{(4)} \sigma_{(5)}) / 400] \times 100$

In specific, the arithmetic average of the sigma will be computed in order to measure their average relative improvement after every lesson.

- $\gamma$  will be compared with the result of the post test in the pre-experimental phase
- (if possible) – students' mid-term results between experimental group and control group will be compared.

For example: On day 2, student A has got 50 for their pre-test and 80 for their post-test.

Pre-test	50
Post-test	80
Improvement	$80-50 = 30$
Max improvement	$100-50 = 50$
% improvement	$(30/50) \times 100 = 60$

Welch's t-test will also be applied in this paper in order to test the hypothesis that two groups of students do not have equal means and are non-overlapping.

# DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

## Phase 1

### *Welch 2 samples test*

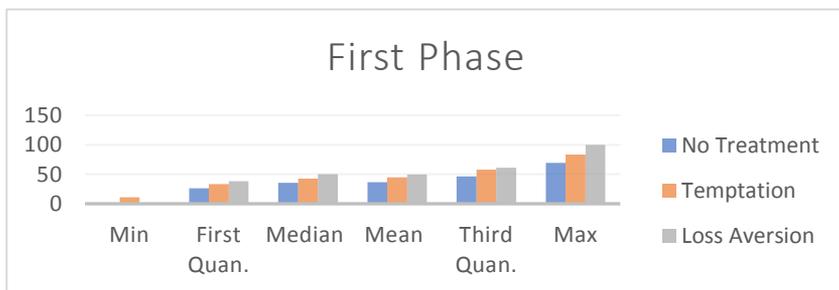
Welch two sample t-test of the mid-term testing score among the 3 groups was conducted. The result of the test reject the hypothesis that there is a difference in means when the p-value of the tests between no-treatment and loss aversion group, no-treatment and bonus group as well as bonus and loss aversion group are .0004, .035 and .0001 respectively. Therefore, it is conclusive that the data are significantly different. Besides, the confidence interval at 95% of the grade for each group of treatments shows that the 2 groups do not overlap and the average scores of 2 groups of students are significantly different with a 95% confidence level.

### *Result*

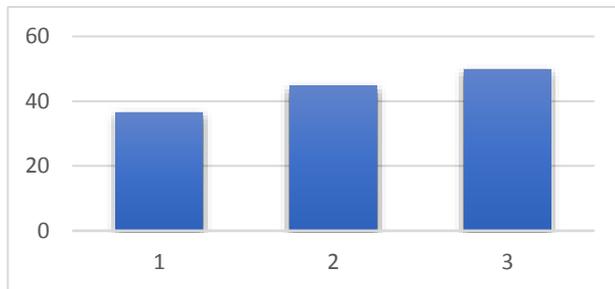
**Figure 1.** Summary Phase 1 improvement result

	No Treatment	Temptation	Loss Aversion
<b>Min</b>	0	11.11	0
<b>First Quan.</b>	26.2	33.33	37.98
<b>Median</b>	35.71	42.86	50
<b>Mean</b>	36.47	44.75	49.8
<b>Third Quan.</b>	46.6	57.73	61.25
<b>Max</b>	69.23	83.33	100

**Figure 2.** First phase result



**Figure 3. Phase 1- average**



The table and graphs show the result of phase 1 of control group, temptation and loss aversion. It could be seen that at the loss aversion group has the highest average score, followed by the temptation group whereas no-nudging group has the lowest result.

In terms of specific, preliminary result reveals that with no-treatment group, the average percentage of improvement is 36.47%. For the temptation group, this result is 44.75% whereas this result for the loss-aversion group is 49.78%. The result is aligned with the hypothesis that students tend to be afraid to get malus whereas with no intervention, this figure is much lower. However, the difference between loss-aversion and temptation group is not so high, just around 5%.

As far as the minimum improvement that students could get during this phase is concerned, in both no-treatment and loss aversion students, there are students who got 0 improvements whereas the reverse is true to the temptation group. Students are considered to get 0 achievement when they belong to one of two conditions as follows:

1. Their post-test result is lower than their pre-test
2. Their post-test result has the same result as their pre-test.

In the no treatment period, there are 2 cases that students got lower post-test result than their pre-tests (9.0 decreased to 8.5 and 12 dropped to 11.5) whereas in the loss-aversion period, there is 2

cases when their pre-test and post-test kept the same (13/20 and 12/20)

The maximum improvement that students could get in the no-treatment group is 69.23%, this figure to temptation and loss aversion are 83.33 and 100 respectively. Noticeably, students are considered to have 100% improvement when they achieve 20/20 points of the post test. In the loss aversion period, there were 5 students achieved this result. However, at the temptation and no-nudge groups, no students got maximum score of the post test.

## Phase 2 result

### *Welch 2 samples test*

The p-value of the test is .006, .0001 and .007 of the three aforementioned groups respectively  $< 0.05$ . Therefore, it is possible to reject the null hypothesis that there is a statistically significant difference between the average of two groups of 1% level.

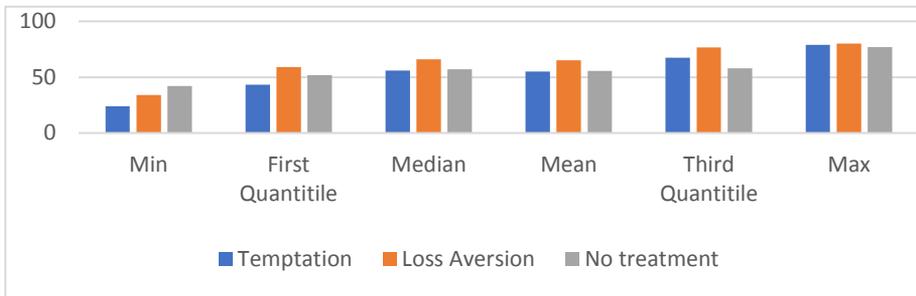
Besides, the confidence interval at 95% of the grade for each group of treatments shows that the 2 groups do not overlap and the average scores of 2 groups of students are significantly different with a 95% confidence level.

## Summary of 3 groups' test result

**Figure 4** *Summary of 3 groups' test results*

	<b>Temptation</b>	<b>Loss Aversion</b>	<b>No treatment</b>
<b>Min</b>	24.00	34.00	42.00
<b>First Quantile</b>	43.25	59.00	52.00
<b>Median</b>	56.00	66.00	57.00
<b>Mean</b>	55.15	65.16	55.58
<b>Third Quantile</b>	67.50	76.75	58.00
<b>Max</b>	79	80.00	77.00

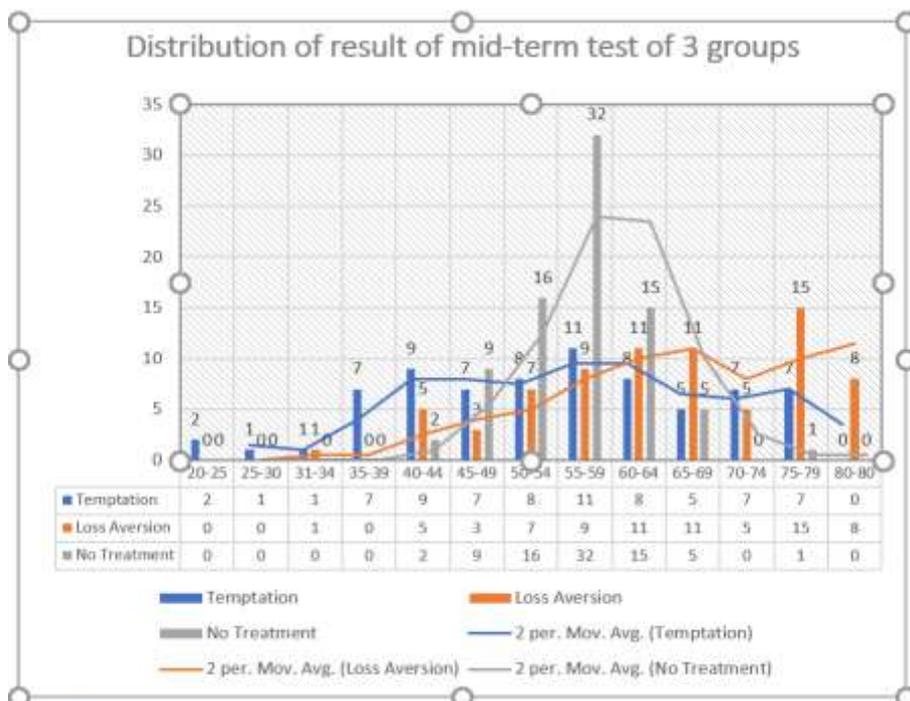
**Figure 5.** *Overview of mid-term test result of 3 groups*



The illustrations above provide information on the summary of mid-term test result of 3 treatment groups: no-nudge, temptation and loss aversion during phase 2 of the experiment. In term of overview, it could be seen that students in the temptation group have the lowest mid-term test result, followed by loss aversion. Those in the no-treatment group have the highest in this category (42 marks in comparison with 24 and 34 in temptation and loss aversion respectively). However, when coming to the other categories including first quantile, median, mean, third quantile as well as the maximum score that students the experiment could get, those in the loss aversion has the highest result of all. Whereas students in the temptation group have lower testing result in the first quantile, median and mean, the opposite tendency is true to those in the higher score achiever: third quantile and maximum result. As for mid-term test, students in the loss-aversion group got the highest testing result – 66 over 80, about 10 marks higher than those in the other 2 groups. About temptation and loss aversion group, students in this category group could get around 56 and 57. This figure of loss aversion group, in a more detailed look, is even higher than the third quantile of students in the no-treatment group, who just got 58 and roughly the same as those in temptation group, who achieved 67.5. Coming to the third quantile of mid-term test result of students in three groups, it could be observed that those in the loss aversion group could get really high score: 76.75, this figure is much higher than those in the other 2 groups. Specifically, this number is around 11 points higher than those that

students in the bonus/ temptation group could achieve and nearly 20 points higher than those in the no-treatment group. It's worth noticeable that the result of 76.75 of those in this group is nearly the same as the maximum marks that students in the no-treatment group could achieve, which is 77.00. Whereas students in the temptation group could get nearly maximum the result of the test (79/80), students in the loss aversion group could get maximum result of the test (80/80).

**Figure 6** Mid-term test result of three groups



About the standard deviation of all three groups, the no-treatment group has the lowest result with 6.175, followed by loss aversion with nearly double 12.169. Students in the temptation group have the highest result with 14.34. Analyzing the quantile of the three groups reveals that in the no treatment group, students have the lowest result as well, with just 6.5. This result reveals that students in the no-treatment group have tendency to have similar testing result. Moreover, it is also nearly three times as less as those in the

loss aversion (or malus) group. Students in the temptation (or bonus group), have the highest result when the quantile of those in this group is up to 24.25, roughly four times higher than control group and around 7.5 marks higher than those in the loss aversion group. In general, students in no treatment group have much lower figures of standard deviation and quantile than those in the loss aversion and temptation group. About under average result, no students in no-treatment group belong to this category and this figure is nearly the same as those in the loss aversion group who achieved from 31-34. Noticeably, more students in the temptation group have the tendency to get below average when doing the test. In terms of details, 2 of them could achieve a quarter of the test, 1 student got from 25-30, 1 student scored 31-34 and 7 of them scored 35-39. This result is much higher in comparison with other groups. About average score – the group of 40-44, bonus/temptation group is also the group with highest number of students belonging to this category: 9 students- nearly double those in the loss-aversion group and more than 4 times of those in no-treatment group. However, it could be seen that there is an extremely high number of students in the control group who got 50-54 and 55-59 categories (51 in total, 16 getting 50-54 and 32 students getting 55-59). Upon 80 students during the experiment in this group, this result could be considered to be surprisingly high. Regarding the other two groups, the distribution of temptation and loss aversion groups in these two categories is much lower, just about 7 students who got around 50-54 students in the loss aversion group and 9 students who achieved from 55 to 59. Besides, about 11 students of bonus group who got 50-54 and 11 students belongs to 55-59 marks in the temptation groups.

Another picture could be observed in the higher test-scoring categories when students in the loss aversion have more tendency to belong to this group. In specific, a majority of students of this group achieved from higher than 65 to maximum score: 80. This tendency is followed by the temptation group. Non-experimental students, on the other hand, just got a minority of distribution in

this group. In detail, just 5 students in this group could achieve from 65-69, the same as bonus/ temptation group. This tendency is just half of those in the loss aversion group. Noticeably, no students among 80 participants in the control group achieved 70-74 or maximum score. The highest result students in this group could get is 77 (with just 1 achiever). Around 20% of students in the bonus group could get from 70 to 79 marks (7 in the 70-74 and 7 in the 75-79 categories). Like the non-treatment group, there are no students in this group could get maximum result (80/80). The result also reveals that nearly half of those in the loss aversion group could get higher scores in the mid-term test than the other groups. In terms of details, the highest proportion of students in this group could score “nearly maximum” result – from 75 to 79, with about 15 students in this group. Similarly, a high number of students in this group got 65-69/80 marks (11 students). Finally, it is worth highlighting that 8/79 students in 2 classes of the loss aversion group achieved maximum score when no students in the other 2 groups could reach this mark.

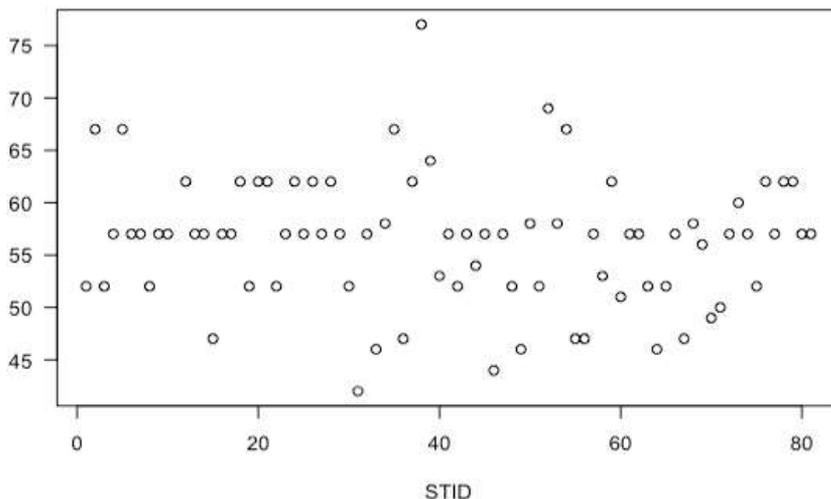
In general, it could be conclusive that:

- Students in the temptation group scored from 20 to 79 marks.
- Those in the no-treatment group mainly focus on average scores.
- Students in the loss aversion have a tendency to get from average and a higher score than the other groups.

The scatter of students’ marks will be illustrated in the next part.

*No treatment*

**Figure 7.** *The scatter plot of mid-term test results in no treatment group*

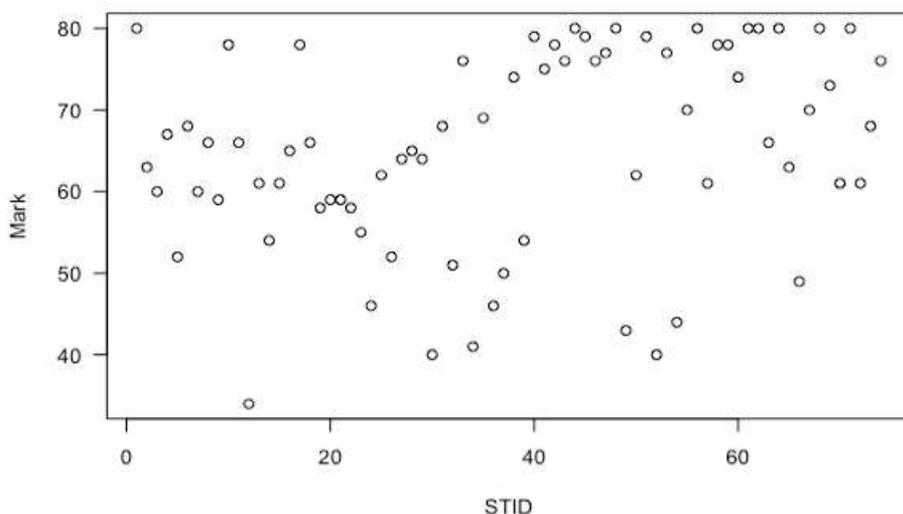


Comparing with other groups, those in the no-treatment group has a more concentration on the distribution of mid-term test, especially 55-59 marks. Looking back at the scatter plot of students in this group, it is observable that around 27 students in the same class achieved the same score (57/80), and 12 students in the same class got 62/80. This result is questionable since with a multiple-choice test, it is not common for a majority of students to have the same results. Besides, no students achieve either lower than average. Especially, there is even one student who did not do the test and got 0 in the original version of the testing result. However, the outlier (0 scorer) was deleted.

Given that this test was conducted online with no approach or control applied, it is possible that students tend to copy others' results or discuss during the time doing the test. However, to be conclusive of this judgement, likelihood ratio test with more variables should be obtained.

## Loss Aversion

**Figure 8.** *The scatter plot of mid-term test results in loss aversion group*

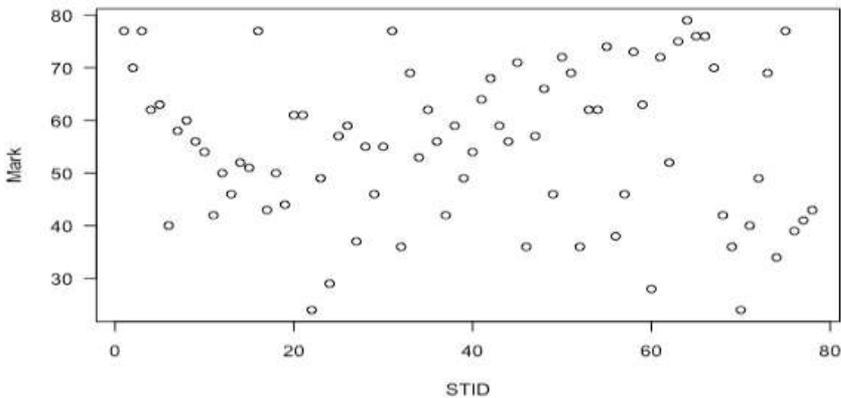


A detailed look at the scatter plot reveals that students in the Loss Aversion groups tend to get higher mark. Just 1% of them (1 student) got lower-than-average score (31-34). The average group 40-44 and 45-49, additionally, also constitute a modest proportion in comparison with other group with just 7% (5 students) and 4%(3 students) respectively for each group. A concentration on the upper part of the plot could be seen, with means that a majority of students in this group could get high test results. In specific, one fifth of students in this group achieved 75-79 marks in the mid-term test (this figure in the non-treatment group was just 1 percent). It's worth noticeable that 67% of students in this treatment group achieved more than 60/80. Especially, 11% of 79 students in this group achieved maximum score: 80/80. This is an impressive result when students in other groups (temptation/bonus and no-treatment) could not achieve.

In general, it could be concluded that students in loss aversion group achieved higher results than their peers.

## *Temptation*

**Figure 9.** *The scatter plot of mid-term test results in temptation group*



The scatter plot of the temptation group shows that students in this group has a wider range of distribution than other groups. In general, students in this group scored from 20-79. Theoretically speaking, this kind of distribution is quite common with offline testing. In specific, around 14% of students in this group scored under-average. Temptation group is also the group that has students with lowest score (20-24 and 25-30). This tendency, despite being common in other offline classes and testing period, could not be found in other 2 groups: non-treatment and loss aversion group. However, nearly 40% of students in this group achieved high score (from more than 60 to 79). This figure is higher than non-treatment group nonetheless, is 27% lower than loss aversion group. The highest point that students in this group could get is 79 (1 student) and no one could achieve maximum result. In general, it is conclusive that bonus testing system had an impact on university students in terms of improving the higher result of mid-term test that students could get. However, it does not reduce the number of students who get under-average result.

## DISCUSSION

The authors would like to make the following suggestions based on the result of the experiment.

In no treatment group, students had a tendency to have similar testing result (about 40% of students in the group achieved 57). Therefore, it is possible to question whether students cheated during the exam since this is not a usual result in the classroom. This phenomenon was not observed in other two groups of treatment. Therefore, it could be inferred that understanding they are in an “experiment”, students may be more “cautious” than the others and understand that their results would be analyzed and compared. Another possibility is that they are confident in their abilities to overcome the test. As a result, the tendency to cheat was reduced.

In the loss aversion group, students had high testing results: 67% of students in this group achieved from more than 60 to maximum. 42% higher than no-treatment group and 27% higher than temptation group.

In the temptation/ bonus groups, student scattering distribution is wider than the others. However, it still enable 40% of students to get from higher than 60/80 (which is considered to be high).

Nudges (by giving bonus and minus), has effects on students' behaviors, engagement improving on testing result. Loss aversion approach has more effect than bonus treatment/ temptation group.

Qualitative result also shows that students were more “stressful” and engaged more in class in terms of making questions or discussing with teachers after class (in treatment group) than in control group.

The outcomes of the experiment in 2 phases are similar in the way that LA students tend to get higher results than their peers.

However, when this gap is high in phase 2, the difference is not so significant in phase 1. It is hypothetical that the difference between the two phases could be due to the impact of the experiment from offline English classrooms to online English classrooms. Therefore, temptation on offline classrooms could be more interesting than in online classrooms. However, loss aversion system is always effective in both online and offline classrooms.

It could be conclusive that loss aversion group performed better in their mid-term test than the temptation group. However, whereas the result in temptation group was better than those in control group in phase 1, students did not show the same result in phase two when the temptation group had some underaverage scorer (but the control group did not)

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

### **Conclusion**

Quantitative result has showed that malus treatment has more effect than bonus and no treatment. However, the gap between malus and bonus treatment in online classrooms is bigger than those in offline classrooms. Besides, in phase 1 (offline classroom), temptation group scored better than the control group whereas in phase 2, it's impossible to conclude so. Finally, students in the control group in phase 2 (online classroom), had a tendency to have similar score whereas the marks in bonus and malus group scatter more.

Aside from the aforementioned result, it is also reported from teachers of first phase experiment that other effect of the intervention could also be observed such as students were more punctual than before (as they expected to be tested for the pre-test) – even though they know the result of the test will not be accumulated for their final result. Besides, students tend to make

more questions in the treatment groups (for both temptation and loss aversion) – as they understood that they would have a post test at the end of the lesson.

Similarly, when switching to online classrooms, students were more punctual and showed up on virtual classrooms on time. Besides, more questions were raised than in the control groups.

### **Implications for education and limitations**

Nudges approach could be a powerful tool for teachers in both online and offline classrooms. It is not only helpful in terms of improving learning engagement and motivation in their learning process but also improving the punctualities and discipline of students. Therefore, it should be employed as a method in teaching English in particular and education in general.

Due to the switch of online classroom, the experiment has some limitations and thus, we would suggest some implications for further research to fulfill these gaps:

Research on the same field with a different focus on other approaches such as following the herbs, status-quo... is also necessary to contribute to the limited literature. As mentioned before, there is a shortage in the study on nudges study in Vietnam context despite the wide applications of this approach in this country as well as its emergence in other contexts. Therefore, it needs more attention from both local and international economists and researchers.

Further research should have a focus on other cities in Vietnam such as Ha Noi or Da Nang, Can Tho or wider population in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam.

Study on merely online or offline classroom should be conducted. This experiment had to change its methodology due to the unexpected outbreak of the virus. Therefore, a focus on just online or offline classrooms would, hypothetically, produce different results.

## AUTHOR

Mr. Quang Tan Nguyen is currently a visiting lecturer of English at the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh city and Ho Chi Minh city University of Technology and Education. He holds a Master's degree in Education (Specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language) and a Master's degree in Social Interaction and Economic Dynamics. His research interest includes nudging in education, learner motivation, behavioral economics, teaching methodologies and approaches.

Ms. Ngan Hoang Kim Vo is currently working as an English Lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. Her research interests cover second language acquisition, teaching methodologies.

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# Appendix

## Example of online pre/post test ( 15 questions in total)

### Unit 4- Managing across culture

Choose the best answer

What's your name (no tone mark - for example: Nguyen Van A - not Nguyễn Văn A) \*

Vấn bản câu trả lời ngắn

What's your student ID?

Vấn bản câu trả lời ngắn

What is the adjective form of culture? \*

- culture
- cultural
- culturing
- cultures

Which of the following person belongs to multi-active group? \*

- warm
- factual
- accommodating
- good-listener

Which of the following words means "talking a lots" \*

- impulsive
- accommodating
- compromise
- loquacious

Which of the following words mean "to cut into someone else's turn to speak" ? \*

- improvise
- interrupt
- intuition
- logic

Which of the following groups are amiable person? \*

- linear-active
- reactive
- multi-active

Which is an invented word combining worldwide and regional concerns ? \*

- globalization
- globalize
- glocalization
- localize

...

Which word means "being humiliated or disrespected in public" ? \*

- interrupt
- intuition
- lose face
- connection

Which of the following words means "a group is more important than the individual" ? \*

- collectivist
- confrontation
- intuition
- compromise

111

Which of the following words is the synonym with polite? \*

- helpful
- courteous
- amiable
- loquacious

..... means communicating among people from different culture backgrounds \*

- culture shock
- culture difference
- cross-cultural communication
- culture communicating

What is the opposite with "individualist"? \*

- collection
- collective
- collectivist
- collect

Which of the following words means "a company with different countries" ? \*

- national company
- multi-national company
- domestry company
- none of the above answer is correct

...

Which of the following words mean "face-to-face" communication ? \*

- confrontation
- connection
- intuition
- lose face

Which of the following words means "an arrangement with items that are below or above"? \*

- universalist
- hierachy
- status
- improvise

Which of the following words is the adjective of decide ? \*

- deciding
- decisive
- decided
- decision

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# Online Teaching Activities to Maintain Non-majored English Students' Motivation

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**An Truong Le**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam

*an.lt@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

The world has been suffering a lot from the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only in Vietnam but also worldwide, education has transformed beyond the fear of the pandemic thanks to the advance in technology. Under the policy of the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), teaching online appears to be the most outstanding way in the lockdown period in Vietnam. Thus, how to maintain students engaged when teaching online at the tertiary level turns out to be a vital issue facing many teachers. This research with the participants of 27 teachers investigates how teacher carried out their virtual teaching activities to have students' retention. Data were systemized and analyzed in both quality and quantity. The results showed that teachers used various teaching platforms, online tools as well as teaching methods to gain students' satisfaction, but failed to push their confidence and attention. Besides some disadvantages such as distraction from the surrounding environment, lack of in-person interaction, online teaching also brings some advantages to students, for example, the accessibility to information regardless of boundary, self-paced study. Implications for teachers and educational institutions were also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Covid-19 pandemic, online teaching, ARCS model, motivation*

## INTRODUCTION

On 12 March 2020, the novel coronavirus was declared to be a pandemic (WHO, 2020). Since then, the pandemic has negatively impacted many pillars of life such as economy, social interaction, health, and education is not an exception. In Vietnam, social distancing was proposed as a temporary solution to stop the spread out of the virus. Therefore, many schools at all levels were closed at that time. Although E-learning has been employed worldwide, it still plays a modest role in tertiary education in Vietnam (Pham & Ho, 2020). However, in these unprecedented times, online teaching appeared to be an effective way of teaching and learning nationwide.

The Minister of Education and Training (MOET) made a stipulation on online teaching. As a consequence, there was 110 higher educational institution transformed from face-to-face teaching to online teaching. At the Ho Chi Minh City Open University (HCMC OU), after the extension of the Spring break, online teaching was conducted to all classes, including non-majored English classes.

It was the transformation upon the outbreak of the Covid-19 that left challenges for teachers who were familiar with in-person training (Dinh & Nguyen, 2020). Besides having the teachers prepared and well-trained with technologies, platforms, or applications used, teachers themselves have to obtain certain online teaching techniques that help maintain learners' motivation to learn virtually.

Motivation is a key factor that helps learners involve in the learning process, especially in the virtual teaching and learning mode (Agung et al., 2020). The ARCS model, standing for Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction, was first introduced by John Keller in the eighties and during its thirty-year history, this model is still validated and well-developed (Keller, 1987). ARCS proposes four steps to motivate learners that are defining,

designing, developing, and evaluating respectively. Attention indicates that teachers should draw and sustain students' attention. Relevance states the reason for students learn the content. Confidence means the lesson must provide learners with a belief that they will be successful if they try their best in learning. And satisfaction suggests that the sense of being rewarded and proud should be built-in learner's perception (Keller, 1987). This model is beneficial for both in-person and online teaching and has been used widely (Li & Keller, 2018). There has been much research on the model such as Hung et al., (2013), Chang et al.,(2016), Annamalai (2016). However, in Vietnam online teaching context during the Covid-19 period, it is rarely mentioned the application of this model in teaching and learning despite its advantages in fostering learners' motivation. It is the lack of an online teaching model customized fitly to the Vietnamese context that leads the study to investigate the following research questions:

1. *What modalities do the teachers employ while teaching non-English majors at the HCMC OU in the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain students' motivation?*
2. *What are the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching that may eventuate in the scope of teaching the English language to the non-majored students at the HCM OU from the teachers in charge?*
3. *How was the ARCS model in teaching applied when teachers at the HCMC OU conduct their virtual teaching?*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Online teaching**

Online teaching is the course where most of the content is delivered online, and there is less than 30% of face-to-face teaching (Allen & Seaman, 2007). Online teaching is an improved form of distance learning (Benson, 2002) in which learning happens thanks to the

enhancement of technological gadgets that allow learners to access the opportunities to learn. Sharing the same idea, Pham & Ho (2020) said that the term “online teaching” is used to describe “distance teaching”. Although there are variables in the terminology used, this study will manage online teaching, e-teaching, and distance teaching as interchangeable jargon that applies technological tools to deliver lessons to students from a distance and not in-person mode.

### **Non-majored English students**

Non-majored at the HCMC OU are students whose majors are not English Studies. They learn English as compulsory courses called Academic English ranging from Academic English 1 to 5 with the Regular Program, and to Academic English 10 if students study in the high-quality program. Le Hang (2020) revealed that there were 89,6% of the non-majored students at the HCMC OU may be or were ready to engage in virtual English classes. The research also showed that students at this university own technological tools assisted their online learning and technical competencies as well. Furthermore, L. D. N. Hang (2020) stated that the roles of teachers when teaching online have been shifted to inspirers, facilitators, and organizers by students. To sum up, non-majored English students, specifically at the HCMC OU, have been in favor of online learning and realized the vital roles of instructors in virtual classrooms.

### **Motivation**

“Cultivating motivation is crucial to a language learner's success-and therefore crucial for the language teacher and researcher to understand” (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2011). Because of its significance, motivation has been designated as a focal point of study and a key framework in the subject of language acquisition. Motivation is defined as an important aspect that contributes to a learner's success (Spratt et al., 2005). To be more exact, motivation was divided into two categories: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). The two illustrate the involvement of both internal and external variables in influencing learners to learn. Gardner & Lambert (1959) believed that motivation has a significant influence on the effectiveness of second language (L2) learning. Hence, in this study motivation will be addressed as the factors that motivate students to be engaged in their online learning activities.

### **ARCS teaching model**

Keller's (1983) motivating design of teaching concept has been used in a variety of educational and training contexts. Keller's ARCS model considers four aspects of student motivation that are attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction as follow: *(1) Attention refers to the learners' engagement. It is critical to get and hold the learners' interests and attention; (2) Relevance: The learning process should show the usefulness of the content so that learners can bridge the gap between content and the real world, (3) Confidence focuses on developing success expectation among learners, and success expectation allow learners to control their learning processes, (4) Satisfaction indicates that learners should be satisfied of what they achieved during the learning process.* The ARCS model has been widely used to increase students' motivation, attitude, retention rate, performance, and other psychological attributes in online or hybrid learning contexts (Li & Keller, 2018).

### **Related studies**

With the transformation of online teaching during the Covid-19, there is much research conducted on both teachers' and learners' perceptions.

Agung et al. (2020) studied the perception of students in online learning during the pandemic. The results reveal that there are three barriers in online teaching that are the complexity and sustainability of the internet, media accessible priority, and the platforms used. Atmojo & Nugroho (2020) pointed out that

activities in online teaching did not well organized due to many factors from students, teachers, and parents also although teachers employed different methods of teaching online such as giving extra points, using the learning management system (LMS), or extra material.

How teachers shape their minds about online teaching is also an important issue to study on. Gao & Zhang (2020) researched the participation of three teachers at the tertiary level in China. The findings suggest that teachers indicated online teaching has its own advantages and disadvantages, and there is a need of integrating technology in teaching online. Moreover, there need to be a shift from conventional teaching to the new form of pedagogy. Cheung (2021) investigated how an English as Second Language (ESL) teacher called out Zoom as an alternative for in-person teaching. The finding claims that the interaction modes when online teaching is reduced, but this mode of teaching offered the teacher certain ways to check students' understanding of the lesson. Both Gao & Zhang's (2020) and Cheung's (2021) research would be more reliable if the research samples had been expanded to a larger number.

ChanLin (2009) designed and implemented a Web-based lecture utilizing Keller's ARCS model to increase students' learning motivation, cooperative learning activities and a task-oriented approach were employed. The finding indicated that students were positive in the new teaching model. Malik (2014) conducted a study on how effective the ARCS model is to overcome the lack of motivation when learning online from students' perspectives. According to the study, systems established on the basis of the ARCS Model increase students' attention during teaching, build relevance to the students' needs, establish a positive expectation for achievement, and aid in satisfaction by rewarding achievement.

Effects of the pandemic on teachers and students are studied by Hartshorn & McMurry (2020). The study asserts that both teachers

and students are affected by the stressors generated in the Covid-19 period, but the transition to virtual education causes more obstacles for students than teachers and there is a decrease in students' speaking skills while studying online. This mix-method study sought major answers to the question of how the Covid-19 crisis impacts ESL learners and teachers in the USA.

Pham & Ho, (2020) figure out the impact of the pandemic on higher education in Vietnam. According to these authors, there have been many universities that constitute distance teaching to face-to-face delivery during the outbreak of the pandemic. This study draws a general picture to the scope of tertiary teaching in Vietnam, but it does not snap the perspective of language teaching.

There are four main reasons, the interaction between learners and instructors, teachers' technology competencies, institutional assistance, and behaviors of learners, affecting teachers when teaching online in a study with the context of a university in Vietnam during the Covid-19 time (Thach & Thanh, 2021). The group of researchers also indicated the importance of blended teaching to the satisfaction of teachers. Unfortunately, this research does not state the specific role of language teaching or motivation from the perspective of learners.

To sum up, teaching English online during the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic has been a need worldwide and nationwide. In the context of Vietnam, online teaching has been concerned but how to maintain learners' engagement to learn English online is also a gap.

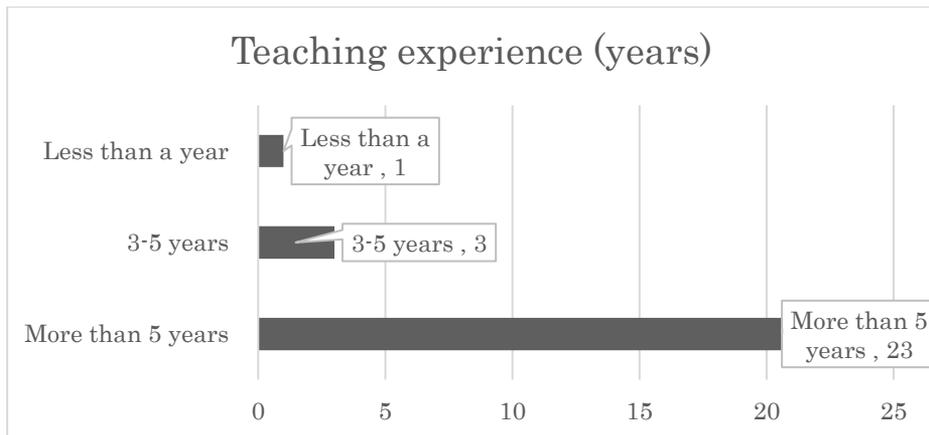
## **METHODS**

### **Research context and participations**

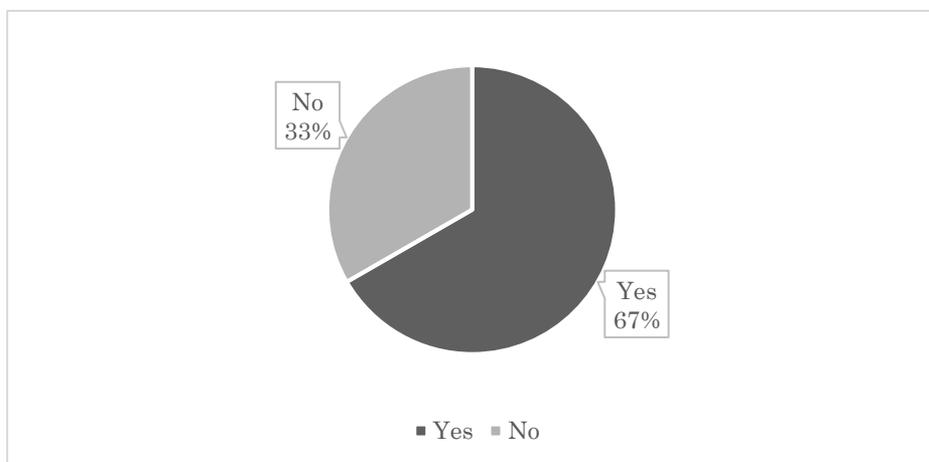
The study is set at the HCMC OU scope with a 15-question survey using Google Form delivered to 30 teachers teaching at the Division of Non-English Major. These teachers are those who were in charge

of online teaching classes during the first lockdown due to the pandemic in Vietnam. There were 27 responses collected and the data are used for analysis.

**Figure 1** *Teaching experiences of the participants in years*



**Figure 2** *Online teaching experiences of the participants (%)*



As can be seen from **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, the number of teachers with more than 5-year experience counts for 85.19% (N=23) while there are 11.11% of the participants obtain 3 to 5 years of experience (N=3). This number of participants who have been teaching less than one year takes just 3.7% (N=1). Besides, there are 67% (N=18) of the participants have taught online for the

online teaching in spread of the pandemic whereas there are 9 out of 27, counts for 33%, teachers have not taught virtually before.

### **Data collection and analysis**

To address the research questions, the quantitative method is employed using the partly adapted questionnaire from Fuentes Hernández et al. (2020). The questionnaire consists of participants' background information, online teaching tools, and applications used, advantages and disadvantages of online teaching, teacher's roles in online teaching, and activities employed in online teaching (16 items) using a Likert Scale. These items are divided into 4 groups of the ARCS model which Attention (*Items 1 to 5*), Relevance (*Items 6 to 9*), Confidence (*Items 10 to 12*), and Satisfaction (*Items 13 to 16*).

Data were analyzed using Microsoft Excel with tables and charts.

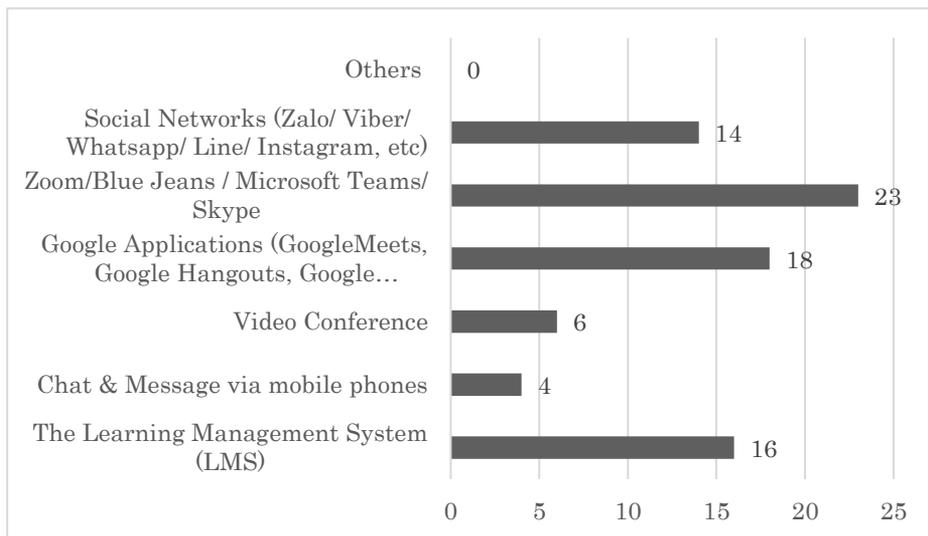
## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

*The research question 1: What modalities do the teachers employ while teaching non-English majors at the HCMC OU in the lockdown of the Covid-19 pandemic to maintain students' motivation?*

### **Teaching places, platforms, and tools**

There are 85% of the teachers (N=23) who revealed that they use a private room at home to teach English while 3 other teachers teach at school in a provided room. It can be said that these places provide teachers with a quiet space to focus on their teaching a lot. All the non-majored English classes during the lockdown at the HCMC OU were synchronously conducted. Twenty teachers use a laptop for their teaching and 7 others use table computers. It means that the devices for online teaching are stable, and the practitioners can also carry out some online teaching tools enhancing the effectiveness of online teaching in maintaining students' attention.

**Figure 3** *Applications or platforms the teachers employed in online teaching*



**Figure 4** *Teaching tools teachers used when teaching online*

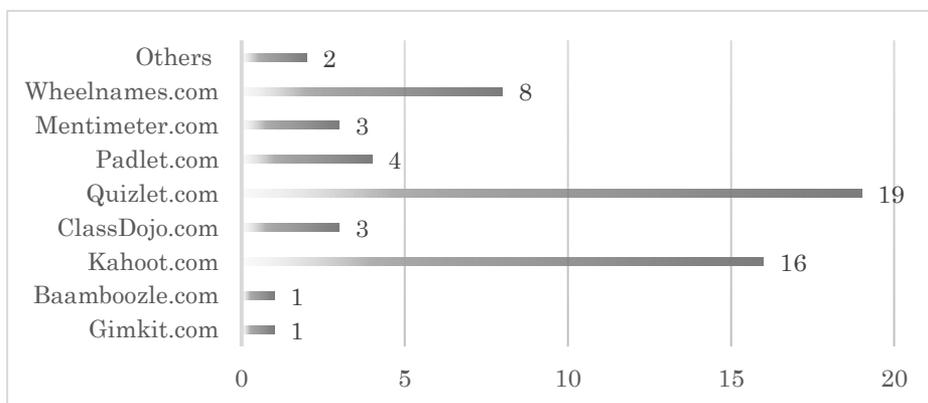


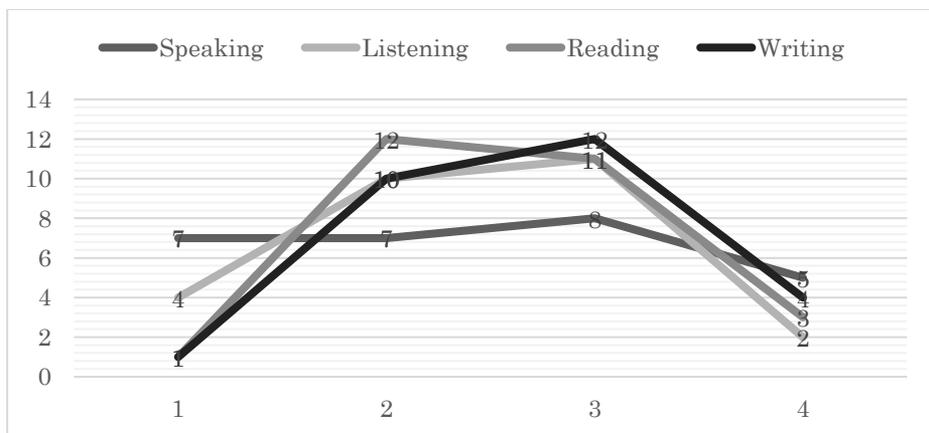
Figure 3 and Figure 4 present the platforms and tools that the participants use when teaching online classes. As can be seen, most of the teachers (23/27) made use of the provided applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or the applications provided by Google company, for example, Google Meets, Google Classrooms. The Learning Management System (LMS), which is used by 16 out of 27 teachers, stands in third place. Chatting and message sending are

rarely employed while teaching online by teachers. There are just 4 teachers who used this means of communication.

Synchronous and asynchronous teaching modes can be employed when teaching online regarding the policies of the HCMC OU. Asynchronous tools expand learners' chances to gain their language skills (Chapelle, 2001). Hence, the LMS plays a vital role in enhancing learners' skills. Fageeh (2013) pointed out that the enhancement of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) helps scaffold, provide learners with an additional environment as well as boost their motivation. Kahoot and Quizlet appear to help teach online for there are 19 and 16 teachers respectively mentioned they used these online tools in virtual classes. These forms of tools enrich the students' engagement and motivate them in their learning much (Licorish et al., 2018). Some other tools such as Wheelnames.com, Baamboozle.com, Mentimeter.com are also called for virtual teaching.

*Research question 2: What are the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching that may eventuate in the scope of teaching the English language to the non-majored students at the HCM OU from the teachers in charge?*

**Figure 5** Teachers' perception of students' language proficiency when teaching online



The Life 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, which is the compulsory textbook to teach non-majors, is an integration resource that aims at developing four skills of language including speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In terms of students' language skills gained during online teaching and learning, teachers are also asked to give their qualitative measurable through observations. Figure 5 illustrates students' English proficiency assumed by teachers through online learning. It is depicted that 12 participants share the same idea that students improve their reading and writing skills through online classes the most and speaking skills fall to the last rank. It can be seen that the number of teachers rating their student's English proficiency in terms of Listening, Reading, and Writing at levels 2 and 3 is very high while that of levels 1 and 4 is relatively low. However, the figure for speaking skill remained unchanged for all four levels. On the one hand, the Reading ability at level 2 and writing skill at level 3 got the most agreement, with 12 teachers, and students' listening skill is also highly appreciated with 10 supporters at level 2 and 11 for level 3. Moreover, the figure of level 1 and 4 is not that high, with no more than 4 assessors. On the other hand, the number of teacher rating students' speaking skill is relatively low and stable at all four levels, with 7 for level 1 and 2, 8 for level 3, and 5 for level 4.

The result in this section shares the same light as in Hartshorn & McMurry's (2020) research which concludes that when studying online, students' proficiency of speaking is the lowest while their writing skills are better.

**Table 1.** Factors that may demotivate or motivate students when learning online

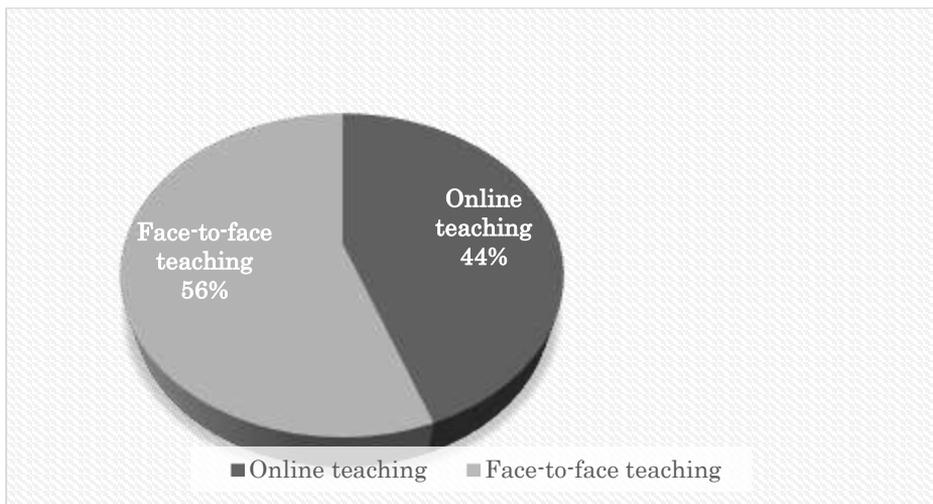
	N=27	%
<b>Factors that may DEMOTIVATE students when studying online</b>		
Constant feeling of isolation by the lack of in-person interaction with the teacher and peers	10	37.04
Distractions encountered in the place where students study	14	51.85
Not being able to accomplish class objectives	0	0.00
Poor internet accessibility	3	11.11
<b>Factors that may MOTIVATE students when studying online</b>		
Information accessibility regardless of the geographical position.	8	29.63
It can be personalized since students work at their own pace.	11	40.74
Learning online is economical.	4	14.81
Equal treatment is given to participants.	4	14.81

Table 1 reveals four elements that cause advantages and disadvantages of online learning that may impact students. These items from the questionnaire are adapted from Arora & Dhull (2017). As can be seen, the number of teachers who think that non-interaction is the factor that affects students’ motivation is 10 (37.04%). Four-teen teachers claim that the surrounding environment such as family members, negative noise distracts students’ from getting motivated in learning online. Three teachers indicate that it is the weak coverage of the internet that causes the lack of motivation for online learning while there is no teacher think that not being able to follow the objectives of the class may demotivate students.

When it comes to the benefits of online studying, participants are asked to choose the factor that may encourage students to learn online. There are 40.74% of the teachers assert that students can self-personalize their studying pace when learning virtually whereas the number of teachers who believe that there is no limitation in terms of distance or geography for students to go online studying is 8, which takes 29.63%. The number of teachers who claim that online learning is economical and students are treated equally when studying online shares the same proportion of 14.81%. Hence, teaching online proposes some pros including learning pace (Amer, 2007), flexibility (Smedley, 2010).

*Research question 3: How was the ARCS model in teaching applied when teachers at the HCMC OU conduct their virtual teaching?*

**Figure 6** Teachers' preference in terms of teaching mode

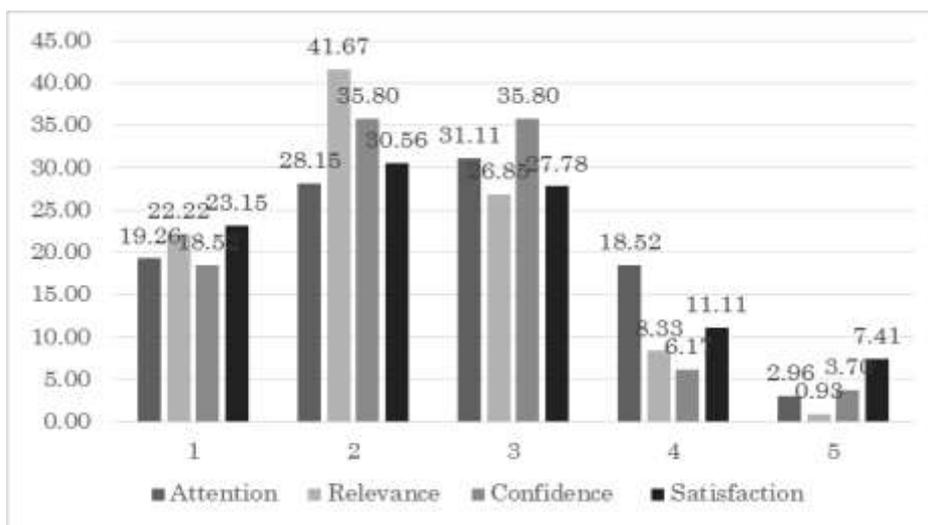


It is important to investigate teachers' preference of the teaching delivery mode because it will affect how a teacher conducts his or her classroom. Twenty-seven teachers are asked to state their favorite teaching mode. It is clear from the pie chart that there are 56% of the participants reveal that they prefer in-person teaching while this number of those who support online studying is 44%. Bakhmat et al., (2021) asserted that the advantage of teaching

online is that the time efficiency. Although 67% of the participants said that they had experience in teaching online, that the unprecedented times of the Covid-19 happened still cause many challenges for teachers to teach online. It requires teachers' preparation and pedagogical methods to transit from a traditional form of teaching to a newborn method that is online teaching. However, teachers are usually equipped with technical training courses rather than methods of teaching online (Lane, 2013) which also play its crucial role in maintaining students' motivation.

The participants came up with the question about the ARCS model. More than half of them, which is 67%, admit that it was their first time coming across the terms while there are 33% of the participants reveal that they have heard this terminology.

**Figure 7** How teachers employed ARCS model in teaching online



The 16-item question was rated by participants based on the Likert Scale 5 with 1 is the least and 5 means the most often use of a technique. **Figure 7** illustrates the percentages of participants rating the use of ARCS via the four modalities are Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction.

The employment of ARCS at levels 2, 3, and 1 takes the top 3 descending while level 5 is ranked at the bottom among the 5 levels. As can be seen from the bar chart, activities relating to relevance and confidence take up the highest places in the level 2 and 3 at 35.8% each.

To explore which methods and strategies that teachers apply when teaching online, the last question of the survey asked participants to share their teaching methods, and there is no clarification of approaches, methods, techniques, or strategies. Teachers are encouraged to share their ideas of teaching freely while teaching virtually. It is prominent that most of the teachers using extrinsic motivation such as bonus points to raise students' participants. Besides, shifting mode of learning from individual to pair or group work is also applied. It is the use of diverse applications such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, or some available Google-related apps that allow teachers to mix their teaching delivery modes. This can be a good way to motivate learners to take part in the online learning process.

## **CONCLUSION**

The spread of the Covid-19 took up unexpectedly involved the changes in many fields of society and education at higher levels is not an exception. With the open door to transform teaching from face-to-face into virtual teaching under the political permit of the government, teaching non-majored English students at the HCMC OU has pioneered to launch of their online teaching during the first lockdown of the pandemic. It is also essential to carry on how and which methods teachers use to maintain students' motivation when teaching the English language conducted virtually.

The literature review has pointed out that there is an urge of online teaching and virtual teaching methods in language education. The ARCS appears to be a useful model to follow when it comes to digital teaching. The research focuses on the perception of educators who are in charge of teaching English classes online

during the social distancing period with the participation of twenty-seven teachers.

Moreover, the results of the research reveal that teachers apply a variety of teaching tools and platforms in their online teaching under the providing of the institutions. Online teaching tools such as Kahoot.com, Quizlet.com also contribute a part in motivating learners in their online learning. To find out what the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching are is also crucial. The finding discloses the perceptions of teachers on both sides of online teaching. Most of the teachers agree that the background environment may distract learners from concentration while students can control their learning speed is the most beneficial factor motivating students in online teaching. Other aspects relating to online teaching, for example, information accessibility, economy, international treating, internet coverage should also be taken into consideration.

Furthermore, modalities of the ARCS that are Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction are implicitly used to teach from distance revealed by the participants. While Relevance and Confidence are admitted to be on the average or lower scale, Attention and Satisfaction from learners are rated at the lower scale. Although this model of teaching is useful to retain learners' willingness to participate in online learning, there is more than a half of the participants in the study have not known it before. Participants in this research also employ different ways to teach online more interestingly including extrinsically motivational methods.

This study mainly focuses on the perception of teachers when they conduct their virtual teaching, which is a limitation of this research. It is suggested that both perspectives of learners and teachers should be collected for further investigation. Moreover, the population of the study also needs to expand. The small number of samples could lead to the reliability of the results

## AUTHOR

An Truong Le is an M.A holder in Education Science. He is working at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of the HCMC OU. He is interested in TESOL, blended learning, and teacher training as well. For further information, please contact an.lt@ou.edu.vn.

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# **EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Challenges on Online Classroom Management During Covid-19 Pandemic**

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**Tue Ngoc Hoang**

Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

**Hanh Duc Le**

Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

*leduchanh.hau@gmail.com*

**Hai Thi Minh Ngo**

Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam

*haintm@dhcnhn.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

Coronavirus outbreaks have brought enormous effects on all aspects of our life. In response to the school closures, education itself had to explore state-of-the-art and versatile approaches to keep learning continued during Covid19 pandemic. Online teaching has not only become the ultimate solution but also caused significant challenges for all the educational stakeholders. Among those, teachers, who have always been considered as the key to effective implementation, play a critical role in the new mode of teaching delivery. Although there has been considerable research on online teaching activities and applications, there is still a dearth of studies on online classroom management. This research aims to explore the EFL teachers' perceptions about online classroom management and their challenges in managing their online classrooms during the Covid19 pandemic. This study collected data from a questionnaire survey to 25 teachers and in-depth interviews with eight teachers in a public university in Vietnam, which required their teachers to implement online teaching delivery mode during the period of social distancing and school closures. The findings would be presented to firstly identify the EFL teachers' perceptions of online classroom management. Then, the research

also revealed the challenges of managing online classrooms, ranging from technology competence of teachers and students, students' engagements, teacher-student interactions, and distraction arisen in the online learning environment.

The presentation would also recommend some practical solutions on how to manage online classrooms effectively, especially during and post Covid19 period, which may be effective for educators and teachers to apply in their own context.

**Keywords:** *online teaching, online learning, classroom managements, teachers' challenges, Covid19 pandemic*

## INTRODUCTION

Covid19 pandemic has been widely spread all over the world since the beginning of 2020. Covid19 itself has caused the urgent obligation to “move online” (World Health Organization, n.d.), which has led to physical and mental pressure and workloads that all the stakeholders in any education institutions coped with to balance the teaching and safety during the pandemic. With much great attempt to keep learning continuous during school closures and lockdown situation, a large number of nations in the world have to make a difficult decision of closing schools as “the best preventive measure” against Covid19 spread (Paudel, 2021, p.70). According to UNESCO report (2020, August), the Covid19 pandemic has made dramatic effect on education system interruption for approximately 1,6 billion learners in nearly 200 countries and all continents (94% of student population in the world) due to school closures and other learning spaces. In this context, a wide diversity of online learning stages has been proposed and organized with the view to supporting and ensuring the continuity of academic schedule. As a result, this digital transition has led to many challenges as well as new adaptations for educational stakeholders, especially the teachers, who are always considered as the vital implementers in education system.

In Vietnam, the situation is not an exception. When there was widespread threat of Sars-Covi-2 virus in the early of March, 2020, Vietnamese government had to announce the obligation of lockdown situation and school closure for nearly three months. For the first two weeks, there was little movement on education with the expectation of “coming back to school” soon. However, when there were still plenteous Covid19 cases reported and the date of back-to-school could not be foreseen and confirmed, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) had to make the decision of suspending school, not stopping learning. In response to this agreement, more than 110 higher educational institutions selected to shift into online learning and teaching to keep their academic programs going (MOET, 2020). This urgent change from normal traditional teaching into basic online education actually pushed school systems into new significant experience and challenges to achieve effective implementations. Therefore, it is certain that not all the institutions at all levels in Vietnamese educational system were practically ready for this digital transformation. There must have been many crucial issues taken into consideration during the overnight shift to online learning, which could be accounted for planning, investment, or human resources.

Moreover, as the one of the most effective implementers in this change, teachers were required to be immediately well-prepared for applying online teaching with or without technical support and experience. They had to overcome all the challenges risen in their virtual teaching to keeping continuous learning for students and achieve the targets set (Hoang & Le, 2021). Hence, the investigation of what are the teachers’ perceptions and how they overcome their challenges on their online teaching during Covid19 pandemic has raised much concern for all the educational researchers, ranging from teachers’ attitudes towards online teaching to their applications of online teaching as well as challenges on teaching online.

In addition, the question of how the teachers manage their online classroom has received considerable critical attention. However, a

search of the literature revealed few studies which investigated the online classroom management of the teachers. For that reason, this paper attempts to explore the teachers' perceptions and their management during their obligatory online teaching in a "new-norm" situation of complete lockdown. This study reports a survey conducted to collect data from the questionnaire with 25 teachers and 30-45 in-depth interviews of eight teachers in a public university in Vietnam. All of the teachers are English teachers and they were required to deliver online teaching mode during the period of social distancing and school closures.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **1. Online teaching and learning**

The academic literature on online teaching and learning has revealed the emergence of several contrasting themes. The term "online teaching and learning" has been widely used in various definitions to be suggested. For the purpose of this paper, the definition of online teaching would be used by the one suggested by Rapanta et al. (2020) who saw it as a type of teaching and learning situation where the teacher and learner are at a distance and they need some forms of technology and Internet to access the materials and interact with each other. This definition is close to that of Singh & Thurman (2019), who categorized online learning as Internet-based courses provided synchronously or asynchronously with the use of different devices at anywhere and anytime. In a synchronous online lesson with the real-time, the lecturers and students meet online using a video conferencing software or website during the presetting class hours and the instructors give lectures on the course. Students attending the online lecturer are able to raise their questions directly, interact socially with the teachers and other classmates as well as receive instant responses and feedbacks (McBrien et al., 2009; Littlefield, 2018). Meanwhile, an asynchronous lecture is considered as an establishment of recording lecture videos and uploading them on a learning

management system (LMS) on Moodle, email systems, or blog discussions, or other platforms where students can access, watch, give comments in their most suitable time (Tarman, 2020; Lorico, 2021; Hoang & Le, 2021).

During the Covid19 pandemic, online learning has risen to be the most effective and handy approach to apply. Therefore, online education was described as where there would be live meetings for 30-50 attendees, which can be accessed, discussed with stable Internet connections via laptops and mobile phones and assignments can be taken properly (Basilaia et al., 2020). With the lockdown situation due to the Sars-Covi-2 widespread, the implementation of online teaching and learning would bring countless challenges for teachers and students, varying from available resources, online activities, interactions, and management during the lessons, which should be taken into full consideration.

## **2. Online classroom management (OCM)**

The meaning of the term “classroom management” has been widely developed through recent years. According to Doyle (2006), classroom management was referred to the actions that teachers take to control the classroom in order. Moreover, Bush (2008) and Kimacia (2007) affirmed that it is operated during the interaction between teachers and students in which self-control and respect for authority could be brought out. As cited in Adedigba & Sulaiman (2020), classroom management was considered as a vital and extensive element to illustrate how a teacher manage the learning’s activities, the learners’ action and social rapport in the classroom (Martin & Yin, 2009). As a result, to make the classroom management effective, teachers must have thorough understanding of the pupils’ individual learning needs, psychological desires and potential capability of building a motivated teacher-pupil relationship. In addition, teachers need to apply a practical teaching method of smoothly organizational and group management as to develop students’ appropriate task behaviors and foster their learning (Akiri & Ugborugho, 2009).

Whilst the classroom management definition focuses on the interactions between teachers and students to make the classroom well – organized and smoothly controlled, online classroom management is used to refer to a more advanced version of facilitating academic materials, online communicating with students in a distance but still leading class control (Chandra, 2015; Garrett, 2014). As noted by Goodyear et al. (2001), Bawane and Spector (2009) and Carril et al. (2013), classroom administration is one of the eight key roles of instructors in online teaching. Other researchers shared their viewpoint of regarding online classroom management as one of online teaching competences, together with content, design and communication (Baran & Correia, 2014; Palloff & Pratt, 2011).

Overall, these studies outline the critical role of classroom management in teaching, especially in online teaching. It could contribute to the students' learning success and the teachers' effective online teaching. For teachers, classroom management has become one of the most worrisome for teachers with less experience. It also could be the reason to cause stress and fear in teaching profession (Kelly, 2017). The concern of what challenges teachers have to face to smoothly manage their classrooms has been taken into consideration in literature, especially during their online teaching due to Covid19 pandemic.

### **3. Teachers' challenges on online classroom management**

It is no doubt that before the Covid19 outbreak, there have been several studies addressing the challenges on classroom management that teachers were facing during their teaching online. In addition to meet the need of innovative pedagogies in teaching and learning, teachers had to raise their awareness of students' behaviors, interactions, learning needs, and necessary skills during their lectures to effectively implement their part (Palloff & Pratt, 2013; Scobey, 2012). This led to improve the teachers' social perspectives to classroom management besides their lecture

deliveries with the aim to effective classroom environment. For instance, the teachers in study conducted by Durmaz (2020) expressed their positive attitudes and flexible about their virtual classroom environment and let students like the learning process. However, data from several previous studies demonstrated that teachers had to encounter problems arisen. The first and foremost issue could be counted for technology competences of teachers and students while learning online (Prestridge, 2012; Wei et al., 2016). Additionally, teachers had to recognize and enhance students' learning needs, their motivations for students' adequate participation and obedience in online activities and teachers' online classroom controlling (Kayikci, 2009; Sasidher et al., 2012). Furthermore, because teachers and students are not in the real-time class with face-to-face environment, the close and social interactions between them were observed as a considerable challenge for teachers to master their online teaching and even to track students' learning process (Sasidher, 2012; Wei et al., 2016).

During the crisis of Covid19 epidemic with lockdown situation and school closures, it was obvious that the education system had to conquer challenges itself to keep learning continuous. This resulted in challenges for all teachers on implementing their online teaching together with their management for effective classroom activities. Specifically, English teachers are in the same case with all academic teachers. Numerous studies have attempted to investigate English teachers' perceptions together with the challenges they faced in their online classroom management. According to Mishra et al. (2020) and Hoang & Le (2021), English teachers at higher education found themselves struggling with managing students' online attendance and mood through the screen of the laptop or mobile phone during their online lessons. The lack of technology competences for online learning and teaching was also listed as the major challenge for controlling the virtual classroom as this shifting into online teaching due to school closures was urgent and immediate without well-prepared and carefully-planned (Mishra, 2020; Basilaia et al., 2020; Lestiyawati & Widiantoro, 2020).

Moreover, teachers were reported to find extremely challenging about students' negative attitudes, less motivation and learning engagement in online learning than traditional classroom one (Akyildiz, 2020). Similarly, the study by Biswas (2020) revealed the challenges on students' lack of good learning attitude, motivation, or good learning environment during this hard time of school closures.

In summary, it has been presented from this review that for teachers - the key implementers during the online teaching due to Covid19 outbreak, there have existed considerable challenges on the way teachers managed their online classroom, diversifying from teachers' and students' technology competences, student-teacher interactions, students' engagement and expectations to the online lessons. However, there has been a scarcity of research on how the teachers' perceived about online classroom management as well as what other challenges the teachers overcome to maintain an effective online classroom management, especially in an Asian developing country in the healthcare emergency context. Therefore, this study aims to explore the teachers' perceptions to the online management as well as to assess the extent to what challenges the teachers were facing during their controlling online classroom. Two research questions would be addressed to achieve the objectives of this study as follows:

*RQ1. What were the EFL teachers' perceptions of online classroom management?*

*RQ2. What were the challenges the EFL teachers are facing in their online classroom management?*

## **METHODS**

### **1. Settings and participants**

The design adopted for this research was based on mixed-methods design with the priority of quantitative method and the support of the qualitative method. The study population consisted of 25 out of

30 EFL teachers at a public university in Vietnam. At this university, like many other institutions in Vietnam and in the world, to adapt with the social distancing due to Covid19 outbreak, teachers were required to apply online teaching delivery to keep learning continuous. The English subject was in the same situation. Hence, the English classes were open virtually for teachers and students to join synchronously via Zoom links with the time tables as scheduled for that semester. Zoom, a video conferencing tool, has become extremely popular for its easy-to-use features (Stefanile, 2020) and synchronous function. It has and continues to change the way teachers and students interact during online classroom (Stefanile, 2020). Before Covid19 outbreak, they had their English classes traditionally face-to-face in their classrooms at the university. It is noticeable when the teachers confirmed that they sometimes applied online tools during their teaching to facilitate their lessons.

Due to the shortage of time and social distancing, our questionnaire survey was distributed online to all 30 EFL teachers at this university. All 25 English teachers completing the questionnaire were with the mean age of 27 years old. Among the participants, there were 18 out of 25 (72%) qualified as Master degree, five of them (20%) had Bachelor of High Distinct degree, and two of them (8%) were Doctors. Even though the number of years experiencing in teaching English of the surveyed teachers ranged from two to thirteen years, with the average of five years, their experience in online teaching was reported at the average of two years. Actually, the total number of EFL teachers at this university were 30. When the questionnaire was initially delivered online to 30 teachers to ask for survey, the researchers got all the 30 responses but only 25 of them were fully completed, five responses were lack of two or three answers. Therefore, the final numbers of valid respondents consisted of 25 respondents for the survey questionnaire. Among those, eight teachers were randomly selected to engage in the in-depth interviews with their agreements from the survey questionnaire.

## **2. Design of the study**

The total number of the questions in the questionnaire consisted of 22 multiple choice items with 5-point-Likert scale to explore the level from strong disagreement to strong agreement of the teachers' perceptions and challenges on OCM and divided into three parts. Part 1 included five questions to collect the background information of the English teachers in terms of their ages, qualifications, experiences of teaching English, and experience of online teaching. In addition, Part 2 was designed to scrutinize the teachers' perceptions and challenges on their OCM with 15 specific items. The level of agreement was identified with 5-point-Likert scale as *Strongly Disagree (SD)*, *Disagree (D)*, *Neutral (N)*, *Agree (A)*, and *Strongly Agree (SA)*. The questionnaire items were adopted and adapted from the relevant literature for the purpose of the study. Then, the questionnaire was uploaded on the Google form site and the link was sent to all the EFL teachers at the university. A brief introduction of the investigation purpose was attached with the link for the respondents. The questionnaire was designed in Vietnamese – as the native language of the respondents to make them clear understanding the questions.

Moreover, following the questionnaire, the eight individual interviews were conducted to retrieve more detailed information about those teachers' OCM as interview was considered to extract more specifically about the informants' attitudes and opinions than questionnaire (Opdenakker, 2006). There were eight semi-structured interview questions designed to deeply delve into the teachers' perspectives as well as the challenges they were facing during their managing the online classroom in their online teaching.

## **3. Data collection and analysis**

Due to the lockdown situation and social distancing, the data of the questionnaire was collected online through the platform of Google form between April and May, 2020 until the researchers received

all 30 responses with 25 valid ones. The data, then, was coded and descriptively analyzed with SPSS software.

For the interviews, because the researchers could not have face-to-face meetings with the interviewees, the interviews had to be conducted online via phone calls or Internet applications of Zoom or Zalo video calls, a mobile-based multitasking network tool with recording function. All the interviews were conducted in Vietnamese and then transcribed into English for thematic analysis.

Once the questionnaire was coded quantitatively for the frequencies and means of respondents' agreement levels, the interview questions were coded and themed qualitatively for distinguishing opinions of EFL teachers about their certain challenges on OCM.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

This section would describe and discuss the principal findings of the current investigation based on the data analyzed to explore the teachers' perceptions of online classroom management together with the challenges they encountered during their online teaching, which were integrated with the intense discussions with the aim of offering the answers to the two given research questions as mentioned above.

### **1. Teachers' perceptions of online classroom management**

Table 1 presented as follows to illustrate the questionnaire responses for four question items in Part 2 to figure out the teachers' perceptions of OCM.

**Table 1.** Teachers' perceptions of online classroom management (%)

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA
6 I am confident that I manage my online classroom smoothly.	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	12 (48%)	9 (36%)	2 (8%)
7 I think that online classroom management is difficult for teaching during the online lessons.	2 (8%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	13 (52%)	5 (20%)
8 Online classroom management is very necessary for my online teaching.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	12 (48%)	11 (44%)
9 I set rules and policies for my online classroom.	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)	18 (72%)	2 (8%)

As can be seen from the Table 1 above, 11 of the respondents (44%) showed their agreements and strong agreements on the opinion that they could manage their online classroom well when more than a half of respondents (54%) expressed their negative agreements on the ease of OCM. While the percentage of respondents perceived difficulties in OCM was much higher at nearly three fourth (72%), nearly 30% of the teachers found it not difficult in managing the online classrooms. For the awareness about the necessity of OCM, there was no doubt that nearly all the teachers at this university (92%) fully comprehended that OCM was very essential during their teaching. In addition, most of them (80%) disclosed that they set rules and policies for their online classrooms when only 8% admitted that they did not set the rules or policies. These findings from the questionnaire expressed the

teachers' positive perceptions of their online classroom management as well as their awareness about the essentiality of the OCM in their online teaching. These findings reflect those of Merrett & Wheldall (1993) who also found that the vast majority of teachers trusted the importance of classroom management in teaching profession.

For the interview sections, the teachers indicated that during the time of closing school due to Covid19 pandemic, they recognized the imperative change to online teaching. They admitted that to smoothly teach online, classroom management was somewhat essential and firmly attached to their academic disciplines.

*"I believe that online teaching is the best solution during this social distancing period. As teaching on face-to-face classroom, online teaching also requires teachers to be well -prepared what activities should be available for their students online, how they should control their students' performance virtually when they can only look at the screen to track their faces and emotion..." (T#5)*

*"I can say that I am quite confident on my classroom management during my online lessons. I always set the rules and policies to check my students' attendances, my students' visible time on the screen and their completing my given tasks..." (T#3)*

These findings may help us to understand the teachers' generally positive perceptions of OCM during their online lessons. Most of the EFL teachers were quite confident on their management with the support of the rules or policies set for online learning. They also acknowledged the obvious importance of classroom management during their online teaching.

### **Teachers' challenges on online classroom managements**

Despite the teachers' acknowledging generally to OCM, there have existed numerous factors challenging them during their online management. From the quantitative and qualitative analysis of data

collected in this investigation, the challenges of OCM in the teachers' view varied from teachers' and students' technology competences, students' engagements and expectations, the interactions between teachers and students, distractions, and the teachers' own experience in classroom management. These issues would be discussed more specifically in the following section.

***Technology competences of teachers and students***

Table 2 below illustrated the respondents' challenges on their technology competences as well as their students' competences.

**Table 2.** Challenges of teachers' and students' technology competences on OCM (%)

	Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA
10	I am confident that I use technology well for online classroom management.	3 (12%)	7 (28%)	0 (0%)	13 (52%)	2 (8%)
11	I use some Internet-based tools to manage my students' performance during my online class.	2 (8%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	13 (52%)	5 (20%)
12	All of my students use technology very well.	6 (24%)	8 (32%)	2 (8%)	8 (32%)	1 (4%)
13	My students usually complain about the unstable network connection.	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)	18 (72%)	2 (8%)
14	I can manage my virtual classroom well.	5 (20%)	7 (28%)	7 (28%)	3 (12%)	3 (12%)

As being demonstrated in Table 2 above, nearly two thirds of the respondents (60%) expressed their confidences in using technology for online classroom management while 40% of them still found their lack of confidence on OCM due to technology competence. In addition, about 72% of the respondents indicated that they used some Internet-based tools to control their online classrooms and students' performance. This finding was revealed more in the interview part when seven of the interviewees shared some Internet tools for online classroom managements, such as Mentimeter, Nearpod, Google forms, etc. The teachers often required students to join in these tools and typed the given codes, answered the questions to confirm their attendance. What is interesting about the respondents that all of them (eight teachers) admitted that they always captured their Zoom screen as an evidence for their online teaching and checking students' attendance. However, this finding could not confirm the teachers' confidence on OCM when nearly a half of respondents (48%) showed their disagreements that they could manage their virtual classroom well and 28% of them showed their suspect of whether their OCM was good or not.

Moreover, when giving opinions about the students' technology competences, the percentage of disagreements that their students could use technology well for online learning was higher than the percentage of agreements at 56% and 36% respectively. In addition, four fifth of the respondents (80%) illustrated their agreements on students' complaint about the unstable network connection during their online learning, that could cause the difficulty in managing the classroom activities when teachers could not connect their students. This result is similar to some previous studies by Bao (2020) or Akyıldız's (2020). However, it is interestingly different to the research by Hoang & Le (2021) which presented the teachers' belief in good technology competence of their vocational students.

## ***Students' engagements and interactions***

Besides the challenges of technology competences, the respondents still informed their challenges on managing students' engagements and interactions during their online teaching. Table 3 as below represented the analyzed data.

**Table 3.** Challenges of students' engagements and interactions (%)

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA
15 My students usually complete all the tasks I gave them.	2 (8%)	7 (28%)	1 (4%)	13 (52%)	2 (8%)
16 I think my students do not prefer online learning to face-to-face classroom.	0 (0%)	7 (28%)	0 (0%)	13 (52%)	5 (20%)
17 My students are well engaged in my online teaching.	5 (20%)	8 (32%)	7 (28%)	4 (16%)	1 (4%)
18 My students are usually distracted during my lessons.	0 (0%)	5 (20%)	0 (0%)	16 (64%)	4 (16%)
19 My students can raise their questions and get the answers immediately during the online class.	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)	18 (72%)	2 (8%)
20 I and my students enjoy seeing each other via the laptop screen during Covid19 pandemic.	0 (0%)	2 (8%)	3 (12%)	17 (68%)	5 (20%)
21 I usually give feedbacks and comments for my students' online learning.	0 (0%)	3 (12%)	0 (0%)	18 (72%)	4 (16%)
22 I think my students enjoy my online activities.	0 (0%)	5 (20%)	3 (12%)	12 (48%)	5 (20%)

According to Lindroth et al. (2015), the challenge that being most frequently experienced by teachers in terms of classroom management was the issue of students' behaviors. These findings from Table 3 also reported the significant results. Specifically, the four questions items in this table was designed to delve into the students' engagements in their online classrooms from the teachers' views. Regarding to the task fulfillment, more than a half of surveyed teachers (60%) reported that their students completed all the tasks they gave to them when 36% of teachers expressed their disagreements of their students' task completion. Furthermore, more than 70% of the respondents showed their agreements on students' liking of face-to-face classrooms than online ones. However, more than a half of respondents (52%) could not show their agreements on well-behaved engagements of their students, and the portion of teachers uncertain about their students' engagements was 8% higher than the portions of teachers agreeing. This resulted in a remarkable finding that the students' engagement on their online classes was not as much as the teachers expected, which made itself become one of the challenges the teachers had to conquer on their OCM. Furthermore, four fifth of the teachers also admitted that their students were distracted by the other stuffs surrounding them during the lesson. As one teacher shared in the interview part:

*My students are usually distracted by other surrounding stuffs. They often explained for their unexpected distractions, such as there was construction noise near their houses, or they had to prepare lunch for their family, or they had to take care of their younger brothers or sisters, their nieces or nephews... (T#2)*

*"I even heard the TV sound or chatting made by their parents during the lessons. All of these really distracted my lessons and affected my students' engagement on their online learning..." (T#7)*

Moreover, concerning about teacher-student interactions, most of the surveyed teachers expressed their direct and social interactions with their students when 22 respondents (88%) confirmed their giving comments and feedbacks for students during the online lessons, 20 teachers (80%) agreed that their students raised their questions and could get the answers during the lessons. They also understood the context of online learning due to Covid19 pandemic when 88% of the teachers believed that they enjoyed their online learning and teaching during this hard time. The teachers also believed in the interesting and attractive online activities that they gave to their students as 68% of them thought that their students enjoyed their online activities. These findings were more specifically explained in the interview part when seven interviewees confirmed that they really paid meticulous attention on the interactions between teachers and students during their online classes. They also perceived clearly that this kind of interaction would ascertain the effectiveness of their online teaching. Nonetheless, the informants disclosed their challenges on how to properly interact with their students as below:

*“I know the interactions between students and teachers would play an unavoidable role in OCM. But I myself find it challenging to closely interact with my students. Sometimes, I tried to ask my students to give comments or feedbacks for their classmates but they kept silent. When I nominated them randomly to answer my questions, I usually received their surprising, unplanned behavior and they would ask me to repeat my questions...” (T#8)*

*“I was very disappointed with my students’ performance during our online lessons. Therefore, I had to expand some rules I often used before in my traditional face-to-face classrooms to control my students’ learning. For example, I usually called my students by their names to answer my questions or do the exercises randomly in order to check whether they were paying attention on the lesson or not...” (T#7)*

This result is consistent with what have been found in previous studies of Muilenburg and Berge (2005) and Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) proving that the lack of social interactions was acquired to be the biggest single barrier to the success of online learning for students. It also contributed to the result of Lower & Cassidy (2007) that the cooperation of teachers and students would gain positive effects on their communications to opt better classroom management. However, this finding illustrated the challenge of interactions more specifically in online classroom management than those previous studies.

## **SUGGESTIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

This study tried to investigate the teachers' perceptions of online classroom management and the challenges they are facing on during the pandemic of Covid19 outbreak. The research revealed that most of the findings presented in this paper provide additional and supportive information for previous studies about EFL teachers' perceptions and the challenges they are facing on managing online classrooms.

As to the urgent digital transition from traditional face-to-face classrooms into online teaching due to the lockdown situation and school closures, the teachers had to encounter plenteous challenges during their online teaching, especially OCM. However, their perspectives towards OCM was revealed in this study as positive and flexible for the changes, which would be consistent with results of prior studies by Mishra (2020) and Lathifah, Maryani & Helmanto (2020). However, this finding resulted from their social awareness and thorough understanding about the urgent situation of closing schools and keep online learning continuous due to health emergency. This is an important finding in the understanding of teachers' perceptions in their online classroom managements.

Moreover, this paper disclosed the challenges that EFL teachers faced in their OCM ranging from teachers' and students' technology

competences, students' engagements, students' distractions and teacher-student interactions during online teaching and learning. Particularly, the research revealed significant findings that in the immediate period of shifting to online teaching, most of the teachers could not get their confidence for controlling their online classrooms due to lack of technology competence besides unpreparedness and unreadiness. Meanwhile, it is quite a surprise that the interaction between teachers and students seems to be the enormous challenge in OCM from teachers' view. This finding is contrary to the research of Apiola et al. (2011) and Cristia et al. (2017), which reported the benefits of online learning to teacher-student interactions. Furthermore, the participants in this study reported that even their students liked online learning but their engagements on online lessons was a direct challenge to their OCM. This result agrees well with the findings by Bate et al. (2012), Hoang & Le (2021), and Willermark (2021) but surprisingly different from the positive results reported by Ott et al. (2018) and Keengwe et al. (2012).

These findings in this paper would offer some practical recommendations that teachers should be introduced or guided some technological techniques and online teaching skills before, during, or even after their online teaching. Training webinars or virtual meetings should be organized for EFL teachers at this university and outside to share and support their experience in using Internet-based tools for managing online classrooms, providing some useful suggestions for interactive online activities, as well as ways to develop students' engagements. In addition, the challenge of students' distractions during their online lessons were remarkably presented and discussed at greater length in this paper than other previous studies. Hence, this result suggests that teachers should set up their rules and policies reasonable to minimize students' distractions and promote their engagement into online lessons.

However, due to the time constraints and social distancing situation, there are several limitations existing in this paper which may shed the light for the further research in this field. Firstly, the study investigated only EFL teachers in a public university, which reflected perceptions from teachers, yet lacking students' perspectives towards teachers' OCM. Moreover, the research based on limited data, which could not be generalized for general education system settings. Additionally, the present research only focused on determining the challenges of OCM that teachers were facing. Future works would be carried out to explore the teachers' implementing and conquering these challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, this present research contributes to the understanding of teachers' perceptions and challenges on their online classroom management in a tertiary education institution in Vietnam during the serious outbreak of Covid19. These findings reported in this study would be valuable for teachers and researchers who wants to plan and prepare for managing their online classrooms during any future crises.

## **AUTHOR**

Dr. Tue Ngoc Hoang is the Dean of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam. He has been working as an English teacher and an educational administrator for more than 15 years. He has conducted many studies and projects to improve the quality of English language education at tertiary level. He received his Doctor of Education degree from Queensland University of Technology, Australia in 2015. His research interests include ICT in education, blended learning, English for Occupational Purposes, and Teacher Professional Development.

Ms. Hanh Duc Le has been working as an English lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry,

Vietnam since 2007. She currently works as a team leader of designing EAP blended materials. She also takes responsibilities of designing, teaching EOP blended program for technical students. Her areas of professional interest include EMI and blended learning. She can be reached at [leduchanh.hau@gmail.com](mailto:leduchanh.hau@gmail.com).

Ms. Hai Thi Minh Ngo has more than 10-year teaching experience at University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University and Hanoi University of Industry. She is currently teaching interpreting skills for English-majored students and Business English for business majors at Hanoi University of Industry. Her areas of professional interest include learners' autonomy and blended learning. She can be reached at [haintm@dchnhn.edu.vn](mailto:haintm@dchnhn.edu.vn).

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# **Multi-pronged Approach to English Language Teaching and Learning amid the COVID -19 Pandemic**

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**Prajna Pani**

Centurion University of Technology and Management Odisha, India  
*drprajnapani@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

This paper analyses the multi-pronged approach amid the COVID -19 pandemic and the changes that crept into English language teaching and learning practices in a state private university in Odisha, India. It endeavours to describe the various approaches to English language teaching and learning at the university amid COVID -19 pandemic. In this study, around two thousand two hundred seventeen students of a state private university were on boarded to the English language teaching (ELT) and learning program in the virtual learning environment. The study was limited to five campuses of the university in Odisha. The researcher analyses the data gathered from English language classes, mail communications, faculty development programmes, reports, student interactions, online surveys, and assessments. At the initial stage of implementation of the ELT program of the University, the digital divide, resistance to adapt to the online mode of teaching and learning, online examination phobia and assessments, fear, anxiety, slow-paced adopters were the obstacles in the teaching and learning process. The paper shows how the participants of the program rapidly adopted and adapted to the challenging demands of the difficult time to revamp curriculum, embrace technology, promote self-learning, collaborate with industry and skill-based communities, and implement job-embedded professional learning to prepare the students for the future. The paper describes the

implementation of learning management systems like Impartus, English Score App, and open-source platforms such as <https://ieltsionlinetests.com/>, and pedagogical practices during COVID -19.

**Keyword:** *English, Teaching, Online, COVID-19, Self-learning*

## INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has disrupted teaching and learning activities everywhere. There was an immediate need to prepare the contents and customise it as per the need of the student and the subject (Prajna & Anita, 2021). Amid uncertainty regarding classes and examinations, the English language teachers have come forward with multiple approaches to support student learning. This paper analyses the multi-pronged approach to English language teaching and learning in a state private university in India amid Covid-19. The university is recognised as a pioneer is ‘Skill Integrated Higher Education’. Inclusivity, integrity, equity, respect and sustainability are parts of the value system of the university. The participants of the study were two thousand two hundred seventeen students who had enrolled in the Job readiness programme of the university. The participants were from various schools such as School of Engineering and Technology, School of Vocational Education and Training, M.S. Swaminathan School of Agriculture, School of Paramedics and Allied Health Sciences, School of Pharmacy and Life Sciences, School of Applied Sciences, School of Management, School of Media and Communication. The pandemic situation radically transformed the English language teaching (ELT) and learning process at the University. The paper describes the entire learning process and how it was successfully taken online, making it interactive and engaging for the students. The English language teachers could assuage the fear of students and offer practice platforms to continue with life-long learning, self-paced learning and self-regulatory learning. The classes were fully digital with the operations to hold student interest and drive operational efficiency.

The paper shows how the students learn, and where the students are immersed in the online spaces of e-learning environments created by the English language teachers. It highlights the integration of digital learning tools and technology including Impartus, MyPerfectice, EnglishScore App and open-source platforms such as <https://ieltonlinetests.com/>, and evidence-based best pedagogical practices during COVID -19. The paper presents literature review, approaches to English language teaching and learning, findings and conclusion.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The pandemic situation has far-reaching outcomes, the shutdown of universities has led to disruptive methods of delivering education ensuring the continuity and quality (Sadhu, 2020, p-1). Despite the fact that universities have closed, learning has not stopped (Carver, 2020, p.129). The World Economic Forum revealed there was a need for individuals to be prepared for challenging times, as the COVID-19 pandemic enforced many of them to change the way they perceive teaching and learning (Dhawan, 2020). Due to COVID-19, United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations (UNESCO) proposed that educational organisations embrace virtual teaching based on social distancing (Bansal, 2020). This digital, or new, media means beyond a collection of digital or screen-based devices or platforms; rather, it includes a mixture of shifting tools, practices, standards, and expectations that help make specific sorts of spaces, activities, and methods of being (Jenkins, 2006; Leander, 2007; Moje, 2009) in the English classroom. Presently, in the pandemic situation, under the new crisis conditions, the motivation behind online language education should be to provide and facilitate access to a multilingual community, which offers opportunities for adequate input, output, and collaboration in various modalities and settings with feedback from peers, the teacher, and technology with the possibility for individualization. Many students dealt with

psychological issues during pandemic situation – there were stress, tension, fear, anxiety, depression and that led to a lack of focus and concentration (Dhawan, 2020). It resonates when looking at the integration of digital media with pedagogy, since educators' use of technology foregrounds design, requiring teachers to think about how to design the class and how to reconfigure themselves as teachers (Jewitt, 2006). Young & Bush (2004) proposed a model for English language instructors working through these highly localised plans: design a pedagogical framework, ask significant questions, prepare guidelines, implement these strategies while integrating technology, and reflect on the experience. Technology for English language teaching and learning has been featured in many studies. The purpose is to engage and motivate the learners in the learning process (Chapelle, 2005). Thus, the focus is on the learning-centred approach. In the early phases, English language teachers were resistant to digital ways of teaching and learning. The attitude of learners toward Learning Management System(LMS) applications as an alternative to the traditional instructions were influenced by the challenges and fears brought about by the abrupt and fast move in the time of Covid (Dhawan, 2020).

Across higher education, evaluation of the utility of LMS applications of learning and teaching process through students' perceptions and use has become established practice (Al-Dosari, 2011; Dhawan, 2020; Hao, 2020; Yen, 2020) because it provides feedback for the course developers on teaching and learning and quality assurance as well (Dyson & Campello, 2003). Partnership for 21st Century Learning (2015) states that learners of the digital age should use technology to learn content and skills so that they will know how to learn, think critically, resolve issues, use data, communicate, disrupt and collaborate. Thus, the endeavour of the facilitators of the 21st century should be to enhance students' 21st century skills through the use of appropriate technology and pedagogical innovation. There is a paradigm shift in the 21st century teaching and learning process i.e., from the traditional

teacher-centered approach to a more constructivist learner-centered approach. Through a concentrated focus on learner-centered approach, knowledge is actively constructed through meaningful learning experiences and this will motivate the students to take the ownership of learning.

In this paper, a description of the digital tools and LMS such as Impartus, open source learning platforms (E.g., <https://ieltonlinetests.com/>), EnglishScore App, Google Forms, MyPerfectice is provided. The findings from the interventions, together with the findings from the continuous assessments are interpreted and analysed.

## **MULTI-PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES: ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Approaches to English language teaching and learning refers here to the theories about the nature of language and language acquisition that serve as the source of practices and principles in language teaching (Richards & Rodgers 2001). The online education is known by various terminologies such as “distance education,” “e-learning,” “virtual learning and teaching,” or “online learning and teaching.” These terminologies have common goal, i.e., content dissemination, self-learning and rapid learning through information and communication technology. In the self-learning approach, the students make the effort to identify their learning needs, set learning goals, find the necessary resources on the LMS, and evaluate their language proficiency skills. There are five levels in MyPerfectice. A student has to reach the third level, i.e., the employability and concept-based level through his/her efforts to pass the outcome-based job-readiness course. The level descriptors are as follows: Level 1-Beginner Practice, Level 2-Elementary Practice, Level 3-Intermediate Practice, Level 4-Advance Practice and Level 5-Expert Practice. Similarly, students also need to go through the IELTS practice sets on <https://ieltonlinetests.com/>,

learning materials on the Centurion Courseware to reach the minimum desired level, i.e., 6.5 band score.

### **Context-specific Courses**

The English language teachers revamped the English courses and moved to online platforms. Context specific courses were designed. The web, i.e., <https://ieltonlinetests.com/> was the curriculum for practice. It resolved the barriers associated with online teaching and learning, limited curriculum time and faculty availability, provided anytime, anywhere learning platform, accessible and standard curriculum, and offered need-based facilitation. The learners can use the exam library, learning tips and live lessons on listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students can practice more than hundred mock tests that are available free. The analytics tool helps learners to analyse their progress, and discover how to acquire language proficiency skills through self-learning and continuous assessments.

The four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) are the heart of a language class. Guided by the <https://ieltonlinetests.com/>, IELTS and Verbal Ability courses were developed and hosted on <http://courseware.cutm.ac.in> with instructional designs, lecture notes, PPTS, YouTube links and other useful learning resources. It is the new LMS developed for all courses by the University. E-learning resources are available in this Courseware for the use of students which they can access at any time and from anywhere. A screenshot of the course outline is shown here:

## Course I: IELTS - Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing

### Module I: IELTS Reading

Skimming and Scanning, Sentence Completion, Choose the Correct options (A, B, C, D), Locating the Specific Information, Assessment on Reading Skill

### Module II: IELTS Listening

Notes/ Form/Table completion, Label the Map/Passage, Multiple Choice Questions, Complete the Sentences, Listening to Find Information, Assessment on Listening Skills

### Module III: IELTS Speaking

Speaking about yourself, your family, your work and your interests, Introduction and Interview, Topic Discussion (e.g, Environment, Covid-19, Job), Assessment on Speaking Skills

### Module IV: IELTS Writing

Summarising the chart, table or graph, Comparing and contrasting graphs and tables, Describing maps and diagrams, Agreeing and disagreeing, Expressing a personal view and opinion, Assessment on Writing Skill, Letter Writing, Email Writing, Getting Started – writing an introduction

## Course II: IELTS Verbal

### Module I: Grammar

Articles, Prepositions, Subject-Verb, Spotting Errors, Sentence Correction

### Module II: Vocabulary

Synonyms, Antonyms, Contextual Vocabulary

### Module III: Reading Comprehension

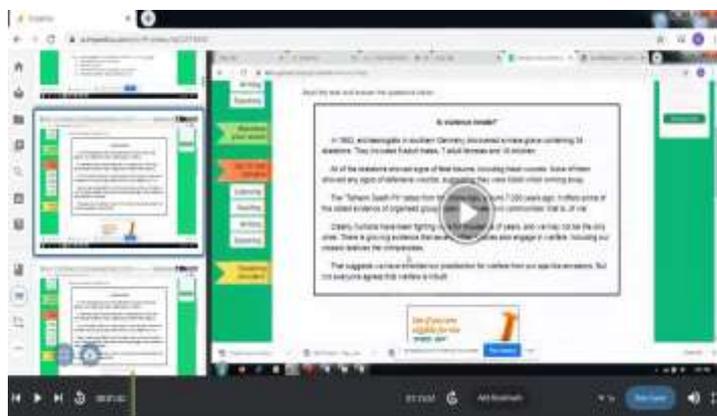
Paragraph, Sentence Completion, Jumbled Sentences, Jumbled Paragraph, Reading Comprehension

### Module IV: Verbal Analogies

## Impartus

Content was delivered via Impartus. Impartus is a simple and comprehensive, learning platform that brings about a paradigm shift in the teaching-learning experience. With the help of platform, educators are able to capture, edit, and distribute contextually relevant content. Students get opportunities to watch recorded or live-streamed class lectures and review all the course material any time, from anywhere. The platform serves more students with existing resources while improving outcomes for all. This is a platform where teacher can supervise student's attendance, assign different task and quizzes, share screen, record his teaching and in the back pack of the platform teacher upload question bank, teacher's handouts, PPTs and PDFs. All these facilities of the platform make the teaching and learning process more comfortable and flexible. The core features of the LMS include Multi-view automated lecture capture, In-Video Search, Discussion Forum, Flipped Lectures, Video Conferencing and Live Streaming, Sharing of Screen.

**Figure 1** IELTS course offered via Impartus



## Open Source Learning Platforms

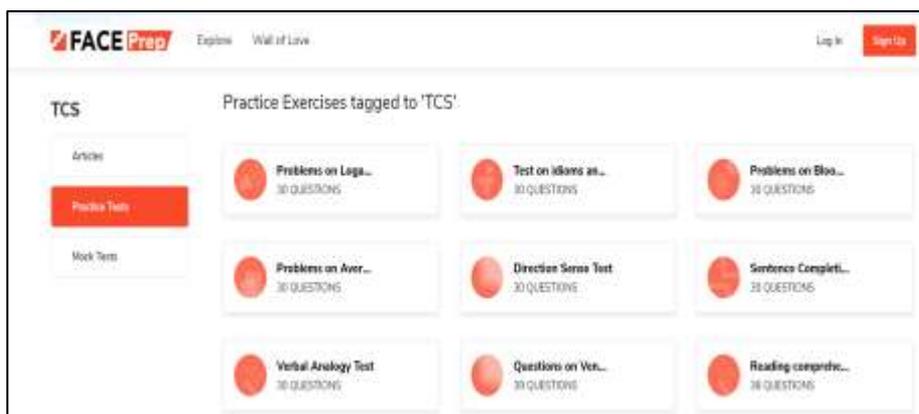
The course facilitators used digital pedagogy which promotes anytime anywhere learning, values open education, including open educational. The language facilitators used open source resources for English language training and prepare the students for the industry life. The paper describes some useful links that were used to improve the language proficiency of the students. The IELTS online practice portal <https://ieltsionlinetests.com> was used across all campuses. It consists of free real exams and IELTS tips. It helps the learners to know where they stand in language proficiency skills. Similarly, <http://getmorevocab.com> was used to train the students on the topics like collocations, common mistakes, English Used in Everyday Conversation, Grammar, Idioms and Phrasal verbs, Miscellaneous, Polite Language, Synonyms and Vocabulary improvement strategies. It also provides practice tests for advanced learners.

The verbal ability module of the site <https://www.indiabix.com> tested the students in the areas of Error Finding, Synonyms and Antonyms, Spellings, Ordering of Words, Sentence Improvement, Sentence Arrangement, Closet Test, One Word Substitution, Voice Change, Verbal Analogies, Select Appropriate Words, Sentence Framing, Sentence Correction, Complete the Statements, Paragraph

Formation, Comprehension, Idioms and Phrases. Other sites that were used to prepare the students for interviews and verbal ability were:

<https://www.geeksforgeeks.org>, <https://prepinsta.com>,  
<https://www.faceprep.in>, <https://interviewmania.com>,  
<https://www.fresherslive.com>

**Figure 2** Practice Test on FACE Prep



## IELTS Mock Tests and Continuous Assessments

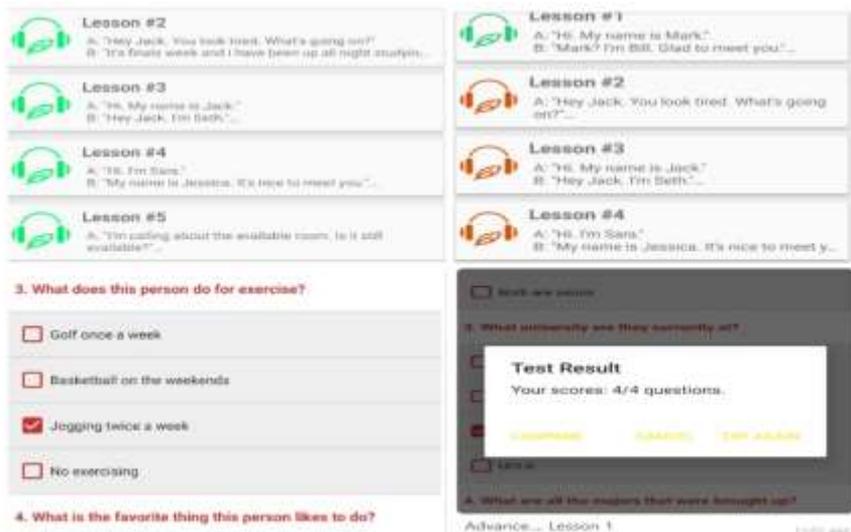
The IELTS online practice portal <https://ieltsolinetests.com> was the recommended site for the students and faculty. Pre-test was conducted and student groups were formed for the IELTS training programme: Pre-intermediate (A2), Intermediate level (B1), Upper-intermediate level (B2), Advanced level (C2) and Master level (C1). Mentors were allotted to the groups. Students were advised to follow the structured study strategy to achieve the desired score i.e., a band score of 8 by the time they come to the 6th semester. For speaking practice, while practicing students recorded the voice. The teachers could reflect on various techniques and strategies such as increased number of mock tests, workshops, webinars on need-based areas, peer support to improve skills of learners. For example, after the baseline test, students of different levels were recommended to take mock tests.

**Figure 3** IELTS strategy for continuous practice



Students were recommended to practise lessons from BBC Learning English to improve the modulations and pronunciation. For IELTS Writing section, students were familiarised with the style and pattern of writing through a series of webinars. Upon the request of the students, supplementary sessions were conducted via IELTS App to improve the listening skills of the students.

**Figure 4** IELTS Test via App



## **EnglishScore App**

Students were encouraged to take tests via EnglishScore App (British Council). EnglishScore App measures specific skill and CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) level. The test assesses core language proficiencies, i.e., grammar, vocabulary, reading and listening and can be used for self-improvement. The App assesses within these skills language elements such as tenses, prepositions, modality and meaning. It also prepares the students for tests such as IELTS. It assesses learner's level between A2 (Elementary) and C1 (Advanced) on the CEFR. EnglishScore is British Council's recent innovation, designed to transform English language assessment on a larger scale. The duration of the test is 40 minutes. It is made available to students free of cost. Learners can take proctored test on the App. After the test, the user immediately gets a score graded against a global standard, along with results in break-ups and recommendations on how to improve their score, with the choice to be awarded with a British Council certificate.

A total of 600 students installed the App and took the test. Around 136 students were found in the B2 level while 22 students reached C1 level, i.e., the advanced language proficiency level. And 281 students discovered themselves in the B1 level. Students below B1 level were advised to practice and reappear the test. The students received certificates with recommendations for improvement from British Council.

## **Google Forms**

English language teachers used the Google forms to conduct student surveys, quizzes, and assessments. This free Google tool supports the users to create forms, surveys, and tests. Teachers collaborated with their colleagues to edit and share the forms. Teachers used Google forms to conduct practice tests and baseline tests.

**Figure 5** Baseline IELTS Reading Test via Google Form



Likewise, students used Google forms to explore where they stand and set the learning goals. Google forms were also used to give and take feedback. It was also used to gather data for the research projects.

### **MyPerfectice- Verbal Ability and Student Engagement**

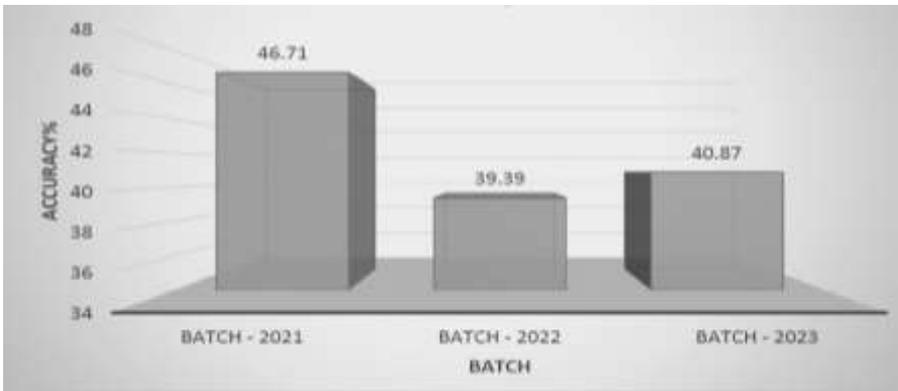
MyPerfectice platform was introduced to the students at the university for continuous assessment, self-learning, recommended intervention, and prepare the students for the placement tests and competitive exams. Around two thousand two hundred seventeen students across campuses were on boarded to the platform.

**Figure 6** MyPerfectice Platform for Continuous Assessment



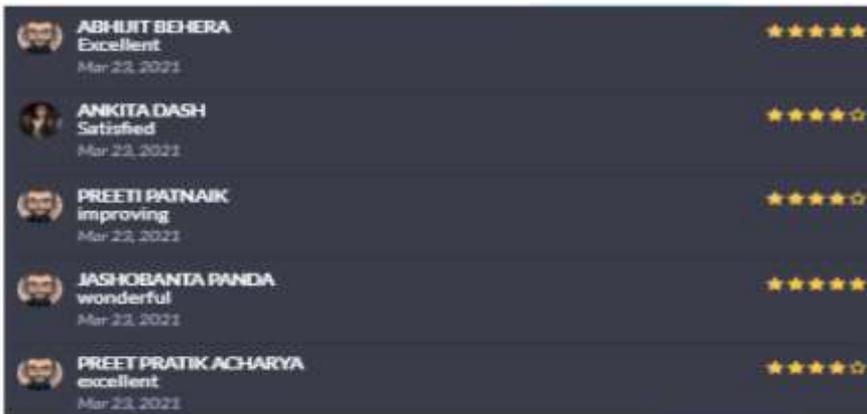
The paper highlights how the English language teachers revamped the approach to English language teaching and learning and embedded "job readiness" within the curriculum itself. This was driven by direct feedback from the companies that participated in recruitment drives over the last academic year. English communication was specifically identified as severely lacking. Keeping this in perspective, the university made Job Readiness mandatory and completely outcome driven, setting specific benchmarks such as an IELTS score that the students need to achieve for scoring the credits. Considering the volume of students, training effectiveness and the limited slots available per week, it is not possible to follow the conventional sixty students or traditional classroom of approach. There weren't enough slots available, and however hard the English language trainers try, the experience and delivery will not be consistent or effective. After a brainstorming session, the university students were onboarded to MyPerfectice platform. This platform comes pre-loaded with content, gamified options for teaching/learning and features to track a student's progress or the lack of it. Students use MyPerfectice platform for self-analysis, identification of weak areas, and continuous practice to reach to the desired level. A test was conducted for the three batches of the university students, i.e, 2021, 2022 and 2023. The students had taken the test in proctored mode. As per figure 7, the performance of 2021 batch in verbal ability is remarkable among all the batches. The expected accuracy level was 35%. It is encouraging to note that 2021 batch achieved 46.71% accuracy, 2022 batch 39.39% accuracy and 2023 batch 40.87%.

**Figure 7. Verbal Ability (Accuracy%)**



Clusters of students emerged with specific weaknesses and strengths which the trainers focussed on through classes and other tools. A deep analysis report was shared with the trainers, career coordinators and mentors where students have scored low. Learners have scored low in questions on the topics such as adjectives and adverbs, reading comprehension, subject verb agreement, conjunctions, critical reasoning and para jumbles. These need-based areas are covered as part of the curriculum currently in play. The students were excited about the baseline tests. The feedback was encouraging. The screenshot from MyPerfectice platform is to show ratings and comments given by the participants at the end of the test.

**Figure 8 Student Feedback on MyPerfectice**



A coordinated approach resulted in the successful implementation. It is recommended that mentors should guide the students in the development areas. Students should spend more time by practising the test series on the MyPerfectice platform. Students should read e-learning section of MyPerfectice platform.

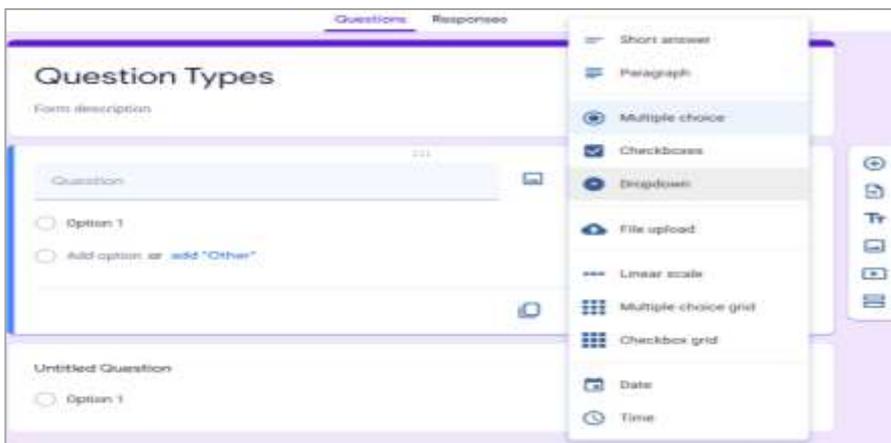
### **Video Conferencing Tools**

English teachers have offered synchronous classes via video conferencing software (e.g., Zoom). They have also created online classrooms where students can engage in asynchronous learning activities. Zoom and Google Meet were used to organise classes and conduct webinars on IELTS Speaking assessment, IELTS Writing, Grammarly, Interview stories to give a boost to the learning process.

### **Google forms**

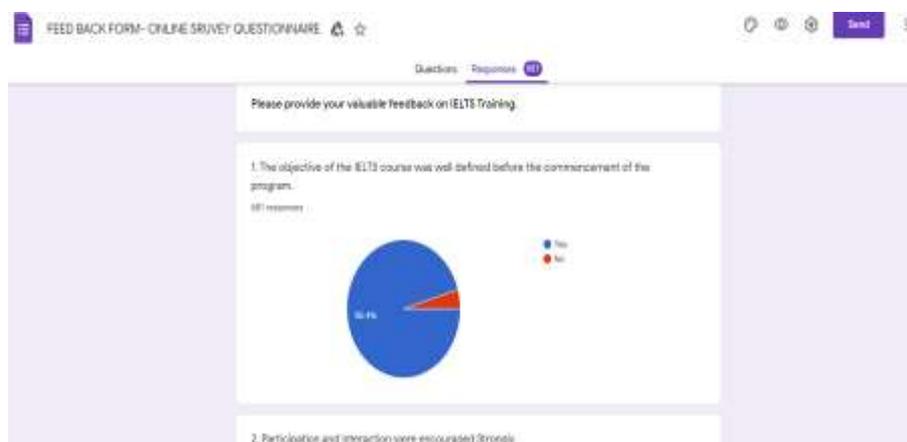
English language teachers used the Google forms to conduct the practice tests, quizzes for the internal tests and surveys to get student feedback. The pre-designed templates including survey forms, feedback forms, and course assessment were used by the teachers to conduct IELTS practice tests. The varieties of questions in the Google Form presented in Figure 9 were of great help to the question paper setters.

**Figure 9** *Question Types in Google Form*



Images and videos were embedded directly into a form to assess what students think and how they comprehend immediately after seeing the image or video. Students uploaded their assignment and work to this upload feature. The Google Form reports were generated, which allowed for further analysis. Google Forms also offered a summary sheet that shows a visual representation of close-ended questions (e.g., multiple choice). Teachers used features like embed, link, and email Google forms, to be easily shared with others. Practice tests were conducted for more than two thousand students at a single go.

**Figure 10** *Online Survey Questionnaire*



To cite as an example, around 687 students responded positively to the online survey on course facilitation. A total of three hours training per week was allotted for the IELTS and verbal ability training program. Around 63% of the students said the time allotted for training was sufficient. 95% of respondents said the facilitator explained the question pattern before conducting the exam. As per 73% of respondents, the sessions were organised and easy-to-follow. 89% of participants said the online materials such as videos, practice sets were interesting and relevant. 73.3% respondents said participation and interaction was encouraged strongly. 79% of respondents were of the view that training pace was perfect, 9.6% said it was fast while 9.1 felt it was a bit slow.

The students showed their willingness to attempt more tests and improve language skills.

‘I want more listening tests because it's little difficult’.

‘We take multiple tests. So, it enough to improve my English skills’.

‘More speaking test or trainings should be there because our English speaking skills still needs improvement’.

## **CONCLUSION**

Thus, the paper reflects on the English language teaching and learning practices in a state private university in India during the lockdown. Online facilitation of the courses, configuration of context-specific job-readiness courses such as IELTS, Verbal ability, content delivery via Impartus, self-learning on MyPerfectice, continuous assessments on MyPerfectice, Google Quizzes and multi-pedagogical approaches are cogently described by the researcher. It describes the approaches to English, to curriculum and pedagogy, that has been adopted by the English language teachers of a state private university in India. It offers a highly self-regulated and flexible approach to English, an approach that is standardised, curated, self-managed, designed around the pedagogy of ‘self-learning’, ‘technology-enabled learning’ and the demands of current times. The findings offer some meaningful insights into how the English teaching and learning activities carried out university have directly and indirectly accelerated the acquisition of language skills. A future longitudinal study will focus on the impact of the job readiness programme in the lives of students.

## **AUTHOR**

Prajna Pani is working as a Professor of English at Centurion University of Technology and Management, Odisha (India). She has 21 years’ experience in teaching, mentoring, training and development. She has specialised in English language teaching and

linguistics. Prof. Pani is passionate about empowering people to succeed in their lives by enhancing their soft skills. She is drawn to exploring the innovative teaching methods using Moodle Software, Learning Apps, Blogs, Canva, ELT 4.0 tools and technology. She is Moodle certified, and an instructor at Udemy.

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# Appendix A



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# Interaction and Evaluation of Teaching and Learning English Online: Challenges and Solution

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**Anh Thanh Nguyet Le**

Dong Thap University, Vietnam  
*nguyetanh2407@yahoo.com*

## **Abstract**

It is widely acknowledged that learning online contributes substantially to academic achievements across learners of all disciplines in COVID-19 epidemic period. Thus, exploring teachers' and students' interaction and evaluation in teaching and learning online is necessary, especially in the local contexts, to provide more insights into the field. Although quite a number of studies have been conducted on learning online in learning English as a foreign language (EFL) internationally and locally, this article reports 138 EFL students' voices via an exclusively narrative questionnaire on this topic at a local university of Vietnam. The findings showed that students held a positive attitude toward the related aspects of learning English online. However, they had many difficulties in learning online, and some of them felt bored. Thus, these students showed their hope as well as their suggestions of improving the effectiveness of teaching and learning English online in the distant future.

**Keywords:** *interaction, evaluation, teaching and learning online*

## **INTRODUCTION**

In the past years, researchers have studied the importance of teaching and learning English online. Since late 2019, the spread of COVID-19 pandemic has led to many countries enforcing the policy of home-based quarantine and physical distancing among citizens. Thus, universities in those countries faced a crisis of the

development of the online teaching and learning environments. Vietnam has had the same situation as other regions over the globe. A number of Vietnamese institutions have been concerned about the best ways to deliver online courses, inspire students, and conduct forms of formative assessment as well as a summative assessment. Besides, according to an official letter number 1061/BGDDT-GDTrH, 25 March 2020 issued by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET), schools and institutions were instructed to use the different modes of teaching and learning on the Internet. Teachers could opt a number of applications and services on the Internet to organise classroom activities, assign tests, as well as assess students' learning, namely Learning Management System, Learning Content Management System, and other online teaching and learning systems. Moreover, accompanying the official letter number 606/ BGDDT-GDTrH, 18 February 2021 issued by MOET, online learning was emphasized and the content of all subjects must be suitable for students' level and local context.

In the rapid technological information era, students can easily use a wide variety of technological devices for English learning (Hoang, 2017). However, for certain reasons, teaching and learning English online (especially in local colleges/universities where the speed of wireless Internet connection might be low) still meet some difficulties although Vietnamese MOET gave instructions and encouraged schools and universities to develop this kind of studying. In addition, though there have been many studies of benefits as well as disadvantages of online learning in Asian contexts (i.e. Gao & Zhang, 2020; Mukhtar, Javed, Arooj, & Sethi, 2020; Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020), their results have yet to be comprehensively generalised and conclusions of this field have yet to be made. Hence, further researches are needed to verify whether the benefits of online learning can be effectively applied to other campus settings, particularly in rural areas across the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. The present study attempts to clarify this as well as to provide more insights about interaction and evaluation

of online learning in the views of Vietnamese-speaking EFL students, who possess hands-on experiences in the process of online learning

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **What is technology-based learning?**

According to Koller, Harvey, and Magnotta (2006), technology-based learning is studying of content through all types of “electronic technology, including the Internet, intranets, satellite broadcasts, audio and video tape, video and audio conferencing, Internet conferencing, chat rooms, e-bulletin boards, webcasts, computer-based instruction, and CD-ROM” (p.4). They also indicate the connected terms of technology-based learning which include online learning, web-based learning, computer-based learning, and e-learning.

### **Advantages and disadvantages of online teaching and learning**

Koller et al (2006) show five positive points of technology-based learning: 1. Flexible access, 2. Learning fixed learners’ requirements, 3. Complete widespread, 4. Updating information, and 5. Direct and efficient airing. Similarly, Haron and Hanafi Zaid (2015) have the same views as Koller et al (2006)’s about the benefits of e-learning. Specially, Haron and Hanafi Zaid (2015) add some more advantages of online learning; for example, students can improve their learner autonomy skills, and feel interested in combining technology and learning English.

Koller et al (2006) also list many disadvantages of learning on the Internet:

1. The “digital divide,” caused by low computer literacy rates and lack of access to technology among some learner populations
2. “Social loafing,” which occurs when learners reduce their effort in TBL programs, or are frustrated in their attempts to

use TBL, because of the program's lesser focus on personal interactions

3. Higher attrition rates
4. Accommodating individuals with disabilities
5. Technology incompatibility
6. High development costs
7. Lack of credibility

(Koller et al, 2006, pp.8-9)

Likewise, Haron and Hanafi Zaid (2015) indicate elements affecting online teaching and learning. More specifically, some students are not willing to use digital tools. Others have weak technology ability. Even some lecturers did not possess enough technology competence.

### **The importance of interaction in learning English online in higher education**

Haron and Hanafi Zaid (2015) state that learning on the Internet is a hopefully strong instrument to develop cooperation in learning language, and the online communication between students and students can improve teamwork skills and peer study in foreign languages. In addition, they show that the online learning environment and interaction activities during online periods play an important role for a successful lesson.

### **The importance of evaluation in learning English online in higher education**

Burgess and Sievertsen (2020) indicate that because of the negative impact of the coronavirus 19 on education on the world, teaching was shifted to online environments, without being tested and dealt with, and assessing students' results was conducted online with many mistakes. They emphasise the significance of online assessment forms for students as well as teachers.

## **Research questions**

To its end, the present study needs to answer the two following questions:

1. What are EFL students' perceptions of interaction and evaluation of teaching and learning English online?
2. What are EFL students' reflections in their teachers' activities to develop interaction and evaluation of teaching and learning English online?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1 Setting and participants**

They were 138 English majors from Foreign Languages Faculty, Dong Thap University, South Vietnam ([www.dthu.edu.vn](http://www.dthu.edu.vn)), where the author has been working as an EFL lecturer for 11 years. They were 20 males and 118 females from 19 to 25 years old (which represented well a male-female student ratio in this faculty in the current years), including 66 sophomores, 7 juniors, and 65 seniors (2020-2021 academic year). After being fully informed of the purpose of this study by the author, all of them volunteered to join and answered narrative questions relating to both interaction and evaluation in their online learning. It should be noted that none of them had experience of attending any programs of online learning skills.

### **1.2 Data collection and analysis**

*Why is a narrative interview used?*

As a qualitative research tool, narrative interviews are considered as “unstructured tools, in-depth with specific features, which emerge from the life stories of both the respondent and cross-examined the situational context” (Muylaert et al, 2014, p.185). Additionally, narrative interview is capable of contributing

to a specific study area and someone's critical reflection. Narrative interview was employed in this study as it allows the researcher to explore EFL students' voice on interaction and evaluation of teaching and learning English online. Interview questions were divided into two parts: (1) students' perceptions of interaction and evaluation in online language learning at higher education, (2) students' reflections on interaction, testing and assessment online. The interview questions aimed to elicit EFL students' thought about online learning. The information collected from the students' anecdotes helps to answer the two research questions above.

## **FINDINGS**

### **What are EFL students' perceptions of interaction and evaluation of teaching and learning English online?**

The findings showed that there were just under half of the participants who liked online learning because of the following reasons. First, online learning allowed the students to save time and expenditure to commute from their house to university (49.3% of interviewed students). Second, 30% of the students reported that learning via online platforms can take place ubiquitously, thereby overcoming barriers to learning. However, there remained a number of students who were less willing to learn via online platforms owing to some difficulties. For example, 25.4% of the students complained about the low quality of Internet services. When they conducted online learning, due to the slow speed of the Internet at their home they could not attend the online classes fully. Moreover, they felt hard to understand the lessons when learning online (16.7%). In addition, 15.2% of the participants claimed that they could not concentrate on the online periods because they were attracted by other people as well as other activities at their places. Also, 15.2% of the interviewed students responded that they perceived the ineffectiveness of online learning because of a lack of teacher-student and student-student interaction. In other words, they felt hard to exchange their ideas with their friends. Besides,

they believed that online teaching and learning had some limitations (14.5%); for example, students could not effectively practice communicative skills; teachers could not manage their students in classes and were not able to assess whether their students fully understood the lessons; students' questions were not answered immediately; some students caused unintentional disturbance to online classes owing to some technical problems from their mobile devices; some felt asleep whereas some believe that online testing was not valid. Finally, few students reported a lack of motivation to learn online (2.9%), whereas some other students were not adequately equipped with technological devices to learn at home such as computer, laptop, and smartphone (1.5%).

For the question regarding positive points and negative views of online learning, 37.7% of the participants believed that online learning was efficient. They showed a great deal of evidence, namely in-depth understanding of lessons, no pressure, flexible time, improving group work and autonomous learning skills, possessing many references, being suitable for lockdown time. However, 62.3% pointed out reasons why teaching and learning on the Internet had many disadvantages. Students hardly concentrated on lessons, and felt bored. They could not understand lectures, and had no interaction between teachers and students, students and students in classes. Their cognition in learning was low. They were not used to learning online.

### **What are EFL students' reflections in their teachers' activities to develop interaction and evaluation of teaching and learning English online?**

According to the participants' demographic backgrounds, participants conducted online learning for the following classes: Writing 2, Listening 2, Speaking 2, Chinese 2, Listening 6, Teaching Methodology 3, Cross Culture, English Phonology, Reading 4, British Culture, Writing 6, Reading 6, Speaking 6, Listening 4, Writing 4, Translation Theory, and Research Methodology. Teachers organized

online classes via Zoom, Google classroom, Facebook, Edmodo, the E-learning system of Dong Thap University.

When asked about whether teachers organised pair-work and group-work activities in online classes, 55% of the interviewed students answered that their teachers always held interactive activities such as discussion in pairs or in groups. 35.5% of them showed that teacher-student and student-student interaction took place effectively. They could discuss problems given by teachers, shared and exchanged their ideas with their group mates. Teachers asked or gave questions to students and then called students to answer. However, there were 19.5% of students who disagreed with the statement that interaction between teacher and students, as well as students and students was not good. Some students talked about their personal stories instead of focusing on the questions from lessons. Some students turned on microphones at the same time, thereby causing disturbance to others in the class. The rest were less willing to participate in group discussions..

On the other hand, 45% of students responded that their teachers rarely interacted with them and did not hold communicative activities. Of those students, 13.7% believed that their learning without interaction was predictable because they thought that teachers hardly controlled and evaluated the given assignments, regardless of pair or collaborative works, when teaching on the Internet. Moreover, passive and less-proficient students felt comfortable with no communication with their classmates; students could concentrate on the lessons, and it took time for students to discuss questions in groups or in pairs. Yet, the rest felt bored, asleep, and difficult to comprehend lessons when teachers did not organise in-class activities.

When asked about forms of assessment in online learning conducted by teachers, 69.6% of the EFL students responded that their teachers implemented different kinds of testing and formative assessment. For example, they were online tests, checking students'

attendance, questions and answers, homework or assignments in groups or in individuals on applications, Edmodo, or e-learning system of Dong Thap university, learner autonomy, discussion, quizzes, interaction in online learning, peer assessment, having ideas to contribute lessons. 66% believed that those forms of assessment were effective because they helped students evaluate their learning ability and progression, self-correct their mistakes, download supplementary materials to revise previously learned lessons, do more exercises, check their understanding of lessons, improve their learner autonomy, receive teachers' feedback, save time, reduce pressure, reflect on the lessons. Online assessment also helped teachers to verify students' attendance status and their understandings of the lessons. In contrast, regarding the negative views of the online assessments, 26.8% of students illustrated that online testing and formative assessment were ineffective or less effective as they could not concentrate on the lessons throughout the whole class time. Additionally, teachers could not know whether their students were actually in online classes; some who did not attend the classes participated in doing tests or quizzes. It was also found that some students cheated on the online tests, namely reading references, using Google translation, searching answer keys online, copying answers from other students or sources of information. Besides, due to the insufficient speed and quality of internet connection, they could not submit their assignments in time.

On the other hand, 30.4% of the students claimed that teachers did not give any types of assessment. When asked whether teachers integrated forms of assessment into online learning, half of them indicated that teachers should give more various modes of assessment to check students' comprehension, get students' attention, promote students self-assessment, create a more enjoyable and a better design of leaning environment, promote social interactions among learners and teachers, and evaluate the effectiveness and quality of the teachers' prepared lessons. Nevertheless, the rest thought that assessment should not be

assigned through online learning platforms owing to the lack of control, thereby being viewed as invalid.

Finally, 32.6% of students suggested that teachers should improve teacher-student and student-student interactions through developing the quality of collaborative learning activities, choosing applications for both teachers and students to be able to meet online effectively, giving more questions for students to discuss, using games to support learning, asking all students to turn on their camera on their laptop or computer, and checking students' attendance. 33.3% supported the existence of online assessments in which teachers should give online quizzes and assignments to students at the end of the lesson; students shared their answers as well as reflected upon their ideas. Additionally, they suggested that teachers ask their students to take online oral tests and other kinds of test for evaluating students' learning performances; for instance, asking students to present their assignments through online platform such as Zoom. They also suggested that teachers design in-class activities and give feedback using social media platforms such as Facebook or Zalo.

## **DISCUSSION**

The findings showed that nearly half of students were in agreement with numerous benefits of learning English online. They echoed a number of positive views of employing online platforms to foster language learning. These advantages are similar to Koller et al (2006)'s and Haron and Hanafi Zaid (2015)'s views as mentioned above. However, more than half of students disagreed with e-learning owing to different restrictions. They thought that e-learning was only suitable during the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19. Many students complained about the speed and quality of internet connection, and students' consciousness when attending online classes.

The data also proved that pair work and group work activities in online classes appeared to be less efficiently organized. Many teachers did not pay attention to fostering teacher-student and student-student interactions. This caused a feeling of boredom in online classes. Besides, many students did not believe in the quality and validity of testing and formative assessment in online courses.

Next, students suggested a number of instructional approaches for organizing better interactive activities between teachers and students, students and students during online learning. They also supported some more kinds of assessment for learning. They tried to give their own opinions to improve the quality of learning English online.

In addition, the negative views of online learning involve several issues; for example, teachers might not have enough ability to conduct online teaching and deal with technological components. They had not received any forms of training for online learning as part of language instruction before. Like teachers' situation, students were not educated attitude of online learning as well as technology competence. The results of this study confirmed factors influencing online English language learning in a local context.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

As educators, teachers should update teaching methodology to suit and prepare for unexpected situations. They also need to adopt better strategies to control their online classes through techniques of classroom management. They should be trained ability of applying technology in teaching English. Finally, EFL students should be given more opportunities to familiarize themselves with learning online as well as using advanced technology.

## CONCLUSION

The results of the present research specifically provided in-depth information on using online technology to support language learning at a campus-setting in a rural area of the southern part of Vietnam. The study has some limitations; for instance, the author has not invited EFL teachers at Dong Thap University to participate in this research. In further research, the researcher will conduct a study of this topic with EFL teachers to compare EFL teachers' and EFL students' perceptions and practices of online teaching and learning.

## AUTHOR

Anh Thanh Nguyet Le is a lecturer of English in Foreign Languages Faculty at Dong Thap University. She has taught English for 21 years. Her research fields are teaching methodology and learner autonomy.

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# LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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# The Effectiveness of an LMS as a Content Delivery and Learner Autonomy Fostering Hub in Vietnamese Undergraduate Courses

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**Quyen Ha To Le**

Saigon University, Vietnam  
*lhtquyen@sgu.edu.vn*

**Tin Tan Dang**

Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education, Vietnam

## **Abstract**

The pandemic of COVID-19 has brought a lot of changes to the teaching and learning process in Vietnam. To guarantee students to be able to track their learning along with synchronous online classes, LMSs (Learning Management Systems) are quickly brought into use at universities in Vietnam. This research collects the reflections of 211 students and 9 lecturers of Foreign Languages Department of a public university about the effectiveness of using Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment), a popular LMS, as a support for course content delivery as well as its potential to foster learner autonomy, both during the emergency remote teaching period and when students have returned to offline classes. The results point out that even though both the teachers and the students appreciated the use of Moodle as a systematic place for content delivery, there were mismatches between lecturers' expectations and students' real activities on those platforms. As a result, the platform's benefits as a potential tool to promote students' learner autonomy are under-exploited. The suggestions from students and teachers are then discussed to make the most advantage of it.

**Keywords:** *LMSs, Moodle, Vietnamese undergraduate courses, learner autonomy*

# I. INTRODUCTION

Technology has brought a lot of changes to how people learn in a short time. University students now belong to generation Z, “the generation who were born after 1995, who tend to be digital natives, fast decision makers and highly connected” (Dauksevicuite, 2016), so they can take advantage of a lot of learning opportunities online. Online spaces are increasingly important because students spend their time on their digital devices connected with the Internet all the time. For informal and self-study online, language students can watch films, listen to music, follow streamers, join an online community and a lot more. For formal learning; however, the ability to develop e-learning and how to apply technology in teaching and learning depend on the facilities of each institute and there is no benchmark for how a university should do with technology in teaching and learning.

Through the pandemic of COVID-19, a lot of institutions have invested to build up the infrastructure for emergency remote teaching. There are more and more courses run at the university with a combination of both offline and online learning, especially the ‘web-enhanced courses’, whose online component does not supplant any time a student spends in a traditional, physical classroom. Online learning requires students to have learner autonomy – ‘the ability to control their own learning’ (Holec, 1981). Vietnamese students who have strong influences from Confucian cultural features - expected to attend class regularly and be fully initiated by teachers (Bui, 2018; Dang & Robertson, 2010) - can have a difficult time managing their learning when they only see their teachers through the screen. Teachers may also face challenges to teach online. The change from traditional way of learning to online learning is a big change for both teachers and students in Vietnam, which could impact greatly on students’ behaviors, teachers’ teaching methods and training quality. Even though the use of LMSs in teaching English has been well discussed in literature, the particular context of Vietnam makes it necessary

to find out the effectiveness of using Moodle, a popular LMS, in web-enhanced courses at university level in Vietnam to answer whether it has been exploited successfully as an information source and a hub to foster students' autonomous learning. Only from these deep understanding, implications could be made to make its use more effective.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. Learner autonomy**

#### ***2.1.1 Learner autonomy is an attribute of awareness and reflection***

Autonomy has its original meaning as a political concept about the emergence of the self-governing city state. Plato, the immensely influential classical Greek philosopher, developed its personal meaning when he defined it as an independent, free-thinking individual (Marshall, 1996). There has been a lack of consensus over definitions of learner autonomy, but there has been agreement since 1970 that autonomy has both manifestation and awareness features (Lamb, 2016).

The performance of learner autonomy focuses on self-management skills and it is exemplified in one of the earliest definitions 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 be specific, learners need to be able to determine the learning objectives, define the contents and progressions, select appropriate methods and techniques to be used, monitor the procedure of learning and finally evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1981, p. 3).

The focus on internal factors of learner autonomy emerges from general work in cognitive psychology. Little emphasized the psychological attributes of autonomous learners when he defined

learner autonomy as ‘a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action’ (1991, p. 4).

### ***2.1.2. Four perspectives of learner autonomy***

Combined these two orientations, Benson introduces three perspectives of learner autonomy: (1) technical perspective which concerns about learner's strategies, techniques and skills; (2) psychological perspective which refers to the learner’s willingness to take more responsibility for their own learning; and (3) political perspective, which means learners need to have the freedom to have a voice in their own learning (Benson, 1997).

Up to this stage, knowledge about learner autonomy was mainly for ‘individual’ view even though from the earliest stage, researchers about learner autonomy have agreed that the construct does not imply the notion that learners are learning in isolation, but it takes place within a sociocultural framework. Rebecca 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’ (cited in (Benson, 2011): 41) and the second to ‘situated learning’ theory (Bloch et al., 1994) (learning as participation or learning is the process of becoming a full participant in a sociocultural practice (cited in Benson, 2011: 47). These social perspectives emphasize ‘the social context of autonomy rather than the individual exercising it’, or in other words, learner autonomy is ‘socially conditioned and constrained’ (Oxford, 2003). Learner autonomy then is considered under four perspectives: technical, psychological, political and socio-cultural (Dang, 2012).

### ***2.1.3. The locus of control***

The fact that learners need to have “space to maneuver” raised the awareness about giving some degree of freedom for learners to control in their learning if they want to develop their autonomy.

Benson expressed this concern when he came up with some revision to Holec's definition of learner autonomy when he replaced 'ability' by 'capacity', 'take charge of' by 'take control of' one's own learning and he defined learner autonomy as 'the capacity to take control over one's own learning' (Benson, 2003). 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). The fourth locus of control – control over space has been added to define learner autonomy as the possibility to exercise one's agency within the space (Lamb & Murray, 2018). Learner autonomy is a condition to start and nourish the 'place making' process to change any learning space to a learning place where learning really takes place.

#### ***2.1.4. The operational definition of learner autonomy***

Learner autonomy in this study is defined as the capacity to work on affordances for learning arising through learner's interaction with the learning environment.

## **2.2. Technology as a support tool in Higher Education**

### ***2.2.1. Moodle***

Institutions around the world can provide courses in which instruction and content are delivered over the internet, ranging from web-enhanced course (where there is an online component but it does not supplant any time a student spends in a traditional, physical classroom), blended or hybrid course (a course that combines two modes of instruction, traditional classroom instruction and online instruction and online instruction supplants some but not all classroom instructions) or online course or fully online course (any course offered completely over the internet and

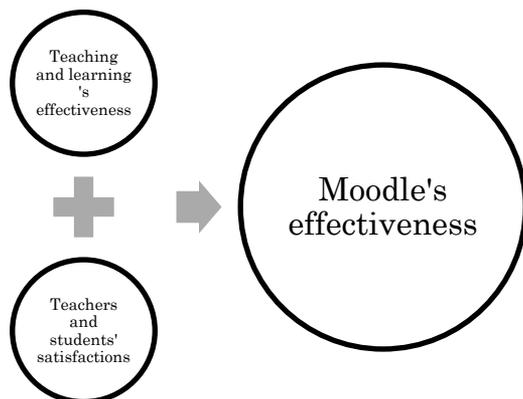
online instruction supplants all classroom time without negative impact on learning outcomes). Along with these courses, the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Learning Management System (LMS) or CMS (Content Management System) will be provided and it would be considered as the virtual learning spaces for students to navigate during their learning process. One of the most popular LMSs all over the world is Moodle (eThink, 2021) and it is employed at universities in Vietnam (Le et al., 2013).

Moodle is designed specifically to support the delivery of teaching and learning materials and activities. It provides a simple, easy-to-use set of tools for creating consistent web pages for every module within a course, and to use those web pages to deliver information and learning activities. The advantages of Moodle are it collects learning resources and activities into one location; provides a number of activities including forums, wikis, quizzes, surveys, chat and peer-to-peer activities and provides fully featured assignment management tools. Some popular activities in Moodle are Assignment, Chat, Choice, Database, Forum, Glossary, Quiz, Survey, Wiki and Workshop; some common used resources are Book, File and Folder. Besides administrative benefits, it also has the potential to facilitate autonomous learning (Snodin, 2013).

Investigating the effectiveness of VLE in Vietnamese context, a comprehensive model was proposed with measurements for four latent constructs, which are system characteristics (system functionality and content feature), socio-cultural factors (language capability, interaction, and learning climate), individual differences (computer self-efficacy) and personality traits (extraversion, openness, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism) (Tran, 2016). Another model with 4 factors – users' satisfaction, teaching effectiveness, academic achievement and cost effectiveness – was developed to evaluate e-learning systems quality in higher education in developing countries (Hadullo et al., 2017). Because of the scope of the research, Moodle's effectiveness will be assessed through 2 of these 4 factors – users' satisfaction and teaching

effectiveness. The users being discussed are students and teachers and teaching effectiveness are Moodle's ability to become a hub for content delivery and learner autonomy development (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** *The effectiveness of Moodle*



*Note.* Adapted from A model for evaluation of quality of eLearning systems (Hadullo et al., 2017)

### **2.2.2. The use of technology to foster learner autonomy**

Although learner autonomy is of great beneficial to every learner, to nourish it is not easy in the language teaching and learning process. There are 6 broad headings to classify practices associated with the development of autonomy: resource-based approaches, technology-based approaches, learner-based approaches, classroom-based approaches, curriculum-based approaches (Benson, 2011).

From technological perspective, CALL can support self-paced study, collaborative learning, greater reflection and learner control, all the essential aspects of autonomy (Snodin, 2013). A lot of research has been done about promoting learner autonomy with different forms of technology. A research about promoting learner autonomy using online platform was the experiment using a social media-like website (Schooly) with two groups of Thai first year students produced significant improvements in the EFL writing performance

of both groups. The first group of students was fully autonomous. After 10-15 minutes of introduction to the site and writing tasks to be performed (produce several written posts per week, get feedback from peers and non-peers and offer feedback), they were entirely free to do as they pleased. The second group was semi-autonomous. This group received the same introduction but had an experienced writing teacher available to assist them, make suggestions and encourage them to write often. Surprisingly, the fully autonomous group (the one with no teacher help) outperformed the semi-autonomous group not only in writing but in other aspects of English language (Chaiwiwatrakul, 2015). Another study also looks at language learner autonomy as a social construct in relation to the context and its users based on the example of Italki, a social networking site for tandem language learning (Turula, 2017). The results of the study indicate that learner autonomy in the digital age can be both self- and other-regulated; characterized by learner independence as well as interdependence but largely will be determined by individual learner agendas, motives, and attitudes. There is also a consensus that technology is not an end in itself but appropriate pedagogy is needed.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Research questions**

To get the general picture about the use of Moodle in web-enhanced courses at university level, its possibilities for delivering content and promoting learner autonomy, the research has 2 research questions:

1. How do students and teachers use Moodle in their learning and teaching?
2. How effective is Moodle in web-enhanced undergraduate courses from learners and teachers' perspectives?

## **3.2. Research design**

Quantitative research brings ‘the strengths of conceptualizing variables, profiling dimensions, tracing trends and relationships, formalizing comparisons and using large and perhaps representative samples’ (Punch, 2013). This research wants to describe how students and teachers use Moodle in their learning and teaching and how effective it is in their perspective, so questionnaires are designed and given to both group of participants to collect quantitative data.

## **3.3. Setting, participants and sampling method**

The study was conducted at the 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. Because of the pandemic, started from the school year 2019-2020, the university has set up Moodle to support content delivery and learning management along with synchronous lessons via Google Meet. The courses on Moodle are set up and technical staff enroll students into their courses for teachers shortly before the courses start. One training session which lasted for 2 hours was delivered to the teachers in charge.

During the outbreak of COVID-19, students nationwide were required to stay at home and follow the arrangement of their institutions to study online. The participants in this research studied synchronously with their teachers via Google Meet at the

same time with their physical classroom. The school also required teachers to upload slides and learning materials on Moodle for students to make sure students could review and understand the lessons whether they participated or not in the synchronous sessions. This period is called 'online study' to distinguish with the time students came back to offline classroom when the pandemic was controlled and schools were open again.

211 students in different years of the Foreign Language Faculty and 9 teachers in the same faculty participated in the study. The participants were chosen at the place where the researchers are working for convenience. The selection was kept as randomly as possible. The students participated through an online survey and the teacher participants were selected randomly by picking the teachers who had odd numbers on the teachers' name list.

### **3.4. Data collection**

#### ***3.4.1. Instruments***

The data of the study was collected through 2 questionnaires developed by the researchers, one (16 questions) for students and one (9 questions) for teachers.

To answer the first research question "*How do students and teachers use Moodle in their learning and teaching?*", 6 questions are used for the students to ask about their frequency of using Moodle during the school closure because of the pandemic and when they got back to physical classroom, the length they used it, the available activities on Moodle and what their own activities on the platform were. For teachers, there is only 1 question asking about their activities on Moodle.

To answer the second research question "*How effective is Moodle in web-enhanced undergraduate courses from learners and teachers' perspectives?*", 6 questions about the effectiveness of Moodle and the reasons for its ineffectiveness are given to students and 6

questions about the effectiveness of Moodle with their teaching and the potential for Moodle to become a hub to support students' autonomous learning are given to teachers. The last 2 questions in each questionnaire are to ask both students and teachers their favor to continue using Moodle in the following school years as well as suggestions to increase the platform's effectiveness.

2 demographic questions about students' gender and the year they are in were asked so that cross-correlations can be run in the data analysis step.

### ***3.4.2. Data collection procedure***

Both the questionnaires were written in Vietnamese using Google forms. They had been piloted in a group of 5 students and 2 teachers to make sure the wordings were clear enough. Based on the feedback in the pilot phase, some changes were made with wordings.

The questionnaire for students was posted on the Facebook groups of each school-year of the Foreign Language Faculty department along with a message asking for participation. The researchers of the current study 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 in 2 weeks at the end of the second semester of the school year 2019-2020. The participation was completely voluntary and it did not affect their studies in any way.

The questionnaire link for teachers was sent to the teachers after the researchers' brief introduction about the purpose of the study.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

The data collected from the questionnaires was screened, coded in number and computed into SPSS for analysis. There were no missing data, so all the answers were valid for coding.

For categorical data such as gender, year of study, the frequency, the time length and the activities used on the platform, frequencies analysis was used for descriptive statistics. For interval data, the Likert scale questions about the effectiveness of Moodle and the possibility it had to become a hub for developing students' learner autonomy, mean, median, mode, standard deviation was calculated.

Cross-tabulations were also used to find the correlations among variables, such as between gender and the frequency the students logged into the platform and the time they spent on the platform and the effectiveness of the platform that they evaluated. There were 'Other' options at several questions such as describing their own activities on the platform and giving their opinion for making Moodle more useful, these answers were grouped into themes; however, these answers only accounted for very small percentages.

## **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1. Demographic information of the students participated in the research**

Among 211 students who participated in the survey, 71 are males (34%) and 140 are females (66%); 42 (19.9%) are freshmen, 108 (51.2%) are sophomores, 54 (25.6%) are third-year students and 7 (3.3%) are in their last year at university.

### **4.2. The use of Moodle in web-enhanced undergraduate courses**

#### ***4.2.1. The frequency of log in***

For the time of online study, nearly half of the students (46%) assessed Moodle every day, more than a quarter (28%) logged in more than a couple times a week, nearly another quarter of them (24.2%) reported to assess only when there is a requirement of the instructors in charge. Once logged in, more than half of them (56.4%) stayed on the space for less than 30 minutes, a quarter (25.1%) spent from 30 minutes to 1 hour and only a tenth (11.4%)

stayed on the space from 1 to 2 hours. Around 5% of the students stayed longer, for more than 2 hours. It seems that female students logged into the platform more often than male students and they did not do it not only because of teachers' requirements. The cross table between gender and how often they logged in the platform is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Cross table between gender and how often they logged in the platform

		How often				
		Every day	Twice or three times a week	Only when required	When need materials	Total
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
Gender	Male	28	20	23	0	71
	Female	70	39	29	2	140

From teachers' perspectives, 55.5% of them thought students would spend quite an amount of time on the platform, and 44.4% thought they spent less than the needed amount of time. After checking with the activities recorded in the course's logbook, students spent slightly less time on the platform than their expectations.

After the online period, 70% of students reported that they only sometimes logged into the system as requested by their instructors. 15,2% of students stated that they still accessed to the platform as frequently as before and 12.4% said they completely did not access to the platform. The main reason that 78.5% of students no longer used the platform was because the instructors have stopped posting materials and activities on the platform, so they had no reason to go there. 16.7% added they did not go to the platform because they had no people to interact there. Some other reasons for not assessing the platform were they found learning offline more effective and they did not have time.

To sum up, even though students belong to Gen Z, students are not really excited with logging into the platform for their out-of-class learning. The amount of time staying on Moodle was quite short and some students only followed the requirements of their teachers to log in. Teachers did not have high expectations for students' using the platform and the real amount of time students used for the platform was even less than the teachers' expectations. These results are different from the popularity of online courses in the United States where the growth rate of online courses were ten times greater than face-to-face enrollments (Kupczynski et al., 2011).

#### ***4.2.2. Activities on the platform***

Nearly all the students assessed Moodle to download materials and class slides (95.7%), to see class notifications (95.7%), to hand in assignments, do the quizzes and exercises assigned for them (79.1%) as well as join the required discussion (40.3%). In their observation, the activity that lecturers used the most on Moodle was resources, uploading materials and slides (96.7%), assigning tests (71.1%), giving notices in the form of chat (66.4%) and making quizzes for students' consolidation and further practice (64.9%). Less popular activities were forums (32.2%), database (22.7%), choice (14.7%), workshop (9%), alphabet (8.5%), and wiki (3.3%).

Similarly, teachers also reported the most popular activity on Moodle was sending announcements to students (100%). Other less common activities were uploading teaching materials (88.9%), responding to students' messages (77.8%), creating assignments (44.4%), making quizzes (44%), and giving questions on forums for class discussions (44.4%).

From the activities reported, Moodle was mainly used as a platform for content delivery and teachers have also tried different activities on the platform to involve students to the platform. These activities reflected the versatility of LMS (Dabbagh & Ritland, 2007) and

were similar to the activities such as Assignment (Helen, 2015), E-homework, Webboard (forum), Resource, Online learning journal, E-courseware on similar platforms (Snodin, 2013). Other activities which students in the study context have not had but also popular were Turnitin Assignment and URL (web link) (Helen, 2015).

### **4.3. The effectiveness of Moodle**

#### ***4.3.1. Moodle's strengths***

The activity on Moodle that learners like the most was materials and files uploading with 51.2%. They also favored quizzes and chat activities with 30.8% and 11.4% respectively. Some also like handing assignments on the LMS (3.3%). Surprisingly, only 1.9% of them liked forum activities. Activities such as choice and workshop received the favor of very small number of students.

The subjects which students thought they could study the most effectively were the ones which included a lot of theoretical foundations, both for general and major subjects. The general subjects listed were Philosophy, Politics, Basic Marketing and so on. The major subjects listed to be effective with Moodle were Phonetics, Listening Comprehension, Writing, American studies, Reading Comprehension, Teaching Pedagogy, Research Methodology, Syntax, Semantics, French, Chinese to name a few. The resources, presentation slides and materials shared on Moodle were reported to help the students to revise effectively and did not waste time to note down like what they had to do in the traditional classroom. The subjects which require demonstrations and spontaneous interactions such as Physical Education for general subjects and Speaking and Teaching Practice for majored subjects seemed to be less effective on Moodle.

The most chosen benefit of Moodle mentioned by 92.9% of students was they could assess the materials anywhere and anytime. They also mentioned about the benefits of not missing any class announcements (70.1%). More than half the respondents

(53.1%) said that Moodle helped them to systemize the information. Through Moodle, 32.7 % of students also reported that they could receive the feedback from teachers more easily, which could be difficult for teachers working with a large class. Nearly a third of them (28.9%) also felt that the materials posted by their teachers on Moodle were much clearer than the materials they found themselves on the Internet, so they could study more easily. Another quarter of students (25.6%) felt that they could evaluate their own learning and a fifth of them (19.4%) thought that the activities on Moodle were interactive which required them to interact with friends or their group members to complete. They were also quite positively stated that Moodle helped them averagely and pretty much in their autonomous learning outside the classroom with 33.8% and 48.1% respectively; 15% of them thought it was extremely useful. The descriptive statistics of the effectiveness of Moodle is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The effectiveness of Moodle

How effective is Moodle				
Mean	Median	Mode	Std. Deviation	Min/ Max
3.75	4.00	4	.741	2/5

*Note.* 1- “not effective at all” and 5 - “very effective”

The longer the students stayed on the platform, the more effective the platform was to them. The time from 30 minutes to 1 hour seemed to be the good amount of time to spend on the platform to have effective learning. This was also consistent with result from other findings which stated that the time and activities they joined on the platform produced meaningful learning (Kupczynski et al., 2011). The cross table between the effectiveness of Moodle and the time students spent on it is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Cross table between the effectiveness of Moodle and the time students spent on it

		How effective					Total
		1	2	3	4	5	
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	
How long	Less than 30 minutes	0	2	45	55	17	119
	From 30 minutes to 1 hour	0	2	15	26	10	53
	From 1 to 2 hours	0	2	10	11	1	24
	More than 2 hours	0	0	1	6	4	11
	It depends	0	0	1	3	0	4
	Total	0	6	72	101	32	211

*Note.* 1- “not effective at all” and 5 - “very effective”

From teachers’ perspective, they reported that the benefits of Moodle were equivalently distributed to giving in time announcements to students, guaranteeing that lessons could be delivered to students, setting assignments and quizzes and creating more opportunities to interact between students and instructors, each accounted for 22.2%. A smaller percentage of teachers (11.1%) thought it could increase the interaction between students and students. The instructors were also positive about the potential of Moodle to become a learning place outside the classroom at average and pretty much level (44.4% each). However, they were doubted about the ability of the system to foster learner autonomy with more than half (55%) thought it could barely promote students’ ability to learn by themselves.

Students were quite more positive with the effectiveness of Moodle as a hub for content delivery and agreed that it had the potential to develop students' learner autonomy in comparison with teachers. This was consistent with the comments that platform like Moodle could give students the opportunities to exercise their right to choose a level of engagement appropriate to their own situations and circumstances, which is the basic condition for the development of learner autonomy (Snodin, 2013). These results were consistent with other research about the advantages of LMS such as user-friendly (Kasim & Khalid, 2016), flexible (Holmes & Prieto-Rodriguez, 2018) and accessible (Aldiab et al., 2019).

The data also showed that the students find it extremely useful with subjects that require a lot of theoretical foundations. For them finding reliable resources seems to be problematic, even though it is an important competence they need to have when they self-regulate their learning. It was also worth noticing that students did not like the forum activities, which reflects the Confucian characteristics of students.

Different activities have been tried to maximize the interactions between students and students and students and teachers; however, not much interactions have been achieved. This is different with research that highlighted the interaction that LMS could create (Cavus & Alhih, 2014). Students relied a lot on their teachers in their learning and they seemed to wait for teachers to initiate their learning, just like in the traditional classrooms. It is not the case of students who had taken the affordances of the platform to initiate their own learning outside the classroom (Snodin, 2013).

As a result, students did not log in to the platform when there were no more requirements from their teachers. Only the students who thought Moodle was effective for their learning continued to use it after the online period. The cross table between the effectiveness of Moodle and the frequency of use when students went back to offline class is presented in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Cross table between the effectiveness of Moodle and the frequency of use when students went back to offline class

		1	2	3	4	5	Total
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
After the online period	As frequently as before	0	0	4	15	13	32
	Sometimes when required	0	5	55	72	15	147
	Completely no	0	1	11	11	4	27
	More than before	0	0	0	1	0	1
	Sometimes without requirement	0	0	2	2	0	4
	Total	0	6	72	101	32	211

Note. 1- “not effective at all” and 5 - “very effective”

### 4.3.2. Limitations of the platform

Besides the advantages of using Moodle, students also mentioned the factors that limit the effectiveness of the system. Nearly 52% of the students thought that the interface of Moodle was not attractive; nearly another half of them (48.6%) said that they did not know how to exploit the materials and activities available on Moodle. A third of them (31.9%) found it difficult to interact on Moodle, and nearly the same figure of students (28.1%) who thought activities and resources available on Moodle was very limited for their studies. More than a fifth of students (22.9%) did not know how to self-study using Moodle because they had not received any training about using it. Another drawback mentioned was the effectiveness of Moodle depended a lot on teachers’ activities, but many teachers were not active enough in organizing activities on this platform, reported by a tenth of students (10.2%). As a result, in students’ evaluation, there was a gap in the effectiveness of Moodle using in different courses, with 72.4% of them said the gap was from noticeable to very noticeable.

In the instructors' opinions, the main reasons for the limitation in using Moodle as a teaching and learning space were mainly because students rarely logged into platform and teachers did not know how to exploit all the functions of the platforms. Other limitations were its interface was quite boring and students had also not received any proper training about using it.

Similar ideas about the limitations of LMSs in general are also mentioned in other research such as its unattractive interface, lack of instructional design guidance (Ioannou & Hannafin, 2008) and lack of training (Bhalalusesa et al., 2013).

#### **4.4. The desire to continue the use of Moodle and their suggestions for more effective use in the future**

Nearly 90% of the students wanted to continue the use of Moodle in the following school years. This similar result can be found with students at tertiary level in Thailand (Suppasetsee & Dennis, 2010) and in Slovenia (Ivanović et al., 2013).

Students hoped they could get the support to be able to use Moodle more effectively. The most expected support was to have more materials and resources available on Moodle. 49.5% of them wanted to have credit for their activities on Moodle. 48.6% of them wanted to have training on self-learning skills and another 41.4% wanted to be trained about using Moodle. About a third of them wanted to have more interactions with teachers on the platform. From other contexts such as at York St John University in England, lecture notes/ handouts were the most expected features for students. They also wanted to have assessment details, requirements and marking criteria (Helen, 2015).

More than 80% of teachers expressed that they wanted to continue the use of Moodle in their teaching. To increase its effectiveness, all of them stressed on the institute to give more training on using Moodle so teachers could create more activities for students on the platform. Along with teachers' training, students also needed to be

trained about working on this platform. Other suggestions were to increase the interactions on the platform and the amount of resources and activities available on the platform. Interactions and the abundance of resources will be two factors that keep students using the platform. Credit could also be counted for students using the platform to encourage them at the first step. Teachers in other contexts experienced similar challenges when starting to use technology tools as Moodle in their teaching. Beside the stress on giving more training on how to use the platform, they also stressed the necessity for collaborating among teachers sharing and collaboration (Suppasetserree & Dennis, 2010).

To conclude, both students and teachers want to continue the use of Moodle to support their learning and teaching. To make Moodle more effective, they all want to have more training about using it. Even though the teachers had received the training to use Moodle at the beginning, it was too short for them to be able to use it in the most effective way. Both teachers and students mentioned about giving credits for students' work on the platform, which reflects that Vietnamese students are extrinsically motivated. A lot more needed to be done to make Moodle more than a space for content delivery.

## **V. IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS**

The study acknowledges the concern about the effectiveness of using Moodle for web-enhanced undergraduate courses. The information collected about the frequency of students logged in the platform, what activities students and teachers did on the platform, what benefits and limitations they still face using it can help not only learners understand more about their learning activity but also teachers think about what they should do together with the students to make the platform more useful. It also points out that Moodle has the potential to become a hub for out-of-class learning but further research should be done to be able to sketch out what should be done to support learners to improve their own learning.

Last but not least, it also points out two biggest concerns to sustain students' connections with the platform are increasing interactions and activities, which should be taken into account when teachers design the activities on the platform.

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 and teachers to reflect about their learning and teaching activities via the questionnaires, so richer data would be reached if interview or observation was added to the instruments.

## **VI. CONCLUSION**

Even though LMS has been in used for a long time in many countries, it is considered new technology for the majority of students and teachers Vietnam. The research's results have contributed to the understanding of what actions learners and teachers have done on the platform and the platform's effectiveness as a hub for content delivery and out-of-class learning. Even though it has brought certain benefits, more needed to be done so that it could become a place to help students systemize their own learning and develop their learner autonomy.

## **VII. AUTHOR**

Quyen Ha To Le is currently a PhD student at HCMC Open University. She has been teaching EFL for more than eighteen years. Her main interest goes with how to support students to become more autonomous on their language learning journey.

Dr. Tin Tan Dang is an EFL and TESOL lecturer at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels in Vietnam. He has published in *TESOL in Context*, *The Journal of Asia TEFL*, *The Asian EFL Journal*, and a few others. He has chaired Language Teaching and Learning Today Conference in 2017, 2018, and 2019.

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# Implementing Moodle to Develop English-majored Freshmen's Listening Skills

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**Phuong Thanh Tran**

Van Lang University, Vietnam  
*ptran0701@gmail.com*

**Quynh Phuong Nhat Ngo**

Van Lang University, Vietnam  
*ngonhatphuongquynh@gmail.com*

## Abstract

With the development of digital transformation and the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic, language learning worldwide is moving towards the E-learning including the popular use of Moodle, a web-based learning platform at universities. Previous studies in the effects of implementing Moodle on university students' listening skills have only been carried out in a small number of areas in Vietnam. This indicates a need to adhere the various English majors' perceptions of acquiring English listening skills through Moodle. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore the effectiveness of employing Moodle to develop English-majored freshmen's listening skills from their perceptions at Van Lang University. For this study, the quantitative approach was used to investigate the students' perceptions of applying Moodle to the development of their listening skills. To collect data for the study, 80 first-year English majors participated in the online questionnaire. The findings reflected that the majority of the students believed that using Moodle platform was effective in enhancing their English listening competences. Another integral finding was that most of the research participants positively evaluated the use of Moodle for soaring their autonomy in the learning process. Nevertheless, some of the responders indicated that the inadequate technical support from school caused them

several difficulties in acquiring listening skills. Some of the issues emerging from the findings have crucial implications for implementing Moodle platform more effectively in language teaching and learning in the future.

**Keywords:** Moodle, teaching listening online, learning management system, e-learning

## INTRODUCTION

By and large, listening skill is one of the most complicated skills for most of the university students. Since they perceive that in order to get through to listening tasks, the learners not only have enough related vocabulary but also precise pronunciation. Thereby, this process may take longer time to boost their overall listening.

Additionally, all the students find it extremely essential to get used to taking a new tool so as to face with listening tasks on their own at home apart from the school time. Fortunately, with the evolution of the technology, the majority of schools or universities now offer students learning, examination, communication, and assignment submission options through web-based applications. Although at the beginning, there is still a vast range of problems regarding inadequate Internet access, slow adoption rate and so on, many experts or university lectures still value the benefit of technological items (Fuentes, Gomez, Garcia and Ayuga, 2012).

While some web-based applications have had noticeable positive impact on student engagement and performance, others proved less effective and, in some cases, even harmful. One of the most feasible as well as useful for the learners is Moodle (Hsu and Chang, 2013). It is the learning system that the process of sharing, learning and assignment may pave the way for both teachers and learners to keep up with the learning outcomes. Specifically, at Van Lang university, 80 students have to partake in utilizing Moodle in blended classroom in order to study Listening with the teacher.

After a semester, most of the learners hold the belief that these oriented resources may cater the positive learning outcomes for them such as unambiguous listening tasks, straightforward practices and so on. In general, using Moodle in teaching Listening can enhance the students' academic performance in Listening skill; besides, it can ease the pressure whenever come into Listening tasks at class (Norah and Alice, 2010).

In this paper, the key aim is to figure out the effect of Moodle in teaching Listening skill which can result in learner's development in terms of Listening skill. The study also aims to examine whether both educators and learners can effectively utilize this online tool to reach to their learning outcome or not.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Major data for this research was collected from these following sources: Recent studies into English-majored students' attitudes towards using Moodle platform for developing their listening skills; Theories of teaching model of ESL blended learning on Moodle, and how Moodle was developed for language acquisition; and English-majored freshmen's perceptions on employing Moodle-based platform to develop their listening skills.

### **Overview of Moodle**

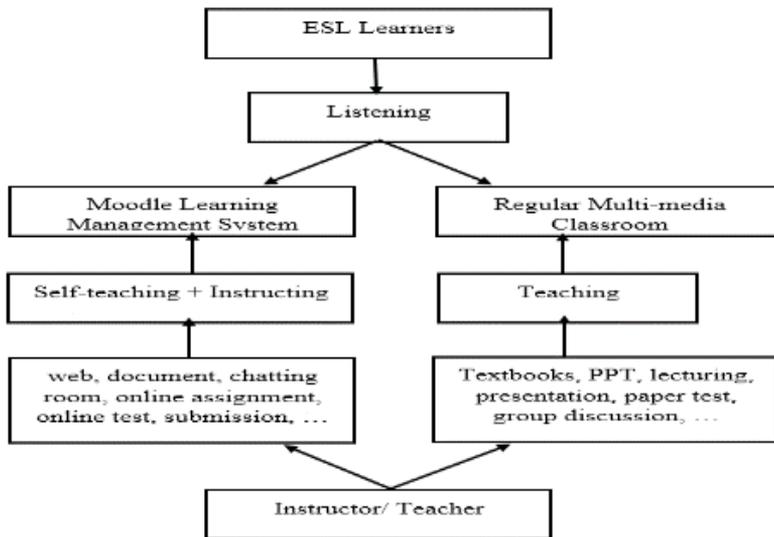
Several studies thus far have found that employing Moodle platform has a good effect on student's listening skill since it includes many features of language learning (Robb, 2004), especially its popular functions of building online quizzes, for example, Matching, True/False, Cloze, Embedded Questions and so on. Developed in 2002 by Martin Dougiamas, Moodle, serving for educational purposes, is employed by many linguistic teachers in the world (Sebae et al, 2019). In the same vein, Moodle is a program for creating an interactive online learning environment on web pages (Lesmana, Susanto and Mufti, 2013). Additionally, Jose

(2015, p.18) affirms, “Moodle in the colleges has enhanced the implementation of e-learning.” This view is supported by Xuan Lien and Hong Phuong (2020) who write that Moodle is one of the reliable learning platforms allowing teachers to easily monitor and evaluate students’ online learning progress. Similarly, Khabbaz and Najjar (2015) assert that Moodle makes online learning possible and facilitative. Additionally, Moodle is accessible since both teachers and learners are capable of creating, uploading and downloading all documents, videos or study materials. Furthermore, a number of studies have found that applying Moodle to language teaching is able to enhance student autonomy and engagement in acquiring English skills (Jing, 2016; Wu et al., 2012; Gluchmanova, 2017; Rymanova et al., 2015; Kapsarginal and Olentsova, 2020). Jing’s (2016) study found that the majority of students (82%) strongly agreed that Moodle increased their learning independence. In another major study, Nedeva and Dimova (2012) affirm that Moodle makes it possible for learners to control their own pace of learning, allowing them to work independently. Likewise, Kapsargina and Olentsova (2020) hold the view that when compared with traditional methods, Moodle creates more opportunities for students to engage in independent work by making them take initiative in their learning process (Cao and Le 2020). Similarly, Lopez-Perez et al. (2019) claim that using Moodle in teaching English is enable to increase the student engagement. This view is supported by Sebae, Rihawi, and Azmat (2019) who write that employing quizzes on Moodle is effective in managing and improving learner’s engagement.

### **Principle of Moodle**

According to Jose (2015, p. 19), the e-learning site, Moodle, is developed based on ‘the principles of adult learning theories such as Action Learning, Project Based Learning, Experiential Learning, Self-directed Learning and Transformational Learning.’ Specifically, Jingwei (2013) is more concerned with the teaching model of ESL blended learning on Moodle including listening skill.

**Figure 1** *Teaching Design of ESL Blended Learning on Moodle*



### **The Importance of Listening Skill**

Generally, listening skill does play a vital role for freshmen at all universities since it may cater for them the key knowledge regarding sound, pronunciation, vocabulary and so on. Thus, they cannot fulfill other crucial tasks in their study unless they obtain an inadequate listening skill. Nevertheless, there are still very few researches in terms of listening skill mainly because these researches are so complicated as well as time-consuming to conduct a sufficient research. Additionally, it is so necessary to conduct a paper regarding listening skill. Despite limited research in listening skill, the value of this skill is still taken into account in several paper. For instance, Flynn (2001) states that listening is considered as the single most important than other skill in the real situation. Specifically, Shannon (2004) also points out that listening skill is the dimensional behavioral skill for most of the university students. Thereby, this paper covered a lengthy literature review with a comprehensive conceptual framework. Also, there is a feasible methodology which combines with the outlining of results and findings. In the last part of the paper, there are the gathered

main ideas which are complementary to the suggestions in relation to the importance of researching listening skill.

### **The Necessity of Using Moodle in Teaching Listening Skill**

In the 4.0 technology era, the support of technical items is widely accessible which may lead to the better alternative resources for the teachers to apply in teaching listening skill for the learners. Nonetheless, in order to pick up the most compatible technological system is another challenge for the teachers. In that circumstance, Moodle is considered as a usable item that can back up for both teachers and the students to complete their listening skill outcomes. Indeed, there is a vast range of paper that value the inevitable role of Moodle, as Mehrabi and Abtahi (2012) state that Moodle is so valuable that the teacher may appease the difficulties of listening skill not only at class but also after class. This quiz-creating function serves for both self-evaluation and assessment purposes because “students know their scores in real-time, receiving immediate feedback on the correct response for each question” (Rymanova et al., 2013, p.237). Besides, when learners take listening tests on Moodle, it is easy for teachers to manage and monitor their time for completing each task and their attempts, and to get information about their test-taking strategies so that the teachers are able to support their students to study harder and overcome their weaknesses in acquiring the skill (Anatolievna and Nickolaevna, 2019; Cao and Le, 2020). In the same vein, Arzal and Tanipu (2014) indicate that teaching through Moodle contributes to the improvement of learner’s English listening competence since it offers abundant activities to develop their listening skills (Diaz, 2012). Besides, Moodle can contribute to the learning process of university students as well as help them to focus more on accuracy of all listening tasks (Kelly and Kelly, 2009). Actually, Moodle is a supportive aspect which creates an intriguing atmosphere for the learners to fulfill their listening tasks at class, apart from that they can revise all crucial points of the lesson at home as well as submit their homework effectively by Moodle. Furthermore, Marsh (2012)

also indicates the positive impact of Moodle as it can provide a provocative vibe for the fresh men to absorb all essential points at home whenever they are available. In this paper, the fresh men at Van Lang University are instructed how to utilize this online learning platform in blended classroom then they are able to apply it from home so as to brush up on the lesson every week and turn in homework through the listening course. Especially, through conducting provided survey, the learners find it significantly workable in improving their listening skill day by day. They also appreciate the reputation of Moodle at Van Lang University since they can widely applicable what they have learned in real situations which may subsidize for other primary skills. As a result, the teacher and the students get used to using Moodle in teaching as well as learning listening skill. Besides, other studies also figure out the positive influence of using Moodle in teaching listening skill as Ybarra and Green (2003) states that Moodle is the considerable support for listening skill simply because it contains all of perspectives to inspire the learners' self-study as well as more active in their learning progress. An interesting study of Walker, Livadas and Miles (2011) highlights the integral factors of Moodle in teaching listening skill. There is a variety of useful factors namely self-efficacy, technical support, instructional design and along with other minor factors. Moreover, these factors can contribute to the fully understanding regarding listening skill for learners. In addition, according to Carvalho, Da Silva and Freitag (2013), it is proved that learners can cope with the Moodle by using it effectively may develop not only their computer skill but also their listening skill; resulting overall improvement after the course. One provocative aspect is by applying Moodle in teaching as well as learning listening skill, the percentage of the students who pass the course surged considerably from 40% to 80% (Emerson and MacKay, 2011). The study results are in line with what Huahong (2013) has found from a later research on the effect of Moodle on the college students' listening improvement of English that nearly 90% of the participants believed that applying Moodle to teaching

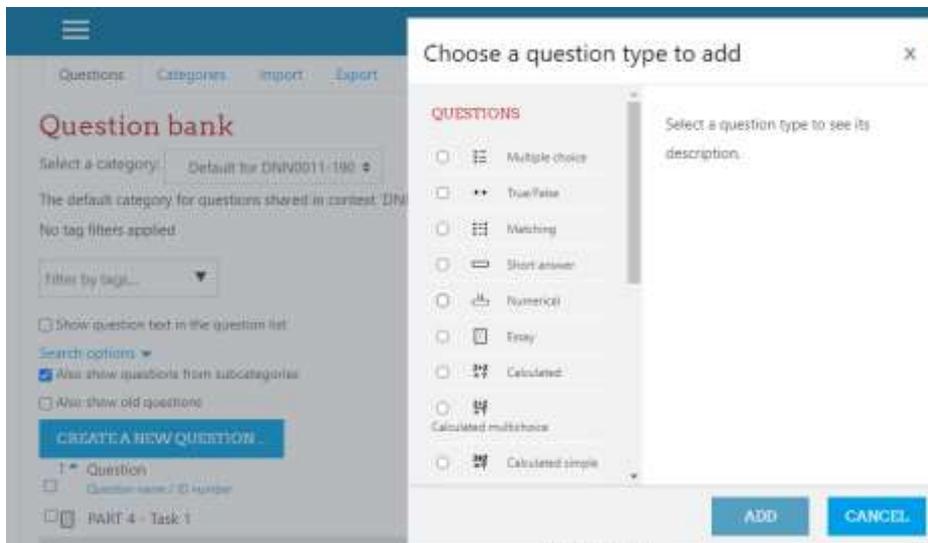
could enhance their listening skills. In another study, Seiver and Troja (2014) state that 70.8% of academic leaders stated that online learning is crucial to an institutions' long-term strategy compared to 48.8% of leaders' beliefs in online education's importance to an institution. All in all, by applying Moodle in teaching and learning listening skill may pave the way for the teachers and learners at universities, especially for fresh men at Van Lang University can obtain a comprehensive as well as accessible method to reach their learning target. Therefore, applying, teaching, learning, revising can be a sequence in boosting the overall listening skill in the long term.

### **Creating Quizzes on Moodle for Teaching Listening Skills**

The Listening 1 Module at Van Lang University is designed with the aims of developing and improving English-majored freshmen's listening skills at the English proficiency levels of from A2 to A2+ according to the CEFR. The curriculum applies the blended learning approach combining traditional method with online learning on Moodle platform to teaching listening as Elhawwa (2017, p.233) asserts, 'There will be easy for the lecturer if EFL curriculum and Moodle platform are integrated together.' The course including 2 credits lasts for 10 weeks with the integrated use of both multimedia classroom and Moodle learning management system. The materials, slides and quizzes that students are going to learn each week are uploaded on the lecturer's Moodle-based online classes in advance. Students are capable of downloading the materials and taking the quizzes after the face-to-face class time. To monitor and assess the students' learning progress in class and at home, 8 Moodle quizzes for each unit are designed based on the English listening main course book and other materials suggested by the Foreign Languages Department every week. Each quiz contains about 5 questions with different types of exercises, namely, dictation, numbering the pictures, choosing correct answers. As for Midterm test and Final test, the students are required to take the tests on Moodle platform at Week 6 and Week 11. The tests consist of 5 parts with 9 tasks including 45 test items

of different question types, namely, True/False, Multiple choice, Filling the blanks, Numbering the pictures, Giving short answers. The test items are usually extracted and modified from the KET listening materials and other suitable materials that meet the A2 and A2+ levels.

**Figure 2** Example of different question types in Moodle-based listening quizzes



**Figure 3** Example of a Listening 1 course on Moodle at Van Lang University



## Research Questions

The aim of this study is to attempt to shine new light on investigating into the English-majored freshmen's attitudes towards implementing the Moodle-based online learning platform to develop their English listening skills at Van Lang University in Vietnam. This study aims to address the following questions:

- 1. What are the students' perceptions on employing Moodle platform in developing their English listening skills?*
- 2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of using Moodle platform for acquiring the students' English competences?*

## METHODOLOGY

### Setting and Participants

In order to collect data for the study by conducting an online survey, the researchers invited 90 English -majored first-year students at Van Lang University who had finished the 10-week course of Listening 1. However, only 80 of them including 25 male students and 55 female students from three classes responded to the online survey on the basis of volunteering. They were encouraged to take part in the online survey so that they had an opportunity to express their opinions towards the use of Moodle platform for acquiring listening skill (See Appendix 2). Additionally, through the survey, the responders were capable of making suggestions on how to improve the quality of teaching and learning this subject. The participants were aged from 18 to 20. Their computer skills were quite good. They were able to use some productivity software like Word, PowerPoint and so on as well as connect to the Internet for web browsing, entertaining, connecting to the online learning platform without any hindrances.

The researchers verbally asked the participants to complete the questionnaire and sent its official link via their student's emails.

The participants were clearly informed about confidentiality of the collected data. They were allowed to be anonymous when submitting their answers. Collected data from the online questionnaires was confidential, and this was solely used by the researcher.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

This study employed the quantitative approach to collect quantitative data from the participants. The study adopted a survey design of quantitative research since it provides descriptions on individual's perceptions and attitudes (Creswell, 2018). Additionally, it helps the researcher to find out the relationships between variables, namely, the relationships between Moodle and the ESL learners' listening competences. For quantitative data collection, this study mainly relied on the online questionnaires delivering to the English-majored first year students who took part in the Listening 1 Module in the previous semester. Both Wright (2015) and Nayak and Narayan (2015) assert that conducting online survey makes it possible for researchers to collect research data in a short period of time at a low cost and to facilitate the process of storing online data after the respondents complete the form.

In most recent studies, the learners' perceptions of using Moodle for developing English listening skills were measured by using the survey approach (Perez et al., 2018, Cao and Le, 2020; Huahong, 2015). One of the major strengths of conducting an online survey is that it makes the researcher possible to design a closed-ended questionnaire with Likert questions (Evans and Mathur, 2005). Another advantage is that it offers an effective way to avoid the problems of receiving unanswered items because the respondents are required to complete a question before moving to another one. The closed-ended questionnaire was adapted from Cordova and Dechsubha's (2018) study on the students' opinions on ESP Listening lessons on Moodle. The questionnaire consisting of 10

items was divided into three categories with the aim of collecting data regarding the learners' attitudes towards the implement of Moodle listening quizzes (Item 1-4), the effects of applying this online learning platform to the Listening 1 module (Item 5-7), and the technical support provided by the university (Item 8-10). The items from the aforementioned questionnaire were built on the 5 Likert scales (1: strongly disagree, 2: disagree, 3: neutral, 4: agree and 5: strongly agree). The benefit of using Likert-scales is that it is useful for research with large sample sizes because it enhances the validity of findings (Hartley, 2013). The questionnaire was designed and translated into the Vietnamese language in order to avoid the misunderstanding for the responders.

This study selectively adopted the Likert questions from the previous study conducted by Cordova and Dechsubha (2018), but they were adapted for the context of implementing the research in teaching and learning English listening for English-majored students at a university in Vietnam. (See Appendix 1 for the questionnaire)

### ***Data collection procedures***

The analysis for collected data followed the below stages:

Stage 1: The collected data from the online survey, which was calculated and quantitative analyzed, will be presented in Table 1.

Stage 2: The researchers examined the effects of using Moodle platform on developing the English-majored freshmen's listening competences.

Stage 3: The analysis of the collected data was examined, compared and related to the literature review.

## FINDINGS

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of the Learners' Attitudes towards Implement Moodle in Teaching and Learning Listening Skill

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
1. The lessons' learning objectives in Moodle were clear.	80	1	5	4.75	4.24
2. I can access and submit my quizzes in Moodle without any glitches.	80	1	5	4.5	4.0
3. The listening topics and activities in Moodle are interesting to me.	80	1	5	4.25	3.74
4. I can understand the listening activities in Moodle.	80	1	5	4.5	4.0
5. The Listening 1 lessons in Moodle has helped me to stay focused on my listening competence.	80	1	5	4.5	4.03
6. My listening ability in English improved after completing the Listening 1 course in Moodle.	80	1	5	4.25	3.74
7. The lessons and quizzes on Listening 1 in Moodle allowed me to be independent in my learning.	80	1	5	4.25	3.74
8. Online learning technical support is effective	80	1	5	2.125	1.66

9. The school has built an online learning platform on Moodle to facilitate the student's online learning.	80	1	5	2.25	1.80
10. The school has detailed instructions on how to use Moodle for learning.	80	1	5	2.875	2.5
Valid N (list wise)	80				

As Table 1 indicates, there is a significant outcome from the learners' attitudes towards using Moodle in learning listening skill. The overall response to the questionnaire was very positive. What can be withdrawn from the collected questionnaires states that the majority of the research participants held positive attitudes towards the use of Moodle online learning platform to acquiring English listening skills. What is interesting in this table is the high rate of students' interests of employing Moodle to the course of Listening 1 module, with over a half of the responders (60 students) who totally agreed that the lesson objectives were transparent on the platform. Furthermore, all of the respondents agreed that the listening activities and topics designed on Moodle aroused their interests in learning listening. Furthermore, all of the respondents who responded to Item 3 agreed that the listening activities and topics designed on Moodle aroused their interests in learning listening. In terms of the effectiveness of implementing this online learning platform, about 80% of the participants indicated that Moodle-based Listening 1 lessons assisted them to have more concentration on building the listening skills while the minority of them (12.5%) held neither positive nor negative attitudes towards it. Interestingly, of 80 respondents who completed the questionnaire, three-fourths of them (75%) totally agreed that by using Moodle, their listening competences improved at the end of the course. Meanwhile, a quarter of them also leaned

towards deploying of this online tool to acquire their skills. None of those who responded to the questionnaire reported that Moodle did not have any good effects on their listening competences. Furthermore, when the learners were asked whether it was possible for them to be independent in their learning progress by using Moodle, the overall response for this item was very positive with 75% (60 students) and 25% (20 students) of the participants expressing the belief that Moodle-based listening lessons and quizzes increased their autonomy in acquiring the skill.

The most striking result to emerge from the data is that regarding to the school's technical support, most of those surveyed indicated that the assistance provided for students by the IT department was not sufficient. The overall response to these items (Items 8-10) was relatively poor. As is shown by Table 1, data collected from these items can be compared with the data from the items related to the effectiveness of using Moodle on the research participants' English listening abilities which shows the significantly lower scores. From the data that had been collected from 80 individuals, the majority of them commented that the school failed to technically provide them with enough support in their learning progress. Specifically, of the 80 students, 50 of whom dissatisfied with the ways the IT department assisted them to learn online.

Additionally, there are several improvements in their learning process which can be witnessed through the Mean ranges from 2.125 to 4.75. The Mean also displays the listening performance based on Moodle are enhanced after utilizing this technical system. With the answer scale between 1 and 5, the students may find it such an intriguing experience during Moodle period in learning listening skill that can be proved by the specific figures namely 4.25, 4.5 and 4.75. Apart from that the numbers which are displayed as 2.125, 2.25 and 2.875 focus on the quality with the technical facilities from time to time as these issues may need much time to address. Hence, these inevitable matters can make the fresh men at Van Lang university tire out whenever they are struggling

in their concrete assignment or quiz. As a whole, these figures represented in Table 1 in order to illustrate the positive impacts of Moodle in their learning outcome, especially in listening comprehension despite several insufficient issues take place. Indeed, Moodle does play an extremely integral in upgrading as well as inspiring the learners' listening attitudes together with improvements. Thus, the teacher can make the most of Moodle in researching as well as giving assistance to the learners so that they not only apply widely a significantly essential system in teaching methodology but also support dramatically for the students' learning process. As a whole, these results indicate it is apparent that although the respondents had intensive preferences for implementing Moodle quizzes functions, they did not highly evaluate the school's technical services in facilitating their listening learning activities on the learning platform.

## **DISCUSSION**

In relation to the questions as well as the response of the participants in the Table 1, the average figures take place considerably in range 2 to 4. This would mean that in general most of the learners value the supportive assistance from the Moodle which they can boost their listening skill step by step. In terms of the lesson, a quite range of students may find it ambiguous whenever they come to Moodle; however, through the intense instruction of the teacher, these students can get used to using Moodle for downloading the informative lesson. Additionally, one of the most essential aspects regarding Moodle is the quizzes as well as the listening activities, according to the questionnaire, the fresh men at Van Lang university are so keen on doing quizzes every lesson or taking the test using Moodle as it is not only convenient but also usable for them to revise or do self-assessment after each specific topic. Simultaneously, there is a diverse mixture of technical issues that may trigger the anguish to their learning process since it is extremely time-consuming and annoying for the students to face with these technical challenges, resulting they may

find it demotivating and tedious to stick to these matters. Moreover, these sophisticated problems also need instant maintenance; nonetheless, there are not any responsible IT experts sooner or later. Despite those arduous technological process, the fresh men at Van Lang university still appreciate the positive features from Moodle when they apply widely in learning listening skill. Intriguingly, the majority of learners offer that their relevant new words, listening activities or listening competence can be enhanced little by little throughout the course which can be witnessed in the numbers of responding participants in the questionnaire. Thereby, the questions in the questionnaire may pave the way for figure out the weaknesses combined with the strengths of the Moodle system when coming to learning listening skill.

The present findings seem to be consistent with other research that the application of Moodle to teaching English listening provides good opportunities for ESL learners to develop and improve their listening competences since they benefit from the useful activities, especially the quiz-creating functions designed on Moodle. Moreover, the findings further support the idea that learning on Moodle allows the learners to take initiative in building their listening skills because they are able to manage their learning attempts, scores, and recorded online time. The results are in line with other studies which found that learning through Moodle raises the learners' autonomy in building the skill. Besides, this study confirms that the majority of the language learners believe their listening competences improved when using the platform and they are interested in its application to teaching and learning. These results also agree with the findings of other studies, in which in spite of the individuals' strong preferences of employing Moodle to develop the listening skills, they are concerned and even dissatisfied with the technical support provided by the IT management department at colleges and universities. Most of the respondents express the belief that the institutions lack instructions on deploying the platform to acquire their listening

skills (Arzal and Tanipu, 2014; Cordova and Dechsubha, 2018; Elhawwa, (2017; Huahong, 2013; Jose, 2015; Nayak and Narayan, 2015; Cao and Le, 2015; Ybarra and Green, 2013).

## **IMPLICATIONS**

As the relevant figures mentioned in the Table 1, there is a vast range of suggestion for future implications regarding listening method research. These statistics may pave the way for the research in the pros and cons for applying Moodle not only in listening 1 but also for listening 2,3 and 4 at Van Lang university. This paper is an underlying step for a sequence research questions or research methodology sooner or later. Furthermore, the findings in this paper can bridge the coming applied research method for all skills which are so essential for all learners that may somehow boost their learning overall outcomes. Also, the later researchers can base on the descriptive numbers in order to get the inspirations in other skills such as Writing, Speaking or Reading. As a result, the students at Van Lang university can enhance generally their interpreted skills. Apart from that, the teachers can make full use of these findings so as to rank all teaching methods to maintain the compatible ones or discard the unsuitable ones. As a whole, these results can contribute accessibly to not only for the learners' learning outcomes but also for the teachers' research method in the relevant fields.

## **CONCLUSION**

All things considered, this study focuses on the attitudes of the freshmen at Van Lang university by applying Moodle in teaching as well as learning listening skill. Through the results displaying in the tables, Moodle is extremely beneficial to the students in improving their performance as well as their positive attitudes are demonstrated clearly in descriptive numbers. It is unambiguous that these informative and concrete numbers pave the way for exploring the learners' reaction towards Moodle.

Nonetheless, apart from the merits of using Moodle in teaching and learning listening skill, there are a diverse mixture of shortcomings which cannot be ignored. One of the most inevitable negative features from Moodle is inadequate supportive assistance from IT experts whenever the system comes into trouble. Another unfavorable aspect from Moodle is the inconsistent quality of the system, especially, the Moodle may mix up all the students during the quiz time or lesson delivery period. Moreover, this process may be time-consuming for learning and teaching. More seriously, several students who find it extremely complicated to get used to using Moodle in catch up with the lessons, fulfill all the tasks or get through to the quizzes on time; resulting these students may feel demotivated or fed up with their learning progress. In that case, the It experts as well as the teachers need to hand in hand to address these repetitive issues immediately that can reverse the situations as well as transfer these insufficient learners into more proficient ones. Thereby, using Moodle in teaching and learning listening skill is the feasible method for both teachers and learners; however, the inevitable matters should be speculated beforehand which can lessen the unexpected circumstances took place during the whole learning period. If the teachers can be fully comprehensive in the Moodle system and be able to get through to it, then the learners may keep pace with the Moodle system in learning listening skill.

Simultaneously, the descriptive statistics pay more attention to find out the opinion of the learners in order to located exactly what they are exhilarated and what they detest in relation to this method in learning listening at Van Lang university. Hopefully, in the foreseeable future, the more effective methods applying in teaching English skills, the higher positive attitudes the learners can express which is more usable as well as sustainable for the researching prospects.

## AUTHOR

Phuong Thanh Tran is an English lecturer at Van Lang University. She holds a M.A in TESOL from Edith Cowan University. She has taught English for 5 years. Her areas of interests are blended learning in Listening and Reading.

Quynh Phuong Nhat Ngo is an English lecturer at Van Lang University. She holds a M.A in TESOL and Linguistics from Benedictine University. She has taught English for 7 years. Her areas of interests are blended learning in Listening and Reading

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## Appendix

### Survey Questionnaire

This questionnaire is about the English-majored freshmen's attitudes towards implementing Moodle to develop English listening skills at Van Lang University.

We are conducting the research on examining the English-majored freshmen's attitudes towards implementing Moodle to develop English listening skills at Van Lang University. Thank you for your participation in completing this online survey questionnaire. You are allowed to be anonymous, and your collected data will be confidential.

Please respond to 10 items in the questionnaire. To submit the survey, click "Submit" at the end of the page.

#### ***Section 1: General Information***

Email address:

Gender:

Male

Female

Your age:

18

19

20

21

22

Other: (please write your answer) \_\_\_\_

Your computer skills:

Fundamental (only typing, mouse)

Basic computing and applications

Intermediate computing and applications

Advanced computing, programing and applications

#### ***Section 2:***

This section includes 10 items related to your opinions about using Moodle for learning English listening skills. CHOOSE one option only.

(1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neutral 4: Agree 5: Strongly agree)

ITEMS	1	2	3	4	5
1. The lessons' learning objectives in Moodle were clear.					
2. I can access and submit my quizzes in Moodle without any glitches.					
3. The listening topics and activities in Moodle are interesting to me.					
4. I can understand the listening activities in Moodle.					
5. The Listening 1 lessons in Moodle has helped me to stay focused on my listening competence.					
6. My listening ability in English improved after completing the Listening 1 course in Moodle.					
7. The lessons and quizzes on Listening 1 in Moodle allowed me to be independent in my learning.					
8. Online learning technical support is effective					
9. The school has built an online learning platform on Moodle to facilitate the student's online learning.					
10. The school has detailed instructions on how to use Moodle for learning.					

**Thank you for completing this questionnaire!**

# 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SKILLS

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# Promoting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning Skills Through Project-based Learning in an E-learning Environment: A Case Study

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**Lam Thi Nguyen**

People's Security University, Vietnam  
*lamnguyenforest@gmail.com*

**Linh Thi Ngoc Ly**

Hoang Hoa Tham high school, Vietnam

**Ngoc Huu Nguyen**

Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam

## Abstract

Because of the constant innovation of new instructional approaches to language teaching, students have no longer been known as passive knowledge receivers but now take active roles in their self-directed learning. Accordingly, project-based learning (PBL) has been widely applied to education with a view to promoting student-centered learning to the fullest extent. Ton Duc Thang university (TDTU) is not the first educational institution that pioneered the application of PBL for students at the tertiary level. However, under the adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, TDTU promptly switched over to the implementation of projects with the use of online learning platforms. This paper aims to explore how PBL has been conducted in an E-learning environment as well as to indicate students' perception towards its effects on the development of students' 21st century learning skills. The case study employed a series of periodic observations, students' in-depth interview and questionnaire with the participation of 69 first-year non-English major students and two English teachers in two separate classes respectively. It was revealed that there were four main phases of PBL conducted online during the English courses, namely Preparation, Realization, Presentation and

Evaluation. In these four stages, there were a variety of activities carried out by the participants to facilitate students' execution of PBL. Moreover, after finishing the group projects, the students showed their positive perceptions towards their significant development of certain 21st century learning skills including creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. The findings of this study contribute to further research on PBL as a kind of technology-mediated learning.

**Key words:** *Project-based learning (PBL), e-learning, 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, Ton Duc Thang university (TDTU)*

## INTRODUCTION

Innovation in pedagogical approaches has always been put on top priority in education so as to boost the effectiveness of teaching and learning to the fullest extent. As a result of various innovative educational techniques, there have been certain changes in the roles of teachers and students. Accordingly, students have become independent and self-directed learners (Krueger, 2014) while their teachers have taken a back seat in the process of the students' learning and discovery. The shift from traditional passive patterns of learning to student-led approaches has indicated positive outcomes such as "students' increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught" (Collins & O'Brien, 2003, p. 338).

Project-based learning (PBL), a popular student-centered pedagogy, has long been used to promote students' self-directed learning through the execution of group projects. According to Alan and Stoller (2002), in PBL, "students are actively engaged in information gathering, processing and reporting over a period of time" (p. 10). PBL, therefore, activates students' latent potential for learning and results in "increased content knowledge and language mastery" (p. 10). Due to numerous favorable benefits of PBL, this

approach has gained its increasing popularity in many educational settings. Especially at the level of tertiary education, PBL is always of much higher frequency to prepare students for their independence, autonomy and accountability in the near future. In particular, at Ton Duc Thang university (TDTU), PBL has been widely applied in English classes since the academic year 2018 - 2019 with the aim of promoting university students' 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills besides their language competence.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, however, distance teaching was considered as the last resort for the continuum of learning and teaching. Like other educational institutions, TDTU also swiftly switched to online teaching for the sake of teachers' and students' health safety. Consequently, every teaching and learning activity carried out by teachers and students was done online, including the implementation of PBL. To investigate how PBL was executed online as well as explore students' perceived improvement in certain learning skills in the 21<sup>st</sup> century through the aid of PBL, this study entitled "*Promoting 21st Century Learning Skills Through Project-based Learning in an E-learning Environment: A Case Study at Ton Duc Thang University*" was conducted.

With the objectives stated above, the study aimed to answer the two following research questions:

1. *How is PBL implemented in an E-learning environment at TDTU?*
2. *What are students' perceptions of PBL in their development of 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills?*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of Project-based Learning (PBL)**

PBL is a contemporarily innovative teaching method in which students can actively explore real-world problems and challenges

through their personal meaning projects, simultaneously develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills while working in small collaborative groups (Goodman and Stivers, 2010). PBL, an innovative and potential pedagogical approach, is defined in multiple ways and has developed through time. According to Thomas (2000), through PBL, students can learn from complex tasks based on challenging issues, or have the opportunity to investigate problems and improve students' capacity to work individually and collaboratively and finally wind up in real-life presentation. Markham, Larmer, and Ravitz (2003, p. 4) describe project-based learning as "a systematic teaching method that engages students in learning knowledge and skills through an *extended inquiry process* structured around complex, *authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks*". Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2005, pp. 317-318) has indicated that PBL is a "*form of situated learning*" and it is based on the "constructivist understanding". It also allows students to learn by doing *real-world activities* in which they can gain a deeper understanding of material when they actively construct their understanding by working with and using ideas. These authors put much emphasis on learning activities such as questions, projects or tasks in which students can be motivated to develop their skills. Specifically, according to Thomas (2000), PBL is a model that organizes learning around projects focusing on challenging questions and problems to end up in realistic products and presentations. Meanwhile, Markham et al. (2003) accentuate an extended inquiry process based on authentic questions and carefully designed projects and tasks. Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2005) argue that real-world activities can increase students' engagement and help them develop their deeper understanding of important ideas by working and using these ideas.

Unlike the definitions of these authors, Fleming (2000) directly concentrates on the role of students in the PBL method. He indicates that the *role of the students* shifts from recipient of information to maker of meaning. Real-world contexts and problems help students duplicate the approaches, methods,

materials, roles, and language used by professionals. In this case, the students can actively participate in learning activities. During the progression of PBL, students apply knowledge instead of solely consuming it and begin to make meaning of the information that is investigated. Through PBL, students are active learners who plan, organize, develop, and carry out activities such as presentations, discussions, interviews, guest speaker events, and field trips (Fleming, 2000).

### **Features of PBL**

PBL is a dynamic approach which is increasingly applied in the classroom to get the students involved in real-world activities to extend their knowledge and skills that are useful for them in their future study or career. However, PBL varies from classroom to classroom and its features are also demonstrated differently depending on contexts, goals, activities and so on. 21<sup>st</sup> century learning requires students' creativity, critical thinking, communication skills and also collaboration skills for the students to be involved in the learning process, which helps them not only explore knowledge but also advance the necessary skills. Therefore, Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2005) recommend five key features of PBL as driving questions, situated inquiry, collaboration, learning technologies, and artifacts.

- **Driving questions**

PBL projects are focused on questions or problems that "drive" students to encounter the central concepts and principles of a discipline (Thomas, 2000, p. 3). Driving questions are the questions posed to students with a view to getting them to explore the problems in the learning process. It sets the context for the PBL and is considered as an anchor to link the real-world situations to the content standards. Driving questions should be clear, open-ended, challenging and linked to the core of what teachers want students to learn. To make students understand and engage in the projects, the teacher should make sure that the driving questions are

focused on solving a problem, concrete and conceptual, abstract and debatable.

- **Situated inquiry**

Situated inquiry is processes of problem solving that are central to expert performance in the discipline. According to Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2005), the most effective learning occurs when the learning is situated in an authentic, real-world context. When students explore the driving questions by participating in a constructive investigation in situated inquiry, they can learn and apply important ideas in the discipline.

- **Collaborations**

In the PBL approach, students have plenty of opportunities to collaborate with each other, or with the teachers and even with the members of society on the projects to find the solutions to the driving questions. This kind of collaboration can result in back-and-forth sharing, using and debating ideas with others, which help them fully understand the lesson and improve other skills.

- **Using technology to support learning**

With the help of technology, students can participate in activities that are normally beyond their ability. Technological tools can help transform the classroom into an environment in which learners actively construct knowledge. Integrating technology into the learning process helps overcome limitations of a traditional classroom, motivate students to actively solve the problems and continually refine their understanding and gradually form a deeper and richer knowledge.

- **Creation of artifacts**

In PBL, through designing and constructing artifacts such as an object, a website, a poster, a multimedia presentation, a documentary and so on, the students can demonstrate their

knowledge of a specific field. A set of real products – artifacts - results from the learning process in which the students learn more effectively when they create and develop such artifacts.

### **Steps to conduct PBL**

Maurer and Neuhold (2012, pp. 18-19) suggest seven steps of PBL as follows:

- (1) *Clarification of terms and concepts* - guiding students mentally into the topic by discussing unknown words or concepts, which is ensured that all students understand the text and that the group shares ideas about illustrations
- (2) *Formulation of a problem statement* - framing the whole assignment, providing a title for the session, and making the group agree on what the general impetus of the assignment is about
- (3) *Brainstorm* - collecting students' potential interests, activating prior knowledge, and sharing certain expectations.
- (4) *Classification and Structuring of brainstorm* - categorizing keywords that fit together and in this way they find common patterns that in the next step will allow for the formulation of specific questions
- (5) *Formulation of learning objectives* – formulating learning objectives in the ideal case reflects the different approaches to the wider topic that students have agreed to research upon
- (6) *Self-study* - emphasizing the self-responsibility of the learner for knowledge acquisition
- (7) *Post- discussion* - reporting back, exchanging their answers, discussing problems and try to come to common conclusions of how to answer the learning objectives

However, different authors have different ways to implement PBL into the specific learning contexts. Svobodová et al. (2010) divides

the project work into four phases, namely preparation, realization, presentation and evaluation. Additionally, Kalabzová (2015) describes the four phases of PBL and summarizes the activities of each phase as follows:

**Table 1** The main four phases of PBL (Kalabzová, 2015, pp. 20-26)

<b>PREPARATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ set the goal</li> <li>○ establish the learning objectives</li> <li>○ select the finished product</li> <li>○ create a general structure, timeline, form teams</li> <li>○ produce the final written framework</li> </ul>
<b>REALIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ gather information and collect data</li> <li>○ process information</li> </ul>
<b>PRESENTATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ present the final outcome</li> </ul>
<b>EVALUATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ self-assessment</li> <li>○ peer assessment</li> <li>○ teacher assessment</li> <li>○ outside expert/ audience assessment</li> </ul>

### **The 21st century learning skills**

According to the Partnership for 21st century skills (2009, p. 4), the 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills are one small branch which includes 4C's in the following figure.

**Figure 1** 4C's of 21st century learning skills



Firstly, **Communication skills** are capabilities to express ideas interactively both in spoken and written form. Moreover, communication skills are shown through the ability to make inferences from values, attitudes and purposes of different sources. What is more, technology and media literacy contribute to the effectiveness of communication. Secondly, **Collaboration skills** comprise the responsibility and flexibility in negotiation among group members to achieve work efficiency. Thirdly, **Critical thinking** refers to the ability to evaluate, analyze and synthesize the data or information. It is also considered as the way to think logically and organize the ideas appropriately to make rational inference from a large number of sources of information. Last but not least, **Creativity** features innovation in solving the problems, interpreting a wide range of information and data and expressing ideas in different and unique ways.

## **E-LEARNING**

### ***Definition***

E-learning, commonly known as online learning, virtual learning learning, or web-based learning, is a process of learning through networked information with the support of electronic means. (Saul

Carliner, 2004, p. 1). According to Keegan (2005), this kind of learning takes place on the Internet instead of in a traditional face-to-face classroom. This process is done through the direct or indirect communication between instructors and students or between students and students by using multimedia technology.

### ***Types of E-learning***

Zeitoum (2018) classifies E-learning into two different types which are synchronous and asynchronous. In the first type, teachers and students interact directly during online meetings via the Internet. In other words, teachers can give feedback on the spot to the students and students can have live discussions during the meetings. The latter, asynchronous E-learning, is considered more convenient because the students can access it anywhere or anytime.

### ***Integration of PBL in E-learning environment***

Integrating PBL into E-learning is not a new concept because there are a wide range of studies conducted in this area. However, this learning approach has been contemporarily proved effective and necessary in terms of learning expenses, enhanced learning outcomes and learning experiences (Heo et al., 2010; Sendag & Odabasi, 2009). Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, using E-learning to maintain a continuous learning process becomes more urgent than ever before. PBL is flexibly applied through online platforms to keep up students' resilience (Rahayu & Fauzi, 2020).

PBL enables students to acquire new knowledge and build up their skills by finding the solutions for real-world problems, which are conducted on the basis of modern technology such as network, computer and internet access. PBL also stimulates students to interact and collaborate with other group members to investigate the problems and propose the resolution. By means of E-learning, students can not only develop their aptitude but also achieve the

learning outcomes. Therefore, according to Soparat & Kaysom (2015), integrating PBL in E-learning environment should be applied to support students to not only achieve learning objectives but also create new knowledge by themselves.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research participants**

Upon the consent of the head of the English department at TDTU, the researchers randomly picked two classes of students from a list of more than 20 classes running at the time. With the help of the department, the researchers sent emails asking for the participation of the two teachers and their classes and successfully reached their agreement. Accordingly, there were two English teachers and 69 students taking part in the study, all coming from Ton Duc Thang university. The two selected teachers have had at least three years teaching English at the tertiary level. Meanwhile, the student participants were mostly in their first and second years. Although the students were placed in the same class, there was a range of students' majors, including Business administration, Urban planning, Architecture and Electronics.

### **Research design**

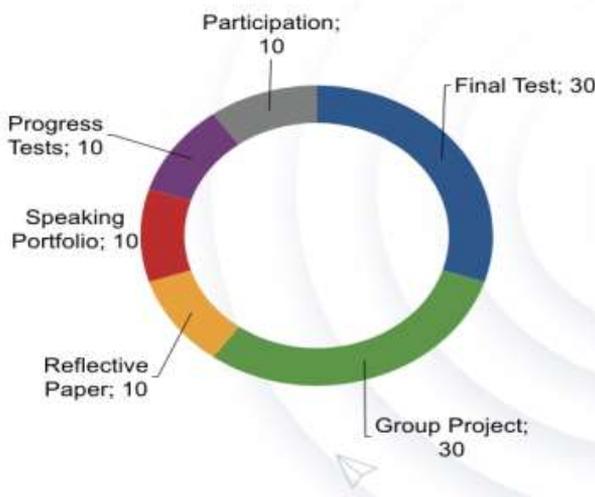
The study was developed as a case study with mixed methods in which both qualitative and quantitative data was collected and analyzed. As posited by Creswell (2007), a case study is “an in-depth exploration of a bounded system based on extensive data collection” (p. 476). This design, therefore, can help researchers gain “better understanding, perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases” (Stake, 2005, p. 446). For the purpose of having a full grasp of PBL implementation in an E-learning environment as well as its effects on students' 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills, a case study with extensive data collection methods was employed.

## PBL at TDTU

### *The integration of PBL in the university curriculum*

PBL is a part of the university curriculum for every English course. As can be seen in Figure 2, group projects account for 30% of the total score in an English course at TDTU. The students are supposed to work in groups of four to do the projects together. Accordingly, the project scores are shared equally among members in the same group.

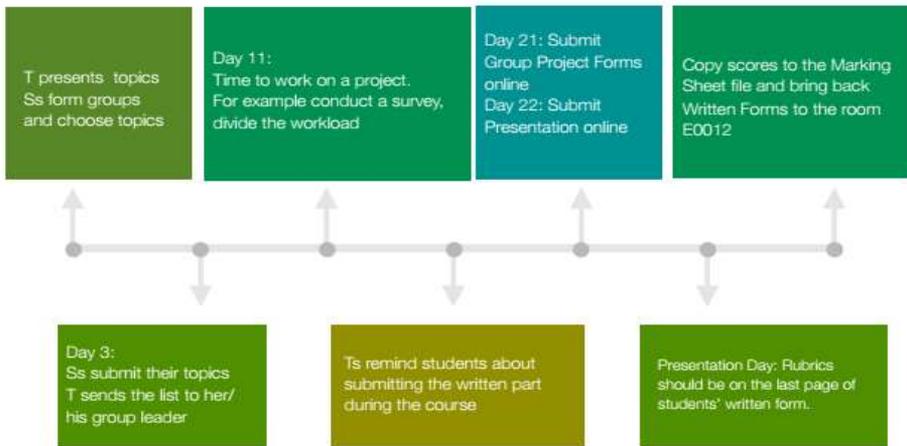
**Figure 2** *The scoring assessment for English courses at TDTU*



### *Project procedures*

At TDTU, the entire English course consists of 25 days with a total number of 75 periods. According to the proposed timeline for PBL, students have to work extensively on the projects throughout the course. The projects are done in groups of four, mostly outside the classroom; however, there are some specific days in the course syllabus allocated for the project execution. The teachers and students are supposed to do certain activities on these days to prepare for the projects. The procedures of PBL in practice are briefly outlined as follows:

**Figure 3** *Group project procedure*



### ***Final project products***

There are two final products in group projects which are written reports and oral group presentations. First, regarding the group project forms (Appendix B), students are supposed to write down a summary of the project findings as well as the sources they use to achieve the project outcomes. The name of group members with specific task division is also stipulated. Second, concerning oral presentations, students are required to design visual slides with animation and take turns to present their project products in groups.

### ***Assessment of group project products***

The assessment of students' final project products is conducted by the teachers based on a specified marking scheme (see Appendix C). As previously mentioned, the total score for group projects is 30 points, covering six main criteria which are presenting skills, language skills, organization, content and critical thinking, visual aids and written parts, and overall impression. The score for each criterion ranges from 1 to 5. Despite group projects, the scores of each member in one group may vary depending on the quality of their performance.

## **Instruments**

To achieve the research aims as well as decently answer the research questions, three main tools were employed, namely observations, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. While observations and interview were used to collect qualitative data, the questionnaire was delivered to gather quantitative data. The combination of data using mixed methods could help the researchers have objective insights into the current research issue.

### ***Observations***

A series of periodic observations were conducted online via the Zoom app with the aim of exploring how PBL was executed online among groups of students. Three observations were carried out in each class on three specific days allocated for PBL, which means there were six observations in total. In each observation, the students' and teachers' activities were carefully recorded using field notes. The data collected was then descriptively presented to figure out the general picture of PBL in an E-learning environment.

Below are the specific dates for observations in the two chosen classes.

**Table 2.** The schedules for classroom observations via Zoom

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<b>Observation Days</b>	<b>Class Foundation 2 - 15</b>	<b>Class Foundation 3 - 34</b>
<b><i>Day 1</i></b>	Thursday, February 4, 2021	Wednesday, February 3, 2021
<b><i>Day 11</i></b>	Saturday, February 29, 2021	Friday, February 28, 2021
<b><i>Day 24</i></b>	Thursday, March 25, 2021	Monday, March 24, 2021

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To access the online meetings of the classes, the researcher contacted the teachers in charge of the classes to ask for codes and

ID numbers. He was then available online some minutes early before the classes started in order to avoid the attention of the students. To make sure that the students could behave naturally and comfortably, the researcher's microphone was muted and audio was turned off.

### ***Questionnaires***

After the completion of PBL implementation, the questionnaire was distributed to all of the student participants via Google forms to discover their perceptions of the effects of PBL on certain 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills such as creativity, collaboration, critical thinking and communication. The questionnaire was in the form of Likert scale ranging from 1 to 5. The mean scores were then calculated using SPSS version 20 to demonstrate the trends of the students' responses.

### ***Interviews***

So as to gain more insight into the students' perceptions of their improvement in 21<sup>st</sup> century learning skills thanks to the execution of online projects, semi-structured interviews were administered with the participation of ten students from two classes on a voluntary basis. For the sake of convenience, the interviews were conducted online using the Zoom app with individual students. To reach the participant interviewees, the researcher sought support from the teachers in charge and then sent emails to them to reach agreement on the date and time for the interview meeting. All of the participants were informed that their participation in the study was kept confidential and anonymous. All the data collected from the interviews was then used for analysis by coding and thematic grouping.

## **FINDINGS**

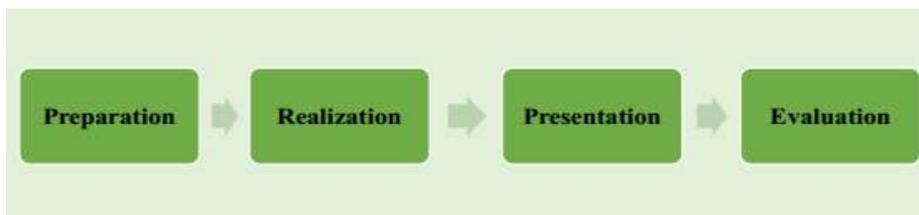
The results were displayed precisely through presenting and analyzing the observations, the questionnaire and the interview.

Firstly, collected information from the observations was descriptively displayed in order to indicate how PBL was applied to the practical context. Secondly, the items in the questionnaire were statistically analyzed in terms of the central tendency measures (means and modes), and variability measures (standard deviations). Specifically, Mean refers to the average to measure the central tendency of the data from respondents and Mode is considered as the most common number in a data set whereas Standard Deviation (abbreviated to S.D) is known as the average deviation that measures the dispersion of data related to its mean. As Mackey and Gass (2005) indicated that the smaller standard deviation indicates, the more homogeneous in terms of a particular behavior the group is and vice versa. Besides, min and max of each item were mentioned to consider differences in students' responses. Finally, insightful responses from the interview queries were qualitatively grouped and analyzed to answer the research questions.

### **Results from the observations**

Through a series of observations carried out online in the two selected classes, the researcher could generalize the picture of PBL application in an online English course. Accordingly, there were four main phases of PBL as follows:

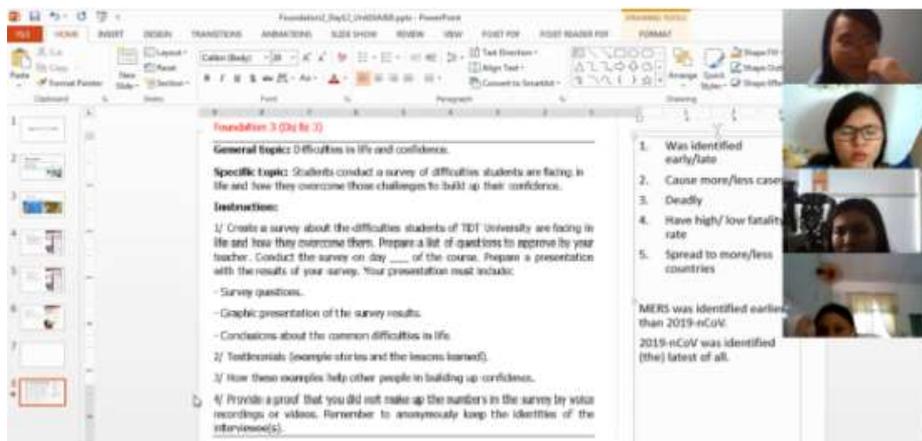
**Figure 4** *Phases of PBL in an online English course at TDTU*



In each phase of PBL, it was observed that the teachers and students had different activities to prepare for the ultimate project products. These activities are briefly described below.

## Preparation

During this phase, the teachers acted as facilitators and instructors guiding the students through the steps to conduct the projects online. To prepare for the projects, there were a wide range of activities done by the teachers and the students in the two selected classes, including teachers' introduction of the project topics, group division and students' creation of survey questions. In more detail, on the first day of the course, the teachers presented the project's topics to the students by showing them the Powerpoint slides downloaded from the Teacher's portal (see Appendix A). It was noted that the topics varied in the two classes; however, the teachers both explained them with great care and detailed explanations with the medium of Vietnamese to ensure the students' full grasp of the project procedures.



**Picture 1** A teacher was introducing project topics to students

Group forming was conducted after the teachers' introduction of the project themes. Notably, although the number of members per group required by the teachers in both classes was the same, there were differences in the ways the teachers grouped their students. In particular, while the first teacher (T1) allowed the students to group themselves together, the other teacher (T2) randomly put the students in groups using the Random name picker tool.

After the students were well divided into groups, the teachers used the Breakout room function on Zoom to create separate rooms and invite the students in the same group to one room. Then they allowed the students to make acquaintances with each other as well as exchange contact among group members in some minutes. This was of great help as the students could connect one another in a group with ease during the execution of online PBL.

In the third class meeting, the teacher helped their students create the projects. As discussed earlier, there were two required project products, namely a group oral presentation reporting the findings from a survey as well as a written form summarizing the project content. On this day, the students in the same groups joined the rooms created by the teachers again to discuss the questions for the survey. They were made to type the questions on a word document which was then submitted to the teachers for correction.

### ***Realization***

After revising the questions for the survey based on the teachers' feedback, the students started to collect data for the projects. It could be seen that the students played the central role in this phase since they actively gathered, analyzed and synthesized the data themselves under the observations of the teachers. The students could seek timely support from the teachers by writing their inquiries and problems in the Google classroom which was the primary communication channel between the teachers and the students.

### ***Presentation***

On day 24 of the course, the students reported their project products by making group presentations. T1 decided the turns of the presenting groups on a voluntary basis while T2 opted for random assignment of group orders. The group members then took turns to present their parts by using the function Sharescreen on the Zoom app. After the speeches was the question and answer section in which the other groups would raise questions to the presenting group.



**Picture 2** *A group was making a presentation online*

### ***Evaluation***

The evaluation process was conducted simultaneously when the students' presentations were in progress. The teachers were the evaluators of the projects, giving the students both marks and constructive feedback on their presentations.

### **Results from the questionnaire**

After the application of PBL in an online learning environment, students improve their essential soft skills significantly, including communication skill, collaboration skill, critical thinking and creativity. The results were illustrated in each skill respectively and communication one was presented as the first factor in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Students’ perceptions of PBL effectiveness regarding “Communication Skill”

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
1. PBL helps me express my ideas effectively.	3.42	4	1.181	1	5
2. PBL enhances interaction among group members.	3.49	3	1.158	1	5
3. PBL improves my ability to present my ideas clearly in written project form.	3.43	3	1.131	1	5
4. PBL betters my understanding of values, attitudes and purposes of what I read and listen to.	3.42	3	.991	1	5
5. PBL helps me take use of means of media and technology to exchange information or materials.	3.54	3	.994	1	5

The displayed descriptive statistics of the first component indicated that means of five items are quite stable, ranging from 3.42 to 3.54, which demonstrated that most of the students expressed their neutral opinions about the first component. However, Item 1 with the most common number of students (Mode=4) who gave agreement with the PBL effectiveness on expressing their ideas more than the other items which have the same mode (Mode=3). The highest mean belongs to Item 5 with 3.54 (M=3.54). Nevertheless, Item 1 has the highest standard deviation which shows that there is a significant difference among students’ responses.

In relation to the second factor, collaboration skill, means of all items are higher than 3.50, which shows that students agreed that they could develop this skill through PBL implementation.

**Table 4.** Students' perceptions of PBL effectiveness regarding "Collaboration Skill"

Contents	Mean	Mode	S.D	Min	Max
6. Through PBL, group members and I can find the resolution for the conflict together.	3.65	3	1.082	1	5
7. I work with other group members to find solutions to the problems.	3.75	4	1.035	2	5
8. I can negotiate with my group members to reach the agreement on the issue we aim at.	3.68	4	1.078	1	5
9. Through PBL, my group knows how to share the work together evenly and cooperatively.	3.80	4	.917	2	5
10. I work with other group members to find solutions to the problems.	3.58	3	1.143	1	5
11. I have more responsibility for contributing to mutual work.	3.72	5	1.110	1	5

As seen in the above table, although Item 10 has the lowest mean ( $M=3.58$ ), it has the highest standard deviation ( $S.D=1.143$ ) which revealed the most indifferent perceptions among students. In contrast, Item 9 which has the highest mean ( $M=3.80$ ) gains the least minimum standard deviation ( $S.D=0.917$ ). Additionally, min and max of each item is quite various in a one-to-five range.

With respect to the component of Critical thinking, the descriptive statistics in Table 5 showed that students perceived positively about this skill. In other words, they agreed that PBL helped them enhance evaluation ability, synthesis and analysis ability, logical

thinking ability, organization ability and inference ability of information or data. Item 16 has the highest mean (M=3.68) and Item 15 has the lowest (M=3.62). Item 14 has the largest difference amongst students' responses with the highest standard deviation (S.D=1.235). Besides, the primary mode of this component is 3 (Mode=3) for three first items; however, Item 14 which has the significantly preeminent number of students strongly agreed with applying PBL to their learning and helping them develop logical thinking capacity.

**Table 5.** Students' perceptions of PBL effectiveness regarding "Critical thinking"

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>S.D</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
12. I can improve my ability to evaluate sources of information.	3.67	3	1.024	1	5
13. I know how to analyze and synthesize the data or information.	3.64	3	1.124	1	5
14. I can think in logical way.	3.65	5	1.235	1	5
15. I am able to organize ideas in an appropriate way.	3.62	3	1.045	2	5
16. I can make reasonable inference from a variety of sources such as data, information, my personal knowledge and experience.	3.68	4	1.064	1	5

With regard to the last component which plays an indispensable role in students' learning process as well as assesses their intelligence and creativity in solving the problems was shown in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Students' perceptions of PBL effectiveness regarding "Creativity"

Contents	Mean	Mode	S.D	Min	Max
17. I can come up with a lot of solutions to the problems.	3.57	3	1.131	1	5
18. I can have multiple interpretations for the information or data collection.	3.78	3	.953	2	5
19. I am able to structure ideas innovatively and uniquely.	3.74	5	1.159	1	5
20. I have the ability to think outside the box.	3.80	4	.994	2	5

From the above descriptive statistics, the mode of Item 17 and Item 18 pointed out that the large proportion of students gave uncertain perceptions on various problem solutions and multiple information interpretations. Many students agreed that they can think outside the box. What was more, the large number of students shared their strong agreement on organizing their ideas in innovative and unique ways with the highest mode (Mode=5). The means of items in Table 6 expressed that students could boost up their creative capacity with the lowest mean of 3.57 (Mean=3.57) and the highest of 3.80 (Mean=3.80). Item 19 which has the maximal standard deviation (S.D=1.159) demonstrates that students' responses are heterogeneous.

### Results from the interview

The data gained via interviews with ten volunteers from the two classes also supported the findings of the questionnaire. It was generally indicated that there was perceived improvement in the four 21st century learning skills including Communication, Collaboration, Critical thinking and Creativity.

## **Communication**

The student participants expressed their positive attitudes towards PBL application because of its favorable effects on their ability to communicate in a variety of modes. In general, the interviewees agreed that their communication competence was significantly boosted after working on the projects.

*After the completion of projects in groups, I found out that I am able to express myself more clearly and effectively now. I could share my ideas clearly through direct and indirect interactions, I mean both when we had face-to-face group meetings and in group chat. (S10)*

*I believe I am better at communicating than I was in the past. Through interactions with my group members during the execution of PBL, I now can present and defend my points concisely and efficiently to my group as well as to the whole class. (S3)*

Moreover, the sign of enhanced communication skills among students was shown through their willingness to listen to other people's ideas. As shared by some of the participants, listening attentively to others before raising your own ideas was an absolute necessity to better understand values, attitudes and purposes of what is being said.

*I think I am more patient and tolerant to listen to other people instead of trying to speak as much as possible. I believe it was also a good sign of improvement in my communication ability. I mean, before saying something, I listen carefully and seriously to get the core points of what is being presented by the other people. This helps me to make proper inferences about the meaning, the values and the purposes of the saying, which can lead to more effectiveness in communication as well as to avoid unnecessary misunderstandings. (S1)*

## **Collaboration**

To the students, having group arguments was ultimately unavoidable. However, they believed that “*valuable lessons*” gained through group work experiences could benefit them a great deal in the long run.

*Sharing work in groups gave us a lot of valuable experiences. Our groups had a lot of conflicts during group work but we eventually worked out our ways to solve them all. Working in a group was such a great experience because we could learn to concede, to defend and to share. (S5)*

*It was annoying at first when we had a lot of disagreement during group work. However, it was until after the project that I realized that it was “a blessing in disguise”. At least I acquired negotiation skills and gained more experience dealing with people of different types. (S8)*

Group work also offered the students the chances to reflect themselves and be more accountable in the mutual work of the whole group. Typically, S6 shared that the sense of responsibility was strengthened among his group members to contribute to the shared goal of the whole group.

*Each member of my group was in charge of one particular part and had to be responsible for it. Therefore, we had to make great attempts to finish our parts so as not to affect the work of the whole group. Group work offered us a great chance to work in the most responsible manner. (S6)*

## **Critical thinking**

The students were optimistic about their ability to think logically and critically after carrying out PBL in groups. To be specific, the students opined that the process of searching for information from various sources and gathering and analyzing the data for the survey helped them to better their critical thinking.

*To be honest, I was overwhelmed when faced with a plethora of sources available on the internet. I could not read them all because my group was in a rush for the project, so I had to skim and carefully select something relevant to my project topic. I believe that I am better at reading skills and critical thinking now. I can read through a long text written in English and quickly identify the points that need to be taken into consideration. (S9)*

*I think my critical thinking was developed through the stage of collecting, analyzing and synthesizing the data for the survey. It was because my group and I struggled to group the data and coded it logically and systematically before presenting it by means of charts and graphics. This stage was so time-consuming but it was rewarding. At least I am happy to witness considerable improvement in my critical thinking. (S8)*

Also, the students perceived that their critical thinking was improved to a certain extent as a result of constructive feedback they received from the teachers for both their written forms and oral presentations.

*My group received a lot of constructive feedback from the teachers. I think it was all good for us because we could identify our mistakes based on that. This helps us to avoid repeating the same mistakes over time. (S5)*

*The feedback from my teacher was of great help as it made us reflect on our own way of thinking again. Actually, I was sometimes surprised at the silly mistakes I made that were corrected by the teacher. I even couldn't believe why I made such slips. (S4)*

### **Creativity**

Students' improvement in creativity was shown through their innovative ways of designing visual slides for the presentation as well as unique approaches to the project topics.

It was indicated that PBL offered the students great opportunities to creatively approach the projects. Through observations, it was revealed that the students had various ways to begin their presentations such as asking questions, organizing a small game, and showing a relevant video. The students, in their sharing, came up with numerous ideas to make the projects during their group discussions.

*My group had a lot of interesting ideas to create the projects. The more we discussed, the more ideas emerged. We were so excited to put them into practice. (S3)*

*The project topics were open, so we were free to design ours creatively. It was motivating because my group had a lot of creative ideas which were then praised by the teacher. I think such projects were well worth it because of their practical benefits on our imagination and innovation. (S1)*

It was noticeable that the students' visual slides were also immensely impressive. Generally, all of the groups consumed a great deal of time and energy to make their presentation unique and creative. They used beautiful templates and lively animations with add-on decorations. In the interviews, the students disclosed the fact the creativity invested in the presentation slides was considered as a criterion in the marking scheme.

*We make a lot of investment in our Powerpoint slides. It took much time to finish it. However, creativity was one of the criteria of the marking, and we tried to carefully design our slides in the most creative ways.(S8)*

## **DISCUSSION**

In terms of the results from the observations, students followed the four steps of PBL and conducted their projects. In the first three phases, teachers were considered as thorough facilitators and caring instructors in order to help students if necessary. The results

are corresponding with Krueger's (2014) theory stated in Chapter 1. In the last phase, teachers became conscientious evaluators by giving both transparent marks and valuable feedback. Students, thus, could realize their mistakes or weaknesses and correct as well as possible.

Regarding the analyzed statistical results from the questionnaire, students, generally speaking, responded that they could improve more or less the given soft skills. They have become independent and self-directed learners in class whilst their teacher has played a role as an instructor and facilitator to help them if necessary. In other words, they assign different tasks to group members and take responsibility to complete their tasks. In case of having arising problems, they will analyze and find solutions so as to solve such problems by themselves. They, therefore, enhance get-together collaboration and outside-the-box creativity. These results are in line with Krueger's (2014) theory mentioned in Chapter 1 and consistent with the Partnership for 21st century skills' (2009, p.4) theories demonstrated in Chapter 2.

In respect of the interview results, all interviewees at first reported positively that they could improve communicative capacity, that is, they could use different communication modes to express their ideas flexibly. This result supported the Partnership for 21st century skills' (2009, p. 4) theories. More importantly, they were willing to listen to their friends instead of talking too much. This is a key point to show their understanding towards others and overcome needless misapprehensions. Secondly, students admitted that thanks to PBL they gained practical lessons and considerable group-work experiences. This finding is similar to the theories proposed by Heo et.al. 's, (2010); Sendag & Odabasi's (2009) theories discussed in Chapter 2. They knew how to testify about the group's conflicts and find out solutions together. They become a sense of belonging which means they have to take responsibility to implement assigned tasks. What was more, they attempted to achieve a common group's goal and build up a strange relationship

between group members. Thirdly, students shared that taking full advantage of PBL helps them develop critical thinking through searching various sources, analyzing and synthesizing data actively. This result is in accordance with the theories recommended by Alan and Stoller (2002). Students also highly agreed that their critical thinking ability is the product of contributive feedback on both oral presentations and written forms as well. Last but not least, PBL encourages students to promote their creativity via designing vivid slides. In addition to lucid and colorful presentations, students themselves came up with plenty of interesting ideas to make their projects. It means that PBL does benefit them a lot in terms of creativity development. This result is compatible with Kegan's (2005) theory presented in Chapter 2.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

This section shows useful pedagogical implications for teachers and for students at TDTU in order to help them better in applying PBL to their future teaching and learning process and minimize weaknesses as well as difficulties during implementation.

- **For teachers**

Teachers with a facilitative and orientative role in PBL application, they need to guide students carefully and thoroughly at the first phase in order that students identify what they will conduct in the following stages to achieve the highest effectiveness. Moreover, teachers should encourage students as much as possible so as to build up their confidence and determination in completing the projects. What is more, giving feedback positively and appropriately is an indispensable step to contribute to students' achievements in recognizing their weaknesses.

- **For students**

Students are people who directly carry out the projects for the first time, so they need to follow teachers' guidelines and instructions.

Besides, group members should take the group's tasks into careful consideration and ensure they have to complete as scheduled. Students also keep calm to be able to resolve unexpected problems efficiently and maintain a good relationship with others in the group.

## **CONCLUSION**

After implementing four primary phases of PBL in an online English course, the paper was conducted with the purpose of discovering the development of students' 21<sup>st</sup> century skills through PBL in a web-based learning environment as well as exploring students' perceptions about how they can promote the four soft skills. The results from research instrument tools indicated that they can enhance communication skill, collaboration skill, critical thinking skill and creativity skill considerably. First and foremost, the observation pointed out precisely four phases which have a close link and logical sequence, so students feel easy to follow and achieve the desired outcomes with the intention of answering the first research question. Teachers showed the four phases and instructed students thoroughly how to conduct their project. The first phase is for preparation in which students were introduced to everything about the project topics and the implementing method. In this stage, students attempted and collaborated together to complete the tasks in the projects. Teachers in this case are facilitators to support their students in a knowledgeable and spiritual aspect. After designing the oral presentation and written form, they continued collecting, analyzing and synthesizing data via web-based tools such as Google form. The third stage is an important one in which they showed their work orally in a random choice or perhaps in a voluntary way. Teachers in each class will listen to students' reports and evaluate them in the last stage. They not only gave them marks but showed them feedback with the aim of helping them avoid superfluous mistakes. Secondly, the questionnaire presented students' perceptions on PBL in lieu of four century skills. What is more, the interview queries provided

insightful responses about these four skills. Specifically, students affirmed that they improve their soft skills effectively after learning a new method of PBL. That is, they are confident to communicate or express their ideas without worrying about miscomprehension. Additionally, they have become a good listener as well as a good consultant in necessary cases. They also gained hands-on experiences and valuable lessons by virtue of taking wonderful advantages of PBL. Furthermore, they had good opportunities to develop their critical thinking through searching materials or analyzing data. Finally, students responded that their creativity skill was improved significantly because they applied innovative technology to their presentation design.

The current paper shows some limitations illustrated precisely in this section. The first limitation is about the sampling choice. The researcher merely collected data from the students who were chosen randomly. The study results, hence, lack comprehensiveness because students' understanding on PBL implementation is not deep enough to evaluate completely all aspects or benefits of PBL bringing them. The second matter is about the research context. The researcher just surveyed and interviewed the students from two classes at TDTU. Therefore, the research results are merely suitable in this context and the results from the collected data cannot be generalized. The final limitation of the study is the way to collect interview data. That is, the researchers only interview participants online, so there are some obstacles in eliciting the responses insightfully.

## **AUTHOR**

Lam Thi Nguyen is an MA student at University of Social Sciences and Humanities. She has also been working as a teacher of Faculty of Foreign Languages & Informatics at University of People's Security. She has taught English courses for non-majored English students for over five years. Her interests are English teaching methodologies and applied language.

Linh Thi Ngoc Ly is an MA student at University of Social Sciences and Humanities. She has also been working as an English teacher at Hoàng Hoa Thám High School. She has taught English to 10-grade, 11-grade, 12-grade students for about ten years. Her interests are web-based learning and applied language.

Ngoc Huu Nguyen is an MA student at University of Social Sciences and Humanities. He has also been working as a teacher of Faculty of Foreign Languages at Tôn Đức Thắng University. He has taught English courses for non-majored English students for over five years. He is interested in E-learning teaching.

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# **The Role of Learner Autonomy and the Use of Self-Regulated Learning Strategies: University Students' Voice**

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**Tham My Duong**

Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam  
*thamdm@uef.edu.vn*

**Huyen Dang Thi Cuc Nguyen**

Nong Lam University-Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

## **Abstract**

Learner autonomy plays a pivotal role in language teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This qualitative study aimed to get insights into first-year English majors' perceptions of the significance of learner autonomy within the shifting landscape of English language teaching and learning in the digital era and their use of self-regulated learning strategies. The research was conducted at a Ho Chi Minh City-based university with the participation of ten students who were conveniently selected for the semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that most of the participants recognized the role of learner autonomy in terms of initiating, monitoring-organizing, and evaluating. In particular, they attributed their success in learning to proactively accessing the internet, setting learning goals, selecting learning activities, creating a study plan, and conducting peer assessment. In addition, the participants revealed underlying reasons for the use of cognitive strategies (e.g., making mind maps, listing main points, connecting related concepts from other documents to link old and new knowledge), metacognitive strategies (e.g., doing tests, changing reading habits, setting short-term and long-term learning goals), and resource management strategies (e.g., learning environment, interacting with peers, interacting with teachers).

The preliminary findings may practically contribute to English language education at the research setting as well as similar EFL contexts.

**Keywords:** *learner autonomy, self-regulated learning strategies, tertiary level, Vietnamese EFL context*

## INTRODUCTION

Within the shifting landscape of English language teaching and learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, learner autonomy is viewed as a key to the effective teaching and learning process. In fact, a variety of studies have discovered positive effects of learner autonomy on learners' outcomes as well as learning attitudes. Chen and Pan (2015) asserted that learner autonomy is a practical approach to language teaching and learning. Likewise, learner autonomy is considered an ultimate goal of education, especially language education (Dang, 2010). According to Dang (2010), learner autonomy helps increase learner motivation and initiation or proactivity.

In addition, several researchers showed the relationship between learner autonomy and peers' interaction (Stevens, 2007). This means that learners are able to learn from each other when they work collaboratively as each of them has his/her own learning styles and strategies (Blidi, 2017). Apart from collaborative learning, an autonomous learner is supposed to set learning goals, create a learning plan, choose learning materials as well as learning strategies, self-assess their own learning, and proactively look for help from peers and/or teachers (e.g., Little, 2001). Specifically, Little (1991) believed that learners are able to plan their learning if they have an opportunity to do so.

The impacts of learner autonomy on academic achievements have been found in some studies. In particular, learners' responsibility for learning is positively correlated with their learning outcomes

(Crabbe, 1993). In other words, when a learner takes more charge of their learning, their results are better. Little (2009) also reckoned that learners are more likely to concentrate on their learning when they are given a right to make a decision during their learning process. In brief, an ability to learn autonomously plays a fundamental role in the 21st century. Language learning and teaching is a life-long process which requires a great attempt made by both teachers and learners (Chen & Pan, 2015). Therefore, they should be equipped with strategies and techniques associated with learner autonomy. Teachers need techniques to facilitate students' learning process, whereas students themselves need self-regulated learning strategies to take control over their learning.

Self-regulated learning strategies (SRLSs) refer to learners' actions and processes aiming at acquiring information or skills (Zimmerman, 2002). There have been various classifications of SRLSs in which cognitive and metacognitive strategies are the two integral components (e.g., Brown, 1987; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986). Pintrich and De Groot (1990) completed their SRLS model with resource management strategies apart from cognitive and metacognitive strategies. That is, three strategy groups, namely cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and resource management strategies are included in the SRLS model. In this study, Pintrich and De Groot's (1990) classification of SRLSs is used because of its sufficiency.

According to Gagne et al. (1992), firstly, cognitive strategies are an internal process reflecting how students learn, remember, and think in their learning process. These internal processes enable learners to use a language to carry out a task creatively and naturally (Pressley et al., 1992). This strategy group falls into three sub-groups including rehearsal strategies, organization strategies, and elaboration strategies. Secondly, metacognition is "a set of higher knowledge and skills to monitor, regulate and manifest cognitive processes of self and others" (Akyol & Garrison, 2011, p. 184). Likewise, Zimmerman (2001) defined metacognition as the

awareness of and knowledge about one's own thinking. Metacognitive strategies fall into three categories in this study including planning, monitoring, and critical thinking. Thirdly, resource management strategies are used to manage the environment such as time, place, effort regulation, and related participants (i.e., instructors or classmates). These resource management strategies are supposed to help students modify their environment to achieve predetermined goals and needs.

It can be observed that there have been a variety of studies addressing the concept of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning strategies worldwide. Henri et al. (2018) explored students' perceptions of learner autonomy with the participation of 636 university students within two years. The findings revealed that the participants did not recognize their learner autonomy development. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the students should be given an opportunity to promote autonomy in their learning. As far as self-regulated learning strategies are concerned, Yusri et al. (2011) investigated 183 university students' use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies in language learning and differences in terms of prior learning experiences and gender at Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia. It was indicated that the participants moderately used the strategies. What is more, the more learning experiences they possessed, the more learning strategies they employed, and more female students preferred using the strategies than male counterparts did.

In Vietnam, Duong (2015) did a quasi-experimental study involving second-year English majors' learner autonomy with the application of a portfolio in an EFL writing course at Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City. The experiment, in which the students needed to use a portfolio as a learning and evaluation tool, lasted 15 weeks. The findings showed that the students held a positive attitude towards the portfolio application to promote learner autonomy in the portfolio-based writing course. Additionally, their autonomous learning skills were developed after the course. In another aspect,

Tran and Duong (2013) delved into non-English majors' attitudes towards self-regulated learning strategies and their employment of these strategies at a college in Daklak province. A mismatch between the students' attitudes and their use of the strategies was found in the study. In particular, they used the strategies at a low level despite the fact that they had a positive attitude towards these strategies.

To sum up, the concept of learner autonomy and self-regulated learning strategies have been considerably explored in the world as well as in Vietnam. However, there have been no studies investigating first-year English majors' perceptions of learner autonomy and their use of self-regulated language learning at Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City so far. Therefore, this study addressing these issues was conducted to fulfil the research niche with the following research questions.

1. How do first-year English majors at Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City perceive the importance of learner autonomy?
2. How do the students self-assess their use of self-regulated learning strategies?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research setting and participants**

This qualitative research was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Pedagogy, Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City. The faculty has offered two undergraduate programmes, namely English Language and Technical Education. Out of 861 students, there were 195 first-year English majors. According to the university's regulation no. 1302/QĐ-ĐT-ĐHNL issued in 2008, first-year English majors have to achieve 30 credits and grade point average of at least 2.0. In terms of time allotment, one in-class credit refers to one in-class period and two self-study periods (i.e.,

a period is 50 minutes long). That is, students are encouraged to learn autonomously.

In the academic year 2019-2020, 195 first-year English majors were divided into five classes. Two students in each class were conveniently selected to ensure the representativeness of the sample, i.e., there were ten participants in total. These students voluntarily participated in the study as the interviewees.

### **Instrument**

In this study, semi-structured interviews were employed to get in-depth information based on the two core interview questions which were adapted from Liu (2012) and Pintrich et al. (1991). The first question is related to students' perceptions of roles of learner autonomy toward their learning. The second question addressed the students' use of self-regulated learning strategies. Apart from the information collected from these questions, there were some more questions concerning underlying reasons and factors affecting their use.

To increase the reliability and validity of the interview, a pilot study was carried out with two first-year English majors who were excluded from the main study. After that, some modifications were made to improve the interview protocol. The interviews, furthermore, were conducted in Vietnamese language to avoid any language barriers. The content of the interviews was transcribed and translated into English language, and the translated transcriptions made by the two researchers were double-checked then.

### **Data collection and analysis**

As mentioned above, ten first-year English majors served as the participants in the study. They were divided into two groups for the interviews at their convenience. Each focus group interview lasted about twenty minutes.

The qualitative data were analyzed based upon the content. In other words, content analysis was used to process the data with the following steps:

Step 1: Coding the participants from S1 to S10.

Step 2: Reading and rereading the information relevant to the study.

Step 3: Categorizing and interpreting the information according to themes.

Step 4: Drawing a conclusion from the data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Perceptions of the importance of learner autonomy**

#### ***Initiating***

The results from the interviews indicated that most of the students recognized the significance of identifying their learning goals that was to direct their learning. S5 gave her explanation on the learning goals as follows.

*I think determining learning goals is greatly important because I will know what I need to learn and what I should learn. Moreover, when I have a clear target, I will be more motivated and get better scores in my study.*

With regard to what they did when having problems, students tended to ask their friends or access the Internet instead of asking teachers for help. The majority of students chose both of these ways since they felt comfortable and convenient. They assured that they felt relaxed and comfortable to share and solve the problems together. When they were at home, they could search for information on in the Google search engine. A considerable number of students had attended some self-study groups on Facebook to share information and resolve their problems (S1, S2 & S9).

When asked the causes of their embarrassment to ask for teachers' help, they frankly admitted that psychology of fear was a gap between teachers and students. As SI1 and SI3 shared:

*I feel shy when I ask my teachers for help though I know their information is accurate and right to the point. However, I don't think I should ask them when they are giving a lecture. Sometimes, I meet my teachers to ask some confusing problems right after class (S1).*

*I have seen some of my friends ask teachers for help. I want to do the same thing, but I am nervous if I talk with my teachers directly. This is my weakness from the past to now. I will try to be more courageous because I think my teachers are very friendly. (S3)*

Similar to the findings of this study, several studies (Littlemore, 2001; Noytim, 2006) showed the impacts of technology, particularly the internet on language learning. Moreover, peers and teachers are regarded as reliable learning resources (Blidi, 2017; Little, 2004).

### ***Organizing-Monitoring***

The interview data show that the students were more interested in the outside-classroom activities such as watching entertainment programs in English, listening to English music than listening to their English lectures.

The great number of students listened and watched entertainment shows in English after they finished their lessons; only one student (S6) watched English entertainment programs as a way to warm up her study. She emphasized:

*I can't start learning without watching a reality show or listening to a song in 15-30 minutes. (S6)*

In order to practise their speaking skills, some students (S4, S8 & S10) asked their classmates who were also their roommates to talk about what they learned in class. Being aware that practising with classmates was an effective way, others could not use this method since they lived alone or with their families. There was a student (S9) who actively found foreigners to practise communication skills in English and another (S1) who accessed the Internet to read and translate the information she was interested in to improve her knowledge and vocabulary in English.

Furthermore, they claimed that making a detailed timetable helped them complete their learning tasks on schedule, not to affect other tasks (S2, S5, S9 & S10). They also showed the importance of choosing learning methods, learning activities, and learning strategies for their learning. In particular, they felt more motivated as they made these choices by themselves. Typically, some students frankly stated,

*I expect that the teachers allow us to choose learning activities (to work individually, in pairs, or in groups) to solve a specific task. I believe we will do better if we are not forced to do provided learning activities. (S7)*

*I like to choose a learning strategy based on my learning style. For example, I will learn better by drawing symbols to recall information. I find it difficult to list the ideas and read them over and over to remember the main ideas as teacher's requirements. (S10)*

There are two contradictory groups of opinions for selecting materials. A larger group of students said that (S1, S2, S5, S6, S7, S9 & S10) they preferred to choose supplementary materials for their learning by finding books related to their lessons' content, not just reading information in their textbooks. They also looked for exercises online or bought more books to do exercises at home.

The other group (S3, S4 & S8) admitted that they were not qualified enough to find reliable resources, especially online ones. Therefore, they mainly learned and did exercise from textbooks. To increase confidence in choosing materials online, one student (S12) suggested:

*[Students] should join self-study groups on Facebook or set up self-study groups with your friends who have the same purpose to share materials and support together. I took part in these groups and found them extremely effective."*

A variety of scholars (Ganza, 2008; Little, 2001; Rubin & Thompson, 1994; Scharle & Szabó, 2000) affirmed that students can take control over their learning when they have an opportunity to create and conduct a study plan and choose learning methods, learning activities and learning strategies.

### ***Evaluating***

The results collected from the interviews suggest that while working with friends, students were able to evaluate their friends' abilities and also assess their abilities in comparison with their friends'; and hence, they worked harder to catch up with their friends. As a student shared,

*When I talked to my classmates, I had an inferiority complex at first because they didn't understand me. After that, my friends helped me a lot, and I myself also tried to listen and learn from them. I feel more confident now. (S4)*

*I like to work in groups with my friends because we are at the same level; therefore, it is easy to sympathize with each other. In groups, some friends are good at this skill; some are good at another skill. We support each other. Especially, when a person says something wrongly and gets feedback from another friend, the others will avoid that mistake. (S7)*

From the above opinions, most students agreed group work helps them evaluate each other's abilities. However, another form of

assessment which causes much controversy is that students' self-assessment gives better learning outcomes. On the one hand, a group of students (S1, S2, S4, S6, S8 & S10) said that students' competency should be assessed by teachers because they had enough professional expertise and qualifications. On the other hand, the other group of students (S3, S5, S7 & S9) shared that they found the materials themselves and took short tests to check their level. Through these kinds of assessment, they would know their capabilities, promote their strengths, and overcome their weaknesses. Nevertheless, they had trouble in self-evaluating their speaking, writing, and pronunciation skills. In this situation, S7 suggested:

*I think if I can't self-assess my speaking, writing and pronunciation skills, I should ask my friends when we work in groups. Until we cannot solve the problems, we ask our teachers for help. Gradually, I will be more confident in evaluating my ability.*

Besides that, the majority of students also monitored their learning progress by timetables. A few students (S1, S2, S3, S5 & S8) admitted that they were disciplined and strictly followed a schedule, which helped them follow their learning progress effectively. Meanwhile, S10 had a different way:

*I don't have a specific timetable, but I always take notes on interesting ideas after each lesson. When I review those notes, I will know what I have learned.*

Note-taking can be considered a simple form of journal writing or comment writing on what you have learned. Not only tracking her progress by writing journals, S6 also considered it as a pressure to complete tasks. Though it had been known as a good way to follow the learning process, few students used it. It is mainly because this reflection form is fairly new to them; some students who had known it before admitted that they were not persistent enough to reflect their study and write journals every day.

It can be seen that the participants preferred working with peers and asking teachers for counselling to self-assessing their ability. Scheb-Buener (2018) concluded that assessment with clearly-stated guidelines should be conducted by both teachers and students, whereas Duong (2015) discovered that the second-year English majors were unconfident to assess their own writing pieces or grade their peers' work despite the provided rubric.

## **Self-assessment of self-regulated learning strategy use**

### ***Cognitive strategies***

When asked about the reasons for using cognitive strategies, respondents (S1, S3, S4, S6, S8 & S9) claimed that they found several ways to remember their lessons by making mind maps or listing main points. There is a student (S3) who even uses different colors to differentiate ideas. Meanwhile, another student (S7) confessed that:

*I am quite lazy to write the main ideas, but only key words right on the book. When I open the book, I will remember the old lessons. I find this method quite effective for me because my memory is rather good.*

In addition, they used other strategies such as rereading the notes to remember the lessons (S2), outlining learning materials to organize learning ideas (S5), and connecting related concepts from other documents to link old and new knowledge (S10).

The participants were likely to use either memory-based strategies or organizing strategies. Weinstein et al. (2000) pointed out that organizing strategies enable learners to deeply understand their lessons. Meanwhile, the first-year participants might employ the memory-based strategies on the basis of teacher-centered approaches in high schools where learners are expected to take notes and memorize what teachers have taught (Duong et al., 2019; Tran & Duong, 2020).

## ***Metacognitive strategies***

The interviewed students stated that they used a variety of intertwined strategies. Some students identified specific goals directly or indirectly and integrated content-related strategies at the same time.

*I make a plan board of learning goals, but I don't do weekly reviews. Therefore, I have not seen my progress clearly or recognize my weaknesses to improve. (S1)*

*I don't have a particular plan board, but I always specify the aims for each lesson. I always answer the questions at the end of the lesson (if any) or make questions to test my comprehension after a lecture, and I will know whether I have achieved the targets. (S6)*

A large number of students set weekly short-term goals to follow easily. In the meantime, a student (S7) was excited to set long-term goals for the whole semester because she wanted to have a broader look to arrange her learning plan for each subject more appropriately.

According to Locke and Latham (1990), goal setting is viewed as a leading strategy which directs students' learning. This strategy, therefore, should be promoted in the learning process. It is also observed that more short-term goals were used than long-term ones.

## ***Resource management strategies***

According to the interviewed students, they used autonomy strategies at a high level due to their convenience and their habit. In particular, they easily accessed the Internet to answer questions and complete assigned tasks as a habit. Besides, they also organized a quality study corner and chose a quiet place to be comfortable.

*The learning environment is very important to me, so I usually tidy up my study space that inspires me while sitting at the desk. (S4)*

*I don't need to sit at my desk, but the study area must be quiet so that I can focus on doing my homework. (S6)*

When they cannot find the answers from the Internet, they sometimes ask for help from friends rather than teachers. Two students (S6 & S10) admitted that they were embarrassed to talk to teachers. They preferred to work and learned from their friends owing to their comfort and support, but it was difficult to contact classmates outside of class time because of the geographical distance. However, some students honestly shared the reasons why they did not want to work with their friends as follows:

*I have difficulty conveying my opinion to friends in my group. I have to explain many times in order that they understand what I mean. At that time, I feel annoyed and wasteful of my time (possibly due to my poor communication). Instead, if I work by myself, I complete the task faster. (S3)*

*I don't like working in teams with my friends outside the class since we mostly work in noisy cafes. It is hard to focus on the tasks, and we mainly chat about our private life. I think it is ineffective. (S9)*

There were two groups of conflicting opinions in terms of perseverance in carrying out plans. A team tried to finish planned tasks to motivate themselves to complete the tasks and increase responsibility for their work. The other group chose flexibility. They could change their timetable based on their schedule rather than using it as a leading tool.

Apart from the above strategies, respondents also provided more strategies that they employed such as participating in skill clubs, attending online courses, searching and translating online

materials to improve vocabulary and translation skills, and practicing speaking English with Elsa Speak application.

That most of the participants looked for a quiet and tidy learning corner is in line with Nguyen (2018). To deal with difficulties during their learning, furthermore, they tended to search for the information on the internet, participate in academic clubs, look for online learning resources, and seek help from peers instead of teachers, which is an autonomy-based learning performance (Dam et al., 1990; Little, 2009; Rivers & Golonka, 2009).

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews showed the following results. The large number of the participants shared similar opinions about the importance of learner autonomy for their learning. Of all the aspects, comments related to evaluating reached a weaker consensus than those on the two others, initiating and organizing & monitoring. It means that English-majored freshmen at Nong Lam University – Ho Chi Minh City recognized the significance of learner autonomy in terms of initiating, organizing and monitoring, and evaluating. In respect of initiating group, the results indicated that many students believed that asking teachers and/or friends for help and accessing the Internet to have answers for their questions helped them be more confident and proactive in learning. Furthermore, they also found setting learning goals beneficial to their learning. With reference to organizing and monitoring group, the informants also acknowledged the positive effects of choosing English practice activities outside the classroom, learning methods, and learning strategies, and setting and implementing learning plans, learning materials on their motivation. Regarding evaluating group, however, students' perception in this group is divided into two subgroups. The majority of students thought that they felt more confident as monitoring their progress and identifying their strengths and weaknesses when working with friends; however, many of them

showed their doubt about their self-evaluating ability and the effectiveness of reflecting on what they have learned.

With regard to the use of self-regulated learning strategies, the respondents used connecting strategies rather than organizing ones in the cognitive group. In the metacognitive group, they tended to use more critical thinking and supervisory strategies than goal-setting ones. In the resource management group, the informants were interested in managing the learning environment, working independently with the assistance from the Internet, working with friends and seeking their support; nevertheless, they were too embarrassed to talk to teachers about their learning difficulties and paid little attention to time management in the timetables and learning plans.

Based on the above-mentioned results, some recommendations to promote learner autonomy are drawn as follows. Firstly, teachers need to emphasize the importance of learner autonomy and the usefulness of learning aims at the beginning of the course so that the students can identify their long-term and short-term goals for the whole course. In addition, teachers need to provide a lot of opportunities for students to increase their initiation and creativity as well as their soft skills by applying project-based learning or task-based language teaching. For instance, after a lesson on “the environment”, the teacher can ask students to work individually, in pair, or in group (depending on the task difficulty) to design a poster about the causes or solutions to environmental pollution. To carry out this task, students need to work together, search information online or offline resources to accomplish their projects. Hopefully, they will be more active and gradually change their mindset about responsibility for their own learning through these kinds of activities. Secondly, that students evaluate their own abilities or their classmates is one of the necessary autonomy-related skills, but in the current context, students were somewhat skeptical about the efficiency of this activity because they had not been instructed to assess their performance in each

subject. Therefore, teachers need to provide a well-defined rubric so that students feel more confident while evaluating their work. Moreover, teachers should encourage students to reflect on what they have learned in different ways such as asking a few short questions, answering questions at the end of the lesson (if any), writing journals, discussing after a lecture, using 3-2-1 game, etc. Finally, teachers need to build close relationships and friendly interaction with students to promote roles of teacher as a supporter, a resource specialist, and a mentor (Bui & Duong, 2018). As a supporter, teachers have to provide students the suitable learning methods for each subject in their teaching process, which can help students avoid disorienting and losing their learning motivation. As a resource specialist, teachers ought to introduce several different types of materials so that students have the best choice in finding relevant materials. Moreover, when students have questions that need to be answered, they view teachers as a reliable resource. As a mentor, teachers should advise students to make right decisions for their learning (Voller, 1997).

## **AUTHOR**

Dr. Tham My Duong is currently Vice Dean of the Faculty of English at Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance. She holds a PhD degree in English language studies from Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her academic areas of interest predominantly lie in 21st century skills, learner autonomy, ELT, language skills, CLIL, discourse analysis, PBL, and TBLT.

Huyen Dang Thi Cuc Nguyen is a lecturer of English at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Pedagogy, Nong Lam University-Ho Chi Minh City. She holds her Master's degree in TESOL from Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities. Her research interests are TESOL methodology, English language skills, and linguistics.

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# Enhancing Students' English Learning in Rural Areas through Peer Teaching on Digital Platforms in Vietnam

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**Nguyen Phuong Le**

Foreign Trade University, Hanoi Campus, Vietnam  
*nguyenlephuong@ftu.edu.vn*

**Anh Le Ngoc My**

Concordia High School, Viet Nam

**Quan Tran Anh**

Southwestern Academy, America

## Abstract

During the COVID-19 pandemic, young people have encountered profound changes in their literacy practices in which traditional face-to-face classes have been switched to online mode as a mandatory action. On the bright side, this transition gave students from both urban and rustic areas an opportunity to get acquainted with Zoom, Google Meet or Microsoft Team classes. This paper reports a non-profit project, The Synesthetes ([duantienganh.com](http://duantienganh.com)), whose purpose is to help students from remote areas improve their English using the peer-teaching method in a voluntary and enhanced online learning environment, how it relates to their motivation to learn English and their attitude towards their English lessons. A mixed method design includes a survey of 130 students attending the online classes of the projects and follow-up interviews with five participants of different levels and ages. The paper may provide a new insight for educators and administrators as they become involved in experimenting with peer teaching and integrate informal online learning of English into their classroom practice.

**Keywords:** *online learning, peer-teaching, digital platform, volunteering, motivation*

## INTRODUCTION

In this age of technology and pandemic, many young people engage in virtual courses taught by formal instructors who have had a lot of teaching experience. This type of education is endorsed by both parents and students as it creates a learning environment that is very convenient and effective compared to traditional face-to-face classes. Another method of training currently being tested by The Synesthetes is peer teaching, which involves students with a good command of English tutoring other students who have lower skill levels within the context of an online classroom. In rural regions of Vietnam, most people do not fully understand the significance of language training, therefore, the quality of English programs provided by academic institutions are often inadequate. Through the delivery of free classes, The Synesthetes aims to promote an optimistic attitude towards online learning among students from remote areas so that they can be more motivated to improve their ability to communicate using English. In each weekly meeting, teachers and learners are required to have at least 75 minutes of online interaction through the video conferencing platform Zoom. Students enrolled in The Synesthetes' program use the Gateway textbook and workbook by Macmillan publisher as their main academic resources. The aforementioned project advocates for the importance of English language training in four provinces of Vietnam (Hai Duong, Vinh Phuc, Hoa Binh, Phu Tho) by offering peer-taught online courses in addition to organizing social activities such as English book donations and scholarship awards. This research paper investigates students' outlooks on the classes they are currently participating in by courtesy of The Synesthetes, thus proposing solutions to help them approach virtual courses and peer-teaching from a more positive angle.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **English teaching and learning in rural areas of Vietnam**

In remote provinces of Vietnam, training programs are of a lower standard in comparison with those in big cities due to a lack of necessary resources. If general education is viewed under its four dimensions, namely access, quality, efficiency, and equity, then it can be said that Vietnam has made significant progress in access development, but remains inadequate in enhancing quality, efficiency, and equity (Pham & Tran, 2015). Schools in rural areas differ from those in urban regions in that there is an absence of first-rate educational facilities, diverse curriculum offerings, and monetary support from parents (Behr, 2005). What's more, the shortage of qualified teachers and modern technology renders it extremely challenging for academic institutions to provide courses of high caliber. The combination of these factors in turn causes students to encounter various difficulties in learning, thus they are very likely to lose motivation to pursue academic excellence. This could be illustrated by the results of basic literacy and numeracy tests given to eight-year-old pupils in five provinces of Vietnam by Young Lives, an international study of childhood poverty. There was significant variation by location: while the majority of all participants were able to complete the tests successfully, the percentage of rural children performing well was considerably lower than that of urban children (Jones et al., 2007).

In December 1986, when the Communist Party initiated an economic reform known as “Đổi Mới” (Renovation), the English boom began in Vietnam. At the general educational level, English is one of the focal points as the national curriculum is constantly being revised to adapt to the demands of students and globalization trends (Hoang, 2018). An easily observable feature of English training across the nation is its emphasis on teaching grammar as a set of rules to be mastered and transferred by learners into proficient language use. While the syllabus takes cognizance of other skills such as reading comprehension and verbal

communication, the grammar sections tend to dominate the content of textbooks and workbooks. Furthermore, English is increasingly becoming an important concern to both the Vietnamese government and society. To promote English teaching and learning at the tertiary level, the Ministry of Education and Training has encouraged the introduction of advanced programs in which English is required to be the medium of instruction. More notably, English outside the formal education system in Vietnam has developed rapidly with various institutions being established, from private tutoring centers to professional associations. Despite these enterprises, language training still has a lot of room for improvement, especially in rural areas.

According to a study conducted by Trang Nguyen (2012) regarding English instruction in a remote province of Vietnam, the implementation of language education has several weaknesses. Even though most primary schools are equipped with computers, projectors, and Internet access, these resources are not used in the delivery of English lessons due to various reasons. Moreover, instructors still employ traditional teaching approaches and older versions of textbooks, which limits students' knowledge acquisition substantially. Another finding of this research is that many schools lack English teachers who achieve the required levels of expertise, and the number of qualified educators willing to work for long periods of time is quite small. In addition, academic institutions in rural areas depend on government subsidies, and this funding is prioritized for schools that meet national standards, which are usually located in or near the main towns. Besides, taking into account the large student population in each classroom, it is not possible for teachers to pay special attention to any individual; therefore, young people often find it difficult to improve upon their English abilities by themselves. These issues with language training are common in many rural provinces of Vietnam, and although much progress has been made since the publication of this study, the quality of English education is still considered to be substandard in certain regions.

## **General benefits of distance learning**

Distance learning has been around since 1989, when the University of Phoenix became the first institution to launch an online degree program (Tikkanen, 2016). Nevertheless, it was not until the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic that virtual classes truly surged in popularity. As academic institutions were forced to shut down temporarily in an effort to prevent the spread of coronavirus, students all over the world converted to virtual schooling with Zoom being one of the most commonly used platforms. Apart from this application, other mediums through which distance learning is administered include Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Cisco Webex. Additionally, teachers have also incorporated fun activities offered by websites such as Kahoot, Quizizz, and Gymkit into their lessons in order to make virtual classrooms more stimulating for students. In a review of the research on online learning, Tallent-Runnels and her fellows (2016) came to the conclusion that this method of instruction 'constitute[s] relatively new frontier for education research.'

Even though online learning is only a provisional way in which the education sector responds to COVID-19, it brings various benefits to students and teachers. Most notably, it is extremely flexible and convenient because individuals would solely require a technological device with Internet access to participate in a virtual classroom. Instructors can deliver their lectures from anywhere in the world for their aspiring learners, which greatly reduces the money spent on traveling resources and other related expenses for both parties (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Besides, since people no longer have to account for commute time, they have more free hours to complete any necessary tasks. Not only do online courses give individuals a chance to practice soft skills such as communication and self-discipline, they also facilitate the development of hard skills like writing and computer (Weiner, 2003). Moreover, students and teachers face a smaller amount of pressure when they approach distance learning since this kind of environment often

has less intensity compared to traditional classes (McCready, 2017). Individuals can decrease their carbon footprint considerably since their reliance on printed materials has lessened due to the availability of resources on the Internet (Vu, 2020).

Specifically for learners, virtual learning is advantageous on many levels. An online classroom is likely to consist of people from different countries or even continents, which creates favorable conditions for them to network with one another. This can lead to future opportunities for collaboration between students, and at the same time, it allows them to be more culturally sensitive given their wide range of exposure (Kumi-Yebaoh et al., 2019). In addition, the versatile nature of distance learning makes it easier for students to achieve optimal school-life balance as they have more control over their daily schedule (Miller, 2019). Online courses are often affordable since the costs are distributed among a large number of participants, thus even people from low-income households are able to acquire education and training (Jung & Rha, 2000). Additionally, students have multiple means of communication with their instructors, for example emailing, class forum, and cell phone, and these are great substitutes for face-to-face meetings (Dumbauld, 2020).

On the other hand, teachers also derive a lot of benefits from delivering virtual lessons. In a previous study, faculty agreed that remote learning was more manageable in that it eased administrative tasks such as recording of lectures and marking attendance (Mukhtar et al., 2020). The use of modern technology gives professors the freedom to experiment in their teaching practice and the ability to make changes if something is unsuccessful, thus they are able to pick up on principles of innovation and efficiency (Stoeva, 2018). More importantly, online education gives learning and teaching a new relevance to contemporary society and professional occupation, which is undoubtedly indispensable in this industrial era (Walker, 2015). Besides, instructors stand a golden chance of reinforcing their

content and skills within the context of a virtual classroom as this experience enables them to improve their expertise in a continuous and pragmatic way (Holmes, 2013). Especially in the case of COVID-19, it is reported that the “forced readiness” brought about optimistic sentiments from educators regarding their rapid transition to online teaching (Cutri et al., 2020).

Objectively speaking, online learning has a multitude of limitations, and whether the benefits outweigh the drawbacks depends on the personal judgment of teachers and students. Needless to say, this kind of training requires people to frequently utilize technology - a highly functional tool that is often accompanied by glitches (Gautam, 2020). Furthermore, for students who lack motivation and independence, e-learning may lead to negative impressions, decreased productivity, and worsened performance (Zounek & Sudický, 2013). On the instructors’ part, they would be obligated to expend more time and effort in the management of learners, which can be extremely difficult and exhausting. Virtual classroom modalities currently practiced in education tend to make individuals undergo contemplation and remoteness; as a result, teachers and students engaging in online courses are likely to experience signs of social isolation due to the absence of real-time interactions (Sander, 2019). On top of that, the issue of academic integrity within the context of distance learning is especially complicated since it is very challenging for educators to detect cheating during online assessments (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Last but not least, the remote nature of online courses classes renders it almost impossible for students to put theory into practice, therefore, their knowledge retention might only last for short-term periods.

### **Characteristics and applications of the peer teaching method**

The history of peer teaching goes as far back as the ancient Greeks’ time, when Aristotle relied on student leaders to tutor fellow learners, thus helping them understand the tenets being taught

(Sturdivant & Souhan, 2011). By definition, peer teaching is a method in which one student instructs other students in an area of knowledge on which the former is an expert and the latter is a novice (Briggs, 2013). This is usually facilitated through student-led activities such as educational workshops, learning partnerships, and collaborative projects (Boud, 2001). As summarized in a review of the literature, the direct advantages of peer teaching to the students receiving assistance include improvements in academic performance, classroom participation, organization, and motivation. Besides, tutors also benefit from instructing other learners in that they were able to strengthen their understanding of class content, acquire an increased sense of confidence and efficacy, as well as demonstrate better attendance and reduced tardiness. On a school-wide level, peer teaching creates an opportunity for learners to obtain individualized attention as teachers now have more time to differentiate instruction according to their students' needs and wants (Monaghan, 2014). By and large, peer teaching has proved to be an effective method of training to distinct groups of people, therefore it should be further investigated and implemented in the field of education.

Research carried out by Ali and his colleagues (2015) indicates that there are three main types of peer tutoring: reciprocal peer tutoring, class-wide peer tutoring, and cross-age peer tutoring. In the first kind, students alternate between the roles of tutor and tutee, which means they are given the chance to practice the skills necessary for both positions. Reciprocal peer tutoring allows each learner to ameliorate their own studies by teaching a review lesson, monitoring other students, and evaluating group work (Sturdivant, 2017). With class-wide peer tutoring, the whole class is divided into smaller groups that include students of different ability levels who would take turns helping one another grasp the course content. It has been shown that changing up the groups and roles of learners on a regular basis can keep them motivated and improve socialization (Delquari et al., 1986). Finally, in cross-age peer

tutoring, older students with a higher academic background are given the task of teaching younger ones who are less proficient in the subject matter. This method enables the tutor to ‘construct a meaningful interaction with younger children’ and enhance interpersonal qualities such as empathy, altruism, and self-esteem (Yogev & Ronen, 1982). A characteristic shared by these three types of peer-tutoring is that they involve separating a classroom of students into pairs or groups because doing so would maximize the efficiency of the teaching and learning processes.

The peer-mediated approach has been applied in a variety of academic disciplines within the context of both general and tertiary education. Govan (2015) documents the effects that peer teaching has on the field of digital forensics through the examination of the pedagogy and andragogy of such method. In this particular study, two senior students joined each group of four-to-six junior students to lead their subordinates through practical activities designed to explore the concepts introduced in formal lecture settings. As expected, all learners were able to grasp a deeper understanding of the subject as well as take responsibility for their own studies; specifically, the tutors became more conscious of the cognitive processes of simplification, clarification, exemplification and differentiation. In Kenya, as a result of the implementation of peer teaching in mathematics, the performance of both learners and tutors increased significantly as measured by the Students’ Achievement Test (Oloo et al., 2016). This research also demonstrates that participants develop several positive characteristics, including optimistic attitude, improved self discipline, and good moral behavior. Furthermore, students at the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology also engage in peer tutoring by exchanging constructive feedback and motivational dialogue. This illustrates that the peer teaching modality can be extended to vocational education settings as it has received a satisfactory response from the majority of learners (Leijten & Chan, 2012).

# OVERVIEW OF STUDY

## The need of the study

In order to improve the quality of English courses and support programs offered by The Synesthetes, collecting and analysing data about student's attitudes toward their online learning must be prioritized. Within the context of this study, learners are allowed to express their opinions about the online course they are participating in and about their experience being taught by peer tutors. In addition, teachers (mainly student volunteers of a similar age group) can reflect on the work they have done and modify their approach to make the classes more comfortable and effective for both the tutor and tutees.

More importantly, in the current Vietnamese public school system, the majority of students only learn from their schools or attend extra classes, all of which are taught by teachers with high qualifications in their area of expertise. Meanwhile, much research has shown that peer teaching is an extremely efficacious method to enhance learners' academic performance and help them develop interpersonal skills. There is a serious need for new programs in Vietnam which implements the peer tutoring modality to test whether this is a better way for students in the K-12 sector to learn outside of school than enrolling in extra classes led by experienced teachers.

Finally, The Synesthetes' online programs pay special attention to two particular skills in English: listening and speaking. Meanwhile, reading and writing exercises are often not covered in great detail as learners are expected to train independently in these areas. This is an unconventional route, considering that school curricula tend to focus on fulfilling the minimum English grammar requirement for students. The level of success reflected by participants through the surveys and interviews would help The Synesthetes draw out a clearer and stronger path for future programs.

## **Research questions**

Through this study, the potential applicability of online peer teaching in the English subject is brought to the test. One way to address this is by surveying students about their own education, starting with a scale rating for overall experience, followed by factors in separate areas of research - peer teaching, online learning, and skill improvement. To achieve the aforementioned purpose, the following are the most significant questions that this investigation sets out to answer:

- 1 According to learners, what aspects of teaching have the tutors (student volunteers) done satisfactorily thus far?
- 2 What are the learners' opinions on the advantages and disadvantages of being taught by a student of their age?
- 3 Do learners find online courses, specifically those provided by The Synesthetes, practical and effective?
- 4 Which English skills (reading - writing - listening - speaking) do learners feel like they have improved the most?

The participants' answers in the survey are expected to corroborate the learning results measured by The Synesthetes in the checkpoint exams given to students after every two units. These assessments are designed to test the amount of knowledge retained by learners in all four skills and help peer teachers determine which areas to focus on in the future.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants**

All participants are students attending the six-month programs provided by The Synesthetes, in which they were taught comprehensive English skills with a focus on speaking and listening. The classroom environment is entirely online through the

video-conferencing application Zoom, and teachers are student volunteers aged 14 to 19 who are members of The Synesthetes. Learners are students from middle and high schools in remote areas of Vietnam, particularly Hai Duong, Vinh Phuc, Hoa Binh, and Phu Tho, where the educational standards are much lower than in big cities like Hanoi. The average student in these provinces do not have many opportunities to receive language training and improve their English skills in the two aforementioned areas, listening and speaking. Out of the 600 students enrolled in The Synesthetes' English classes, 130 students filled out a short questionnaire and five students took part in a phone interview, all of whom were selected using random sampling.

### **Data collection**

A questionnaire was sent out to 130 students, asking questions in the following areas: effectiveness of English courses; helpfulness of peer tutors in class; enthusiasm level of learners; likelihood to attend future online classes; most and least improved skills; students' expectations, difficulties, and motivation; and suggestions to enhance teaching quality. Subsequently, five students were contacted for follow-up interviews, which investigate similar areas as the questionnaire but focuses on garnering detailed feedback and comments from individual learners. Both the questionnaire and interviews were conducted in March, six months after The Synesthetes launched its online English courses applying the peer teaching modality. The collected data was subject to qualitative and quantitative analysis, the results of which will be presented in the next section. Using the students' answers, researchers identified revelatory excerpts relevant to the research problem, and these have been organized in four categories as in an effort to describe the participants' experience.

### **Data analysis**

In the survey sent out to 130 students, there are 11 questions in total, all of which can be placed under the four areas of

investigation identified in section 3.2 above. The percentage of learners choosing each answer were calculated for every single question, and the detailed results will be presented in the following part of this paper with additional description. In the phone interviews, five students were asked a similar set of questions, however, they have been adjusted along the course of the conversation based on the individual responses received.

## **FINDINGS**

Based on the responses of learners to the questionnaire, four categories have been derived: the attitudes of students before, during and after the online courses; the skills that have been improved in comparison with the expectations; the existing problems with the current program offerings; and the suggested solutions gained from learners' perspectives.

In terms of the attitudes of students taking parts in the online peer teaching English programs, the overall outcome of the project could be considered successful. Of those surveyed, more than 38% and 27% claimed that the classes were interesting and extremely interesting, respectively. On the other hand, only 1.5% of the students showed their dissatisfaction with the Synesthetes' courses. In addition, when learners were asked about the teachers' enthusiasm and helpfulness, it appears that the tutors had done a great job so far. The majority of participants (70%) reckoned that the peer teachers were very passionate and approachable and none of them thought the teachers were unenthusiastic. Besides, the students were required to rate their levels of concentration and excitement during lessons. Sixty percent of them certainly had a good time in their classroom environment and paid full attention to the materials taught. Around 32% percent of students rated their experience fair and only 0.01% felt distracted and indifferent.

With regard to the skills learners wished to improve before the course and the skills learners actually improved on after the course,

the results seemed astonishing. Most of the students (80%) indicated that they are on track with the class, meaning that they were able to keep up with the pace of everyone else. Specifically, 18% showed that their receptiveness is equal to or above that of their peers while 35% thought their ability is average compared with other students in the class. In all four skills of English, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing, the peer teachers had done a great job since only 0.01% of the students said that they had not improved in any aspect. Meanwhile, 37% of the participants enhanced their reading and listening skills and almost 51% of them could practice better verbal communication. The least developed skill is writing, with 9.5% of learners indicating that their performance ameliorated in this area. When asked which skill they would like to further polish in the future, 70% wanted to improve their listening, 34% wished to improve their speaking, and 45% aimed to improve their writing.

Although 77% of participants expected to have a better command of the English language before starting the course, they still encountered many problems in fulfilling their goals. Forty-nine percent found it challenging to form an efficient learning habit and 19% met with difficulty when utilizing technology. Nearly half of the students surveyed expressed that they had trouble applying the knowledge learned in the classroom to real life circumstances. To tackle these obstacles, around 60% of students tried to stimulate their own learning by watching movies and listening to songs in English. Additionally, 21% created a schedule with suitable times for studying and relaxing, 23% solicited help from friends and teachers when necessary, and 42% actively sought chances to put their skills into practice. These are some of the methods used by learners in order to increase their motivation to study English both in traditional classes at school and in The Synesthetes' online peer teaching programs.

Through the questionnaire, it appeared that most of the participants felt satisfied with the online courses taught by their

peers and indicated that they would be likely to enrol in similar programs. Thirty-six percent of the students would definitely take online classes in the future and 38% of them showed a high possibility of joining The Synesthetes' courses again. Only 2% of learners would not consider participating in another virtual classroom looking forward. On top of that, some useful and practical suggestions were put forward by the students surveyed. A few learners wanted to be assigned homework that was not included in the book so that they could have diverse practice, which would help their knowledge foundation become multiform. Moreover, participants also recommended that peer tutors should be more creative when it comes to their teaching approach and create a more comfortable atmosphere to best facilitate their students' learning. Besides, it is advisable for teachers to adjust the pace of the course to accommodate the majority of students, as some learners felt like they were unable to keep up with the rest of the class.

After students have filled out the survey, follow-up interviews were also conducted to clarify the existing problems and find appropriate solutions. All information gained from the interviews with five learners randomly chosen from five classes was in support of the fact that The Synesthetes' online courses brought various benefits to students in rural areas. Every interviewee said that their ability to communicate using English improved significantly, and so did their academic performance at school. More interestingly, they confessed that they were no longer afraid of English and now found it very interesting. Through the online classes, students realized the importance of learning English in this age of globalization, therefore they were more determined to enhance their language skills. Four out of five interviewees found that the incorporation of fun games into the lessons helped them retain knowledge better as these activities required them to use a combination of different skills. One problem identified within the classroom environment is that the peer teachers' lack of experience in managing student behavior sometimes led to slightly chaotic situations.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study indicate that peer teaching has various benefits, even when implemented on digital platforms. However, some hindrances to the process of providing free English education to students in remote areas are also revealed. These obstacles need to be resolved immediately and reasonably in order to create better opportunities for students in rural regions to learn English effectively.

First and foremost, pre-teaching training for peer tutors should be enhanced. Most of the students volunteering for the project had been trained for a month by experienced teachers about learners' mentality, teaching methodology, online class delivery, and technology utilization. However, there still exist several problems when peer teachers put theory into practice because they are quite young and so have limited experience. Organizing regular meetings and training sessions can be a good idea as tutors will be able to share the issues they are facing in their classes and seek counsel from other teachers in the project as well as the advisory team.

Secondly, another factor that ought to be ameliorated is communication between teachers and students. It has become obvious that most of the tutors and tutees do not have a close relationship since their interactions are entirely online. The geographical distance makes it difficult for them to meet face-to-face or contact regularly in order to build a mutual understanding. Taking this into account, some outdoor activities or informal meetings could be set up at a convenient location for both parties so that students and teachers have a chance to foster a good connection.

Finally, peer tutors should incorporate activities that are both enjoyable and educational into their online lessons. Sitting in front of a computer for hours without interactions with other students may be extremely difficult, thus teachers can come up with fun

games through which learners can practice their skills. Since tutors are required to complete their schooling in addition to delivering online classes, they need a supporting team whose job is to put together activities that help students find the joys in learning.

## **LIMITATIONS**

Given the design of this survey, specifically the questions being asked, it is important to note that there are still many external factors contributing to the percentages of each answer choice. Students were taught in different classes with different teachers, even when they are of the same level in the CEFR scale. In addition, the participant pool consists of students from five different schools with distinct learning schedules and demographics. Despite these dissimilarities, all peer teachers follow the same curriculum for their level and keep the same objectives in mind for each lesson. Nevertheless, the main goal of the survey is to help the administrators determine the right path to take when planning out future educational programs to support students in the countryside and inspire them in their learning journey.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In our research, we intended to capture the main outcomes and drawbacks of online peer teaching through courses delivered by The Synesthetes in an effort to increase the students' motivation to learn English. We employed parallel quantitative and qualitative methods, such as general questionnaire and focus group interviews, to evaluate the efficiency of the course.

The peer teaching model is relatively new in Vietnam, therefore it has not yet been implemented in formal academic settings. The feedback garnered from the first six months of the project have proven the expected results, but this topic calls for further investigation. Based on the findings of this survey, several possible avenues for future research are offered.

- 1 Since there are still external and overlapping factors that render some aspects of the survey insignificant, there should be additional studies with a focus on either peer teaching or online learning that implements a well-designed experimental method.
- 2 Because the participant pool only consists of students from two regions of Vietnam, further research should be conducted with learners from other locations and with a larger participation rate in order to arrive at a more generalized conclusion.
- 3 As the study looked into online learning and peer teaching in one type of program, other studies might provide a better comparison between these innovative methods and more traditional ones, such as peer teaching in a face-to-face format, or online courses taught by experienced teachers.

## **AUTHOR**

Phuong Nguyen Le has been a teacher of English in Vietnam for nearly 20 years. Her passion is to help students become exuberant in English learning and achieve their goals in a natural way. In pursuit of this, in 2019, with her group of Vietnamese students among whom Anh Le Ngoc My and Quan Tran Anh are of the most enthusiastic members, The Synesthetes was founded. There are nearly 700 students from 15 schools in rural areas who have benefited from this non-profit project through a variety of activities.

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# First Year Students' Self-Directed English Vocabulary Learning During Covid 19 Pandemic at a University in Viet Nam

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**Thuy Thi Thanh Pham**

Hanoi National University of Education  
*phamthanhthuy09@gmail.com*

**Nga Hong Ha**

Hanoi National University of Education  
*nga.hahong@gmail.com*

## Abstract

The year 2020 witnessed a different circumstance related to first year students because of the COVID 19 pandemic. From taking the special entrance exam to enrolling as freshmen at university, the experience was etched deeply in each student's mind. This research paper investigates the comprehensive techniques these students applied to self-direct their English learning, including picking up vocabulary for the subject English 1 at their tertiary institution, while the COVID 19 pandemic still continues worldwide. Success in mastering a foreign language is partly because of developing effective techniques of self-directed vocabulary accumulation. Key research methods are semester-2 class observations (school year 2020-2021) and direct interviews for students at the beginning and the end of semester (or qualitative methodology). After that, major findings are discussed thoroughly culminating in a final conclusion and pedagogical implications for language teaching and learning.

**Keywords:** *self-directed English learning, 1<sup>st</sup> year students, COVID 19 pandemic, English 1, vocabulary*

## **INTRODUCTION**

For first-year students, much time and effort is required to get used to the new educational environment at their tertiary institution. The year 2020 presented a challenging experience to freshmen, which required their adaptation and flexibility. In terms of English studying, these students showed their thirst for pursuing higher level to get themselves fitted with the era of 21st science and technology. It is necessary for them to self-direct their English learning including English vocabulary.

A diverse range of vocabulary leads to their confidence in obtaining satisfactory scores in all four skills of English. Due to worldwide expansion of COVID 19 pandemic, during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021), these freshmen underwent 4 weeks of online self-study with the assistance from lecturers at Hanoi National University of Education. Furthermore, in the further 7 weeks of face-to-face class attendance, they still needed to self-direct their English vocabulary in addition to direct class time.

As a result, our research paper aims at investigating which techniques these students utilized so as to self-direct their vocabulary accumulating for better scores on the speaking test, the mid-term test and the end-of-term test, as well as their challenges to do that job throughout semester 2 at university. Proposed pedagogical implications will be written down for discussion among students, teachers, educators and all those concerned.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Self-directed language learning**

There have been a number of authors who have written in detail on self-directed learning, including self-directed language learning. According to Williamson (2007), self-directed learning is a learning process in which learners have the major responsibility, and they work individually and independently in their learning process.

Shannon (2008) stated that, in self-directed learning process, learners become responsible to be managers of their own learning activities and processes. Hendry and Ginns (2009) held a similar idea that, self-directed learning is a process in which learners make their own decisions related to studies, or in which learners are responsible for deciding about their own learning processes.

In terms of self-directed language learning, Moradi H. (2018, p.63) explained that, language learners decide for themselves, and they freely make decisions about different aspects of their learning, since they have the key responsibility of their learning processes in active learning. Hence, students learn by their own purposeful attempts rather than simply follow their instructors' decisions.

### **Self-directed vocabulary learning**

Vocabulary has been considered one of the most pivotal factors contributing to success in language learning. Therefore, self-directed vocabulary acquisition is undeniably essential in order to master four skills of a foreign language.

One research confirmed that, “vocabulary acquisition research has established itself as a central research focus for language acquisition researchers” (Henriksen, 1999, p.303). Another author called Wu, J. (2015, p.191) confirmed that, vocabulary knowledge is a key indicator of overall language ability and that vocabulary learning is relevant to the development of all language learning skills. For instance, vocabulary learning has a strong correlation with reading comprehension (Nation, 2006) and quality writing (Laufer & Nation, 1995).

Research has been conducted on different techniques to learn vocabulary, ranging from learning vocabulary in context (Hedge, 2000; Davies and Pearse, 2000) to learning vocabulary without context (Oxford & Scarcella, 1994). Sahandri and partners (2009) categorized techniques of students' acquiring vocabulary from mostly used ones: deciding, memorizing, metacognition, awareness,

and society. From then, the authors made a list of techniques to learn vocabulary, as follows: (1) using a language dictionary, (2) guessing meanings from context, (3) learning new words through repetition, (4) forming correlations between the word and its synonyms and antonyms, (5) putting new words in sentences, (6) using media channels in English, (7) taking notes, (8) learning sounds of words, (9) repeating list of new words, (10) writing paragraphs with numerous new words, (11) learning new words with classmates, (12) asking classmates for meanings of new words (13) testing equivalent words in mother tongue, (14) miming new words, (15) talking to native speakers, (16) asking teachers for the meanings of new words.

In Viet Nam, many works were carried out in the field of self-directed vocabulary learning. Phung Van Đe (2012) investigated 400 non-English majors at Tra Vinh University in 2009. Findings showed that students were highly aware of the significance of English vocabulary; however, the fact students' actual learning did not reflect that awareness. Experimental study proposed two effective techniques for learning English vocabulary: flash cards and rewriting words many times, which could be applied for use with a large number of students. Ngo Thị Kim Thanh (2018) studied factors affecting students' ESP vocabulary learning at the Department of Work, University of Traffic and Transportation. She investigated 200 students of courses 55, 56 after they finished learning ESP and interviewed lecturers of English Division. Findings showed three factors affecting students' ESP vocabulary learning including: the word itself, learners, and methods of teaching.

### **Research questions**

This study deals with the following research questions:

- i) What difficulties did freshmen face while studying English vocabulary during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?

ii) What techniques did these students utilize to self-direct their English vocabulary studying during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?

iii) How effective did lecturers assist the students to conquer English vocabulary during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Settings and participants**

This research study was conducted with freshmen during their 11-week second semester (school year 2020-2021) at a tertiary institution. These students experienced 4 weeks of online self-study with the assistance from their lecturers because of the COVID 19 pandemic, face-to-face learning for 3 weeks at the beginning of semester 2, and the other 4 weeks at the end of semester.

Participants of the research included both male and female first-year students (ages 18-19) from 6 A1-level classes, originating from a variety of faculties and hundreds of family backgrounds. These students were active and enthusiastic to attend class, both online and offline, and participated in a diverse range of activities.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The research paper was written based on findings collected from one A1 level class' semester 2 observations and direct interviews with 30 randomly selected students from six A1 level classes, and with the assistance of results in vocabulary tests after each Unit in the course book (New English File - pre-intermediate). Generally, the major methods of the research included both qualitative and quantitative ones.

After data was collected, findings from class observation and interviews were analysed in details and scores of vocabulary tests were shown in percentage.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

First and foremost, findings from semester 2 class observation are discussed specifically. The class observed was a A1-level class of 62 students. The purpose of the class observations was to notice what difficulties students faced while self-directing their vocabulary learning through the course book, vocabulary books, and from other authentic materials such as movies, songs, and adverts. Moreover, students' own techniques to self-direct their vocabulary learning are considered together with lecturers' guidance and help.

For the first three weeks of face-to-face attendance, students tended to be rather relaxed, as they had just finished the first semester exams and the lunar new year was coming soon. Hard-working students still learned diligently and expressed themselves well with active participation in class activities and excellent results in vocabulary exercises. By contrast, those students who did not spend much time on English vocabulary learning paid more attention to activities outside the class; they just attended the English class as compulsory. Consequently, their performance in class was of worse quality.

The lecturer instructed students in techniques for self-study vocabulary outside of class time and assigned them vocabulary tasks from course book (vocabulary bank for unit 1, 2, 3 and vocabulary from other sections in the course book) during both offline and online class time.

For the next four weeks of online work, students learnt from exercises posted on the self-study webpage (namely [fitel.hnue.edu.vn](http://fitel.hnue.edu.vn)). Lecturers had the responsibility to prepare online teaching materials for students, including PowerPoint slides, lecture videos, automatically scored online exercises, supplementary exercises and materials, and homework set with certain deadline. Vocabulary is a necessary part of the PowerPoint slides for lectures in the course book of New English File

(pre-intermediate) with parts of speech, meanings, phonetic symbols and examples being covered.

Besides online materials, students also attended online Zoom lectures weekly with their lecturer and talked to lecturers and other classmates in Zalo group. It was observed that students showed eagerness and happiness to interact with their lecturer during their studying at home because of the COVID 19 pandemic. The students with good or excellent English proficiency levels spent more time learning vocabulary and English; the rest just completed the compulsory exercises before the deadline and did not spend time self-studying vocabulary. Therefore, the ones who did not make their hardest effort to acquire vocabulary by themselves did not make much progress in English learning. Lecturer sent the whole class online vocabulary tests for Unit 1,2 during home time and for Unit 3 at the end of the semester. Undeniably, hard-working students quickly finished the tests; the worse students did not display much satisfaction when the lecturer asked them to finish the tests and asked them to add up their mid-term test scores once they had finished the tests.

After 4 weeks of online class time, students learnt for four other offline weeks. This returning to school witnessed differences between diligent students and those who did not spend much time learning vocabulary by themselves in real performance in class. Those who frequently acquired vocabulary made considerable progress with good results in exercises from the course book, speaking test and mid-term test; the students who did not invest time in self-studying vocabulary were more likely to possess worse results although they showed their wish for good scores. The latter blamed lack of time and weak Internet connectivity for their poor performance.

Secondly, here are findings for vocabulary tests (Unit 1, 2, 3 in the course book). There were 311 answers (6 classes) for vocabulary Unit 1&2 test; among them were 9 below 50% scores, the rest of

the 302 answers were above 50% scores; and 242 answers ranged from 70% to 98% scores. For vocabulary Unit 3 test, just 101 students submitted answers. Among them, only 10 students scored below 50%; the rest of the 91 students scored above 50%. 64 answers were between 70% to 100% scores. Findings showed that majority of the students held rather effective techniques for self-directed vocabulary learning. Clearly, merely a few students did not prove their efficient vocabulary self-acquiring techniques as for low scores in vocabulary tests.

Next are findings from students' interviews at the beginning and at the end of semester 2. Randomly selected five students from each class of 6 A1-level classes (in total, 30 students) answered the questions for direct interviews.

At the beginning of semester 2, all 30 students knew for sure the term self-directed English learning. All of them were highly aware of benefits and drawbacks of self-studying English during COVID 19 pandemic. They said that students had difficulties in directly interacting with other classmates and lecturers; thus, they could not comprehend the lectures deeply and their questions were not responded in details. In terms of techniques to self-direct vocabulary learning, they suggested watching movies with English subtitles and listening to English songs, learning English with apps, studying with flash cards, learning vocabulary on specific topics or learning a certain number of new words daily (5-10 words). As far as suggestions for lecturers' assistance were concerned, students asked that lecturers respond frequently to their questions, weekly vocabulary test and assessment, sharing with them reliable vocabulary reference sources (books or links) or playing video with English subtitles in class.

At the end of the semester 2, the students did work by themselves in self-studying vocabulary. They still applied techniques similar to what the students proposed at the beginning of semester 2. Some students admitted that they did not spend much time learning

vocabulary outside class; thus, their vocabulary range did not increase much. However, the others confirmed that they did make progress in vocabulary and 4 skills of English at the end of semester as they diligently added up new words weekly to widen their vocabulary range. It was good news that they could understand the teacher's lectures much better after 11 weeks of semester 2. All the students assessed lecturers' proper and enthusiastic assistance well in guiding them to learn new words and testing their vocabulary throughout semester 2. Their help contributed to their easier comprehending lectures, materials and better results in compulsory online exercises, course book tasks, speaking test and mid-term test.

The above mentioned research questions were responded appropriately in the study. For the first research question (What difficulties did freshmen face while studying English vocabulary during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?), it could be seen obviously from the findings that, such troubles students encountered included being stressed at home during COVID-19 pandemic, self-managing their own study plans without frequent offline meetings with their classmates and lecturers. These difficulties prevented them from frequently acquiring vocabulary by themselves for best scores in vocabulary tests, speaking test and mid-term test. The second research question (What techniques did these students utilize to self-direct their English vocabulary studying during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?) was answered in findings from class observation and students' interviews. The students made use of diverse techniques to self-direct their English vocabulary learning such as watching movies with English subtitles, listening to English songs, learning English with apps, studying with flash cards, learning vocabulary on specific topics or learning a certain number of new words daily (5-10 words), talking to their lecturers on Zoom, Zalo whenever they are in difficulties with English acquiring. All these techniques were beneficial to them on their way to master English vocabulary. The final research question (How effective did lecturers assist the

students to conquer English vocabulary during semester 2 (school year 2020-2021) at H.N.U.E?) was dealt with comprehensively in findings for class observation, vocabulary tests and students' interviews. Specifically, lecturers assisted the students throughout the semester. They gave them online Zoom lectures, responded to their questions properly on Zalo app, guided them how to self-direct their English vocabulary, assigned them vocabulary exercises to accomplish weekly and testing their vocabulary knowledge after each Unit in the course book. Obviously, the lecturers managed to assist the students who worked as participants of this research with utmost effort. That resulted in comparatively good scores in the vocabulary tests and students' on-going progress throughout the semester.

### **Implications**

The following suggestions are for teachers to guide and instruct students to self-direct their vocabulary studying:

First of all, teachers share with students effective techniques to learn vocabulary both online and offline at the beginning of semester. Secondly, they can also send them reliable authentic vocabulary sources and materials on specific topics. Thirdly, teachers should enthusiastically help their students whenever they have troubles in figuring out certain new words. Fourthly, to make it more effective, teachers assign students appropriate vocabulary tasks in course books or other vocabulary books. Fifthly, teachers design vivid effective online vocabulary tasks (Google Form) and games (Kahoot, Quizlet, Quizizz) for students to test their vocabulary frequently. Finally, teachers weekly test students' vocabulary for on-going assessment during semester.

## **CONCLUSION**

The research paper summarized theories of self-directed English learning and vocabulary learning. After that, the topic was discussed more specifically basing on class observation, students'

interviews and vocabulary test scores.

Obviously, most of the participants were aware of the importance of self-studying vocabulary during the semester and used effective techniques to increase vocabulary number frequently. A few of them were still not hard-working enough to make progress at the end of semester, which could be seen in poor performance in class and low test scores (speaking test and mid-term test).

For limited time and scope of study, the research is expected to be widened for larger number of participants at HNUE and other tertiary institutions.

## **AUTHOR**

Thuy Thi Thanh Pham, M.A, Ph.D Student, started her career of teaching English in 2004 at Hanoi National University of Education. She earned her M.A degree in University of Languages and International Studies - Hanoi National University in 2008. At present, she is taking 3-year Ph.D course on Linguistics in Hanoi. She majors in 4 skills of English, vocabulary, linguistics and methods of teaching and learning English. She has attended a number of conferences in Vietnam and overseas, including VietTESOL Convention International Conference 2020, 17th CamTESOL International Conference 2021, Glocall International Conference 2019 in Danang, 1st International Conference on Innovation in Learning Instruction and Teacher Education 2019 in Hanoi National University of Education. Her slogan is “You cannot live the 2nd time, so live and work with love at your fullest effort!”

Nga Hong Ha, M.A is currently Vice-Dean of English Faculty, Hanoi National University of Education. She has worked as a teacher-trainer in English teaching since her graduation from Hanoi University – Viet Nam in 1990. Her major interests include linguistics, 4 skills of English, E.S.P, English teaching and studying methodology. She has attended a number of training courses and conferences in Viet Nam and overseas.

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# Using Kahoot! to Enhance Students' Motivation in Distance-Learning Classrooms During Covid-19 Break

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**Vy Nguyen**

Vietnam-USA Society Language Center, Vietnam  
*vynguyen2807.k39@gmail.com*

**Huong Ngo**

Vietnam-USA Society Language Center, Vietnam

## **Abstract**

This research studied the effect of Kahoot! on students' motivation in the quarantine time during which the interactions between teachers and students, students and students are limited. As students were forced to study online using online conference-based applications such as Zoom or Google Meet, they were more likely to lose focus, which led to the reduction of teaching quality. In order to maintain students' interests and engage them in the lessons, teachers have applied the use of an online game platform in the process of teaching. This application of online game platforms in teaching proven to be effective in traditional classrooms, however, no research has been conducted to look into the effects it has on students in online classrooms. The students in the survey are teenagers whose ages ranging from twelve to fifteen. The study investigated students' motivation before and after Kahoot! was applied in online lessons with a qualitative approach using surveys and observation to collect data about students' motivation. Overall, the findings suggested that students were more willing to engage and invest themselves in the lessons when Kahoot! was used. We also learned that Kahoot! helped reduce distracting behaviors in students and improved the dynamics of the lesson in general.

**Keywords:** *Kahoot!, student motivation*

# INTRODUCTION

In the time of the pandemic COVID 19, teaching and learning language has become a challenge, especially in the lockdown time when the interaction between students and teacher was limited to the computer screen. The task of attracting and maintaining student attention is harder due to the non-academic environment at home, students are surrounded by personal devices and social media applications, which tends to distract them from their studying (Dontre, 2020). In addition to that, teaching online limits the face-to-face interaction between the teacher and students and between students and students which causes negativity feeling in students towards online learning and make it harder for the teacher to deliver the lessons (Tichavsky, Hunt, Driscoll, Jicha, 2015).

In order to keep the students focused and engaged, there was a dire need for new and innovative tools and methods. Kahoot! as a free and highly interactive platform, offers an efficient tool for the teachers to make the lessons, especially virtual lessons, more lively and appealing for students.

The study aims to inspect the effect of using Kahoot! on VUS students' motivation. The objectives are:

- To find out an effective tool for distance learning lessons
- To improve students' motivation towards learning English

Online-based lessons require teachers to be more creative and flexible in order to maintain students' focus and interests in the lesson since the environment at home gives students abundant other sources of entertainment.

Kahoot! as game-based teaching aids might be a useful tool for teachers to provide fun and intriguing activities. However, the effectiveness of applying Kahoot! in English lessons and to which extent Kahoot! helps with student motivation are still in question.

The study attempts to answer the following question:

*What attitude do students have towards Kahoot! activity in online classrooms?*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Motivation**

#### ***Definition***

According to Dornyei and Skehan (2003), motivation was defined as a factor which has impact on people's decisions and willingness to continue doing the activity, as well as their efforts on doing it. In the educational aspect, Ahmad (2008) defined "motivation to learn" as something that students thought school-related tasks as meaningful and worth doing activity. With that way of thinking, students would try hard to benefit from learning. Sharing the same idea, Ormrod (2000) claimed that motivation helped with maintaining students' learning behaviors, and pushed them forward in the right directions. Besides, Harmer (2007) indicated that "motivation is some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2007). Sharing the same view, Mayer (2003) described motivation as "an internal state that initiates and maintains goal-directed behavior. It is an inducement to action" Although these researchers approached motivation definition in different ways, they all shared the same point of view that motivation is *a combination of effort and desire to accomplish something difficult*.

#### ***Types of Motivation***

##### ***Intrinsic Motivation***

Intrinsic motivation is the self-desire to seek out new things and new challenges, to analyze one's capacity, to observe and to gain knowledge (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In simple words, intrinsic motivation is the desire to accomplish goals and develop

professionally. In further research, intrinsic motivation was considered as one of the finest form of motivation, which can lead to many different advantages such as “enjoyment, persistence, and psychological well-being” (Deci & Ryan, 2008)

Intrinsic motivation is created by people having a personal interest in accomplishing something difficult and the need to create new and better things for themselves and others. (Deci & Ryan, 1980)

According to Deci & Ryan (2002), educators would consider intrinsic motivation to be more preferable and to have a better effect on improving students’ learning outcomes than extrinsic motivation. Moreover, Middleton, Leavy and Leader (2013) has shown a report on the dramatic increase in students’ academic performances thanks to the rise of students’ intrinsic motivation.

### *Extrinsic Motivation*

Contrary to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation refers to the performance of an activity in order to attain the desired outcome (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In simple words, extrinsic motivation is the desire to obtain valued outcomes that are separate from the work itself. In opposition to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is created by people engaging in the work in order to achieve something outside of the work itself such as money, health insurance, etc.

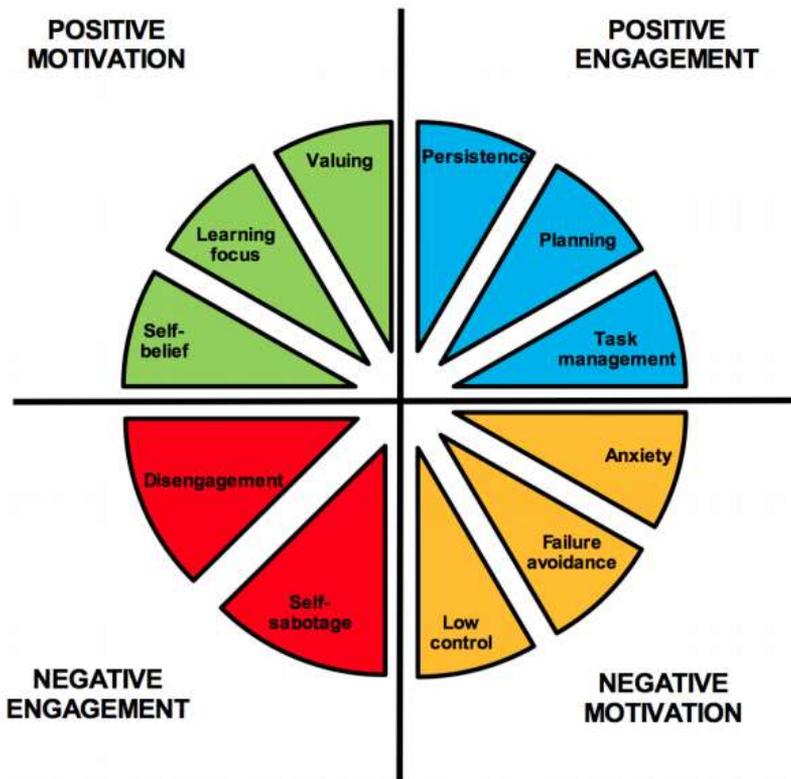
Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is driven by rewards such as praise, awards, bonuses and the fear for failure or punishment. (Wigfield, Guthrie, Tonks, & Perencivick, 2004)

According to Deci & Ryan (2008), extrinsic motivation helps with promoting activities that are considered as not “intrinsically interesting”. However, extensive use of extrinsic motivation would lead to a decrease in genuine motivation of students (Kohn, 1999).

## ***How to measure students' motivation***

Martin A.J. (2017) developed a system called Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel to measure student motivation based on eleven elements divided into four main attributes: positive motivation, positive engagement, negative engagement, negative motivation.

**Figure 1.** *Motivation and Engagement Wheel*



Positive motivation is the students' urge and desire to learn and accomplish, including self-belief, learning focus and valuing school.

Students who have self-belief are confident of their ability to face challenges and do well in school. They believe that they can understand schoolwork and perform well at school.

1. If students are learning-focused, they tend to enjoy learning, and learn for their own satisfaction instead of rewards. Their attention is set on gaining more knowledge and skills. Additionally, they find pleasure in acquiring new skills and information.
2. Students who value school believe what they learn at school is important and relevant to their personal life and to the current world in general. They understand that what they learn at school can help them in other aspects of their life.
3. Meanwhile, positive engagement is the positive behaviors that follow the aforementioned positive motivation, consisting of persistence and planning and task management.
4. Persistence behavior in students expresses through their determination to carry on when facing difficulties in learning until the problem is solved.
5. When a student plans and monitors their own learning progress they know clearly what they need to do and prepare in advance their studying progress.
6. Task management indicates the students' ability to arrange their personal time and space for study and homework.
7. In summary, positive motivation and positive engagement are elements that activate students' enthusiasm for studying.
8. Contrary to positive motivation and engagement, negative motivation and engagement hinder students from doing well at school.

Negative motivation comprised three main components: anxiety, low control and failure avoidance

1. Students' anxiety is shown through two indications: worrying and feeling nervous. Worrying is the students fear of not doing well at school. While symptoms such as heart racing, sweat,

nausea before or when doing the schoolwork or examinations are typical signs of feeling nervous.

2. Students who have low control lack confidence in themselves to do well at school as well as have no clue how to improve their performance at school. They often feel lost at what to do and have no plan for their studying.
3. Failure avoidance is noticeable in students who tend to set their goal to avoid failure instead of aiming for success. They fixated on avoiding poor performance at school out of fear of disappointing their parents or teachers.
4. All these negative motivation above eventually lead students to negative engagement (action)
5. Students have a tendency to self-sabotage their own study process when they procrastinate doing schoolwork or use the time that was meant for studying for other activities.
6. Disengagement referring to resigning thoughts and emotions which push students to trying less at school and getting detached from any class or school activities.
7. In short, negative motivation and engagement are destructive intention and behaviors that undermine their effort in studying process.

## **Kahoot!**

### ***Using Kahoot! in language teaching***

Using gamification in teaching has been proved in many studies to successfully motivate students prompting teachers to include them in their lessons. Furthermore, with new technology activities in classrooms have shifted from basic student-response system to game-based students response system (GSRS), particularly Kahoot!" (Wang, 2015)

Including technology in teaching lessons has become a common practice among teachers to aid motivating and engaging factors in the classroom. Additionally, the advanced technology can also help with tracking and evaluating students progress. Supporting this view point, Koile and Singer (2006) agreed that students are more willing to participate in learning and deliberately keep track of their own learning progress when game-based activities are involved.

Kahoot! provides a free platform for learning through educational games, which help inspire and engage students. The system allows students and teachers to interact with each other on a real-time basis, which makes the learning process more exciting and competitive for students.

Scores are measured based on the accuracy and the time of the answer, reshaping the conventional tasks into dynamic activities. After each question, names of the top players are displayed on the screen, prompting students to try harder to complete the tasks. Kahoot! also supports teachers with a full report of students' results, including how many correct answers each student gets. It was mentioned in Plump and LaRosa (2017) that Kahoot! is an easy tool to use as it requires no professional training for teachers.

### ***How Kahoot! motivate students' learning***

According to Tapper (2014), students are reluctant to direct ask and answer activities because they are afraid of losing faces and being thought of as an attention-seeker by their peers. Many pieces of research have shown that students are not likely to ask public questions and prefer to be anonymous (Exeter et al. 2010), which could lead to the reduction of students' engagement in classroom activities. The continuity of this situation could lead to the increase of students' avoidance of making their own decision (Dediu 2015), which may also negatively impact deep learning. However, GSRs' use such as Kahoot! guarantee students' anonymity when they interact with others and acquire new knowledge (e.g. Wang 2015).

According to Papastergiou (2009) and Siegle (2015), students' development of cognition, motivation and emotion can be enhanced with the help of educational games. These are proven to be effectively used as a learning tool for high school students. Unlike traditional educational games which need face-to-face interactions, gamification is more easily accessible through the use of student response systems. In traditional classrooms, the student response system can be used in a large classroom (Plump and LaRosa, 2017). The gamification process has been used in recent decades. However, with the rapid growth of technology, it has helped teachers apply the interventions in more collaborative and distributed contexts (Holmes and Gee 2016).

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Participants and Research Site**

The subjects of the study were the students of the Young Innovators 1 class in Vietnam USA Society language center (VUS) in Phu Nhuan district. There were 120 students in the seven class. All of them are between the age of twelve to fifteen and in the pre-intermediate level. Since VUS is the language center, students were less likely to be affected by the scores of the tests like they were in their secondary school. Therefore, it could be seen that their motivation was one of the major factors that made them study in class.

Through observation, teachers noticed that in this class, students seemed to be less motivated in online teaching lessons, showing boredom and remaining silent when being assigned the tasks by the teacher. However, in contrast to this, they tended to have more energy in face-to-face classes where they could compete in teams or win a game in class. Moreover, using games with competitive features helped teachers to gain students' attention more easily.

Considering the effects of Kahoot! on students' motivation in learning, the teachers decided to apply Kahoot! in online teaching lessons with the hope of improving students' motivation to pay attention and participate in class activities.

During the Covid-19 breakout, VUS shifted all the offline classes which lasted 3 hours each session into online classes which lasted only one hour per lesson. Therefore, within only 1 hour of teaching, teachers had to deliver the lesson and draw students' attention to help the class go smoothly and effectively. With the help of Kahoot!, these could be achieved easily.

## **Instruments**

### ***Questionnaire***

In this study, survey questionnaire is used to give answers to the research question. Students were asked to complete Google forms to state how they felt about learning online with the help of Kahoot! during the lessons.

The questionnaire was designed using the Likert scale, in which items range from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). By answering the questions in the survey, teachers can collect data and compare to see how much the students' learning is affected by Kahoot!.

The survey was conducted at the end of the study period when students studied the lessons with Kahoot! activity. This survey questionnaire helped the teachers to see the attitude that students had towards the application of Kahoot! in online lessons. Students were asked to complete the Google form sent to them through the Chat session in Zoom setting. Once students finished filling in the forms, the results were automatically collected by Google for analyzing later.

### **Teacher's observation**

During classroom meetings, one teacher was in charge of teaching, the other teacher observed and took note of the students' reactions during normal activities and Kahoot! activities in online lessons. Through the cameras, teachers could have a close view at students' faces and reactions to see how they felt and thought about the

activities that teachers had designed for them. The data from the classroom observations helped teachers to measure the differences between two classes' motivations through carefully observing both the positive elements such as "self-belief", "learning-focus", "persistence", "value-schooling", "planning and monitoring" and the negative elements such as "anxiety", "low control", "failure avoidance" and "self-sabotage".

### **Data collection and analysis procedure**

Due to Covid-19, the city has been locked down and classes have been changed from face-to-face classes to online classes. It depended on the schools to choose what facilities to be used to teach online. After considering the pros and cons, VUS has decided to employ Zoom as a platform for online teaching and learning. Zoom offered a variety of functions for easy teaching. One of the functions in Zoom that helped the use of Kahoot! going smoothly was the "Share screen" function.

The "share screen" function allowed students to see the screen on their teachers' computer. In order to use Kahoot! as an activity, teachers needed to make sure that students were using Zoom on the computer, laptop, or Ipad and they needed to have a mobile phone with them at the same time.

When students played, they needed to use the laptop with Zoom as a screen to see the questions and a mobile phone to choose the answers. On the phone, students could download Kahoot! app or log into the website Kahoot!.it and used the PIN number given on the screen to join the game platform. They could choose their own nicknames or teachers could ask them to use their real names to play. On the screen, students could see how many of their friends joined and they could share their ideas as Zoom was still working.

After all the students had joined the platform, teachers could explain how to play and set the time limit for each answer. Students would have some seconds to read the questions before the options

were shown for them to choose. In order to give out the answers, students would tap on the symbols that match the correct answers on their mobiles. Not only did they have to be correct, but they also needed to be fast to gain more points to win the game.

When all of the students had answered or they had reached the time limit, the results would be shown on the screen. Students could see the correct answers and the number of students that chose each of the answers. Based on what had been shown statistically on the screen, teachers could see their mistakes and give clear explanations. Teachers could also raise a discussion with groups of students after each question.

Then students could see their score privately on their mobile screen and they could see if they were ranked on top on their laptop screens. After each question, their points might be changed and they could see their names moving up or down on the ranking board.

After the quiz had been done, teachers could privately see the detailed results shown by Kahoot! on students' common mistakes, and each student's performance as they gave out statistical results.

When students finished doing the quiz, teachers could ask them to complete a google form survey to see how they reacted to these kinds of activities in an online classroom. Their feedback through google form was collected and analyzed to give the answer to the research questions.

Before doing the analysis, researchers transformed the results into an Excel file and checked the answers thoroughly so that those with missing or inappropriate information were excluded. Nothing was changed in the valid information. Then, the answers were coded and inputted into the SPSS software in a proper way to analyze the data. Finally, discussions and conclusions were drawn from the findings.

## **FINDINGS**

According to the results of the research, it has been shown that the use of Kahoot! in online classrooms helped to engage students more in the lessons. As the students are young learners of English, educational games are necessary to maintain their interests and motivation. However, due to Covid-19 and the switch from offline classes to online classes, teachers need to adopt different ways to keep the students' high interest in learning.

With the help of technology, there are various tools for teachers to apply to their teaching to help students participate openly in classroom activities. This study has proven the use of Kahoot! in online classes contributed to raising students' motivation and engagement.

**Research question: What attitude do students have towards Kahoot! activity in online lessons?**

The questionnaire consists of 15 questions, based on Martin A.J. (2017)' s Student Motivation and Engagement Wheel with 11 factors: persistence, planning and monitoring, value of schooling, learning focus, self-belief, task management, self-sabotage, low control, avoidance focus, anxiety and disengagement.

## Positive Motivation and Engagement

**Table 1.** Positive Motivation and Engagement

Items	Categories	Mean	Level of agreement
13. If I try hard to play Kahoot!, I believe I can answer correctly	Self-belief	<b>4.3</b>	Somewhat agree
7. I feel very happy with myself when I do well in Kahoot! by working hard	Learning focus	<b>4.63</b>	Strongly agree
4. I can use things I learn in Kahoot! in other parts of my life	Valuing school	<b>3.73</b>	Somewhat agree
14. Learning at school is important	Valuing school	<b>4.31</b>	Somewhat agree
1. If I can't understand any question in Kahoot!, I will keep doing it	Persistence	<b>3.81</b>	Somewhat agree
9. If the questions in Kahoot! are too difficult, I still keep trying hard to get a better score in the game.	Persistence	<b>3.91</b>	Somewhat agree
2. I feel very happy with myself when I get a high score in Kahoot! activity	Planning and monitoring	<b>4.55</b>	Strongly agree

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3. I will choose to participate in Kahoot! in places where I can concentrate	Task management	3.87	Somewhat agree
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### ***Self-belief***

With question item number 13, the value for students' self-belief was shown in a relatively high mean score. The mean score of 4.30 implies that students were highly aware of their ability to perform well in Kahoot! activity and get a better ranking. Students believed that when they took the activity seriously, they would get the answer correctly and fast, which could result in the chances of winning the activity. They had confidence in themselves that they could perform well and this led to their competitiveness in Kahoot! participation.

### ***Learning focus***

The data was derived from question item number 7. With the mean score of 4.63, it was proven that Kahoot! had a significant impact on students' learning focus. By making learning a fun and enjoyable activity, Kahoot! has helped students to stay focused. It also helped teachers to draw students' attention back to learning even when there were many distractions as they studied online at home during the pandemic.

### ***Valuing school***

The data of two items 4 and 14 used to measure student value of schooling demonstrates that students believe what they learn at school is important and relevant to their life and the world in general. Nevertheless, the result for item 4 is relatively lower than item 14, showing that students are more conscious of the importance of learning at school than how learning is relevant to other parts of their life.

### ***Persistence***

Student persistence was measured by item 9 and item 1 in the questionnaire. The results show that there was a concurrence among students that they could retain their determination with Kahoot! The mean score of 3.97 and 3.81 represent a relatively high level of commitment in students.

### ***Planning and monitoring***

The statistics show that students have a tendency to plan ahead to win and try to keep track of their progress in the game. Item 2, with the mean score of 4.55, shows their strong inclination towards keeping track of their own progress.

### ***Task management***

The mean score of item 3 is 3.87, which indicates that even though most students are inclined to plan their own learning timetable effectively, their awareness and control of their learning environment is still not very high.

## **Negative Motivation and Engagement**

**Table 2.** Negative Motivation and Engagement

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10. When exams and assignments are coming up, I worry a lot	Anxiety	<b>3.51</b>	Somewhat agree
12. When I get the right answers in Kahoot!, I'm often not sure how I'm going to do it again next time	Low control	<b>2.43</b>	Disagree or Strongly disagree
6. When I don't get the right answers in Kahoot! I don't know how to stop that happening next time	Low control	<b>2.42</b>	Disagree or Strongly disagree

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11. Often the main reason I participate in Kahoot! because I don't want people to think that I'm dumb	Failure avoidance	<b>2.73</b>	Somewhat disagree
5. Sometimes I don't try hard to answer in Kahoot! so I can have a reason if I get low score	Self-sabotage	<b>2.81</b>	Somewhat disagree
8. Each week I'm trying less and less to answer the question in Kahoot!	Disengagement	<b>2.28</b>	Disagree or Strongly disagree
15. I don't really care about what the teachers are saying on the screen.	Disengagement	<b>1.85</b>	Disagree or Strongly disagree

### ***Anxiety***

The anxiety level of students was measured through question item number 10. By asking students' opinions on their concerns about tests and examination, the researchers got the mean score of 3.51, which represents a relatively high rate of anxiety. This means that even when students were motivated to learn and had a positive attitude towards learning, they were still afraid of tests. Kahoot! does not have much effect on students' anxiety in examinations.

### ***Low control***

The mean scores of the low control factor were derived from question items number 6 and 12. With the means of 2.43 and 2.42, students showed that they were in control of the answers they gave in the quizzes and they knew what to do in the next answer to get a better result. The numbers show students' confidence in themselves and a high control in every Kahoot! activity.

### ***Failure avoidance***

Failure avoidance level in students was inferred from question item number 11. The mean score of 2.73 from the table shows that to some extent, students wanted to avoid failure and losing in the activity. It was not merely positive that all the students participated from their own interest and they just aimed to win. Some of the students still showed reluctance and worry for failure.

### ***Self - sabotage***

Item number 5 of the questionnaire indicates that students to some extent kept themselves from trying hard in the game so that they have a reason for any possible failure in the activity, not because they lack ability but because they did not try. This kind of behavior hinders students from achieving good results at school and this habit was still maintained in the game.

### ***Disengagement***

The mean score of item 8 (2.28) reveals that few students show a dismissive attitude towards Kahoot! activities, meaning the students were putting effort into achieving good results in the game. Even though measuring the same type of behavior, item 15 reveals that students show a strong disagreement towards not listening to teachers.

During the online lessons, teachers carefully observed students' reactions and the flow of teaching and learning through cameras. Students tended to participate more in Kahoot! activity, with all students' participation, compared to only some active students' participation in normal lessons. Students were more likely to speak in the discussion part after each question. Therefore, teachers could make sure students understand the lessons and know how to apply them in the exercises. Students seemed to get excited when they saw the scores and ranks changing after answering each question.

## DISCUSSION

The data and figure presented above are meaningful and help the researchers to get the answer to the research question. In the study, students' attitude and their motivation driven by the application of Kahoot! in online lessons were taken into consideration. The results coming from the questionnaire and observation gave the answer to whether teachers could use Kahoot! to engage students in online classrooms to deliver the lessons more effectively. The discussion of this study is based on the comparison with the findings of the previous study written by Licorish, Owen, Daniel and George (2018)

Even though the two studies were carried out in two different classroom environments (one was in the classroom, the other was in the online platform), the results were similar in many aspects.

The research done in 2018 has pointed out and confirmed many benefits of the game-based learning system, specifically Kahoot!. Kahoot! helped teachers to maintain students' attention, motivation and engagement in the classroom. However, there were still doubts about whether it helped with students' learning and retention. The results in this study also stated that students' level of motivation and engagement in Kahoot! were also high in the online-learning situation.

Although Kahoot! could help with maintaining students' motivation and engagement in online classrooms and assist in reducing negative motivation and engagement in students, it could not entirely eliminate students' anxiety before the examination. Moreover, most of the students claimed that they did care about the lessons delivered by the teachers.

Studies have proven that Kahoot! was an effective tool to maintain students' motivation and engagement in various classroom environments. Teachers can make good use of Kahoot! to deliver the lessons in a more attractive way and Kahoot! can be a useful tool for online classrooms during the Covid-19 pandemic.

## CONCLUSION

The findings confirmed that students had a positive attitude towards and were motivated by Kahoot!. All five motivation boosters showed a high level of acceptance from students. On the contrary, students were in disagreement with most of the guzzlers after the application of Kahoot! in teaching English online.

With the current situation of the pandemic and its resulting distance-learning programs, keeping students motivated and excited is a big challenge for teachers. Through the survey, Kahoot! proved to be a powerful teaching aid. An online game-based platform such as Kahoot! offers teachers a tool to make the interaction and communication between teachers and students can also become a motivating force, helping students feel involved and inspired in the process of learning.

However, students' fear for examinations and some of their self-sabotage behaviors were still present despite their commitment to Kahoot! activity. These types of behaviors will need further investigation with different motivation tools in order to have a more holistic view of using gamification to motivate students. In addition, this study was only conducted on a little over one hundred students resulting in a small database. Future similar research can be repeated with larger sample sizes to gain a more generalizable result.

Furthermore, since the research was conducted in the early stage of Covid-19 quarantine time, possible research tools were limited to survey and observation. Subsequent studies can consider bringing in more online tools to gain different perspectives on the matter of motivating students using online game-based learning such as Kahoot!

## AUTHOR

Vy Nguyen and Huong Ngo are teachers who have been working in language teaching for more than 3 years at Vietnam-USA Society language center. Their students' ages range from three and a half to fifty and the students are in different levels and from different backgrounds. As young teachers, they would love to be able to apply new technology and teaching methods to improve the quality of teaching.

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# WRITING INSTRUCTION

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# **The Effectiveness of Teacher's Feedback on Students' IELTS Writing Task 2: An Action Research**

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**Khoi Duy Nguyen**

Foreign Trade University – Ho Chi Minh City Campus, Vietnam  
khoinguyenduy97@gmail.com

**Binh Thanh Nguyen**

Kim's Teaching House, Vietnam

**Nhi Ho Y Nguyen**

University of Social Sciences and Humanities –  
Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City

**Son Hong Nguyen**

Nguyen Tat Thanh University, Vietnam

**Nguyen Ngoc Khoi Pham**

Dong An Polytechnic, Vietnam

## **Abstract**

Teaching the IELTS writing task effectively has always been a challenge for English teachers. Though the teacher's feedback does carry some weight, its contribution is vague at best in terms of immediate effect on revision and long-term development of the general writing skills. This action research is aimed at exploring the effectiveness of the endeavor in teaching writing. To this end, data was collected from ten non-native, intermediate-leveled student participants between the age of 16 and 32 through teaching and learning experience and three semi-structured interviews. To gain insight on the students' perspectives regarding the teacher's feedback on their IELTS writing task 2, they were asked to attend

an IELTS Writing Course within ten weeks, which were further divided into two reflective cycles for the sake of the action research. There were three lessons per week with an allotted time of 2.5 hours for each session, whose data was obtained and decrypted via thematic analysis. The action research managed to prove that feedback given by the teachers on the students' IELTS writing task 2 is effective to some extent. The action research framework was deemed ideal for teaching progressing academic writing; via a series of actions, feedback, and handling out instructional tasks based on the former; a standardized, well-laid writing format without trivial errors can be reached by the student participants.

**Keywords:** *Corrective Feedback, IELTS Writing Task 2, Progressive Academic Writing, Students' Perspectives, Teacher's Feedback.*

## INTRODUCTION

Increased international migration to English-speaking countries for work and education has resulted in a greater need for success in international English language tests. (Green, 2007; Moore & Morton, 2005). The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is a high-stake, international gate-keeping test that provides reliable evidence of a person's English proficiency (Green, 2006). However, candidates enrolling in an IELTS preparation course reported encountering difficulties completing practice tasks within writing task 2, the test's discursive essay component.

Academic writing skill is the forefront of any university students or higher since almost every subject and/ or research conducted along the way demands mastery over the aforementioned (Zhu, 2004). In order to help them flourish and reflect upon their own shortcomings, teachers, instructors, and professors alike must give them feedback, either regularly, at the end of the course, or otherwise (Paulus, 1999). However, to what extent can feedback by the teacher impact their students, as well as how the latter view the act, remains at large with many contrasting effects according to

past arguments and debates (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

The study stemmed from the fact that the first author, Khoi, who was the English instructor at Foreign Trade University – Ho Chi Minh City Campus, along with one of his co-researchers, Son, his counterpart at Nguyen Tat Thanh University, were assigned almost within the same semester a writing class for freshmen at their respective educational institutions. However, the focus was on Khoi's counterpart.

Khoi took on the roles of being the teacher as well as the action-researcher while his co-researchers assumed the latter position only. Since the educational institute focused on teaching the IELTS exam, Khoi conducted the action research mainly in his writing classes, where his co-researchers periodically attended his sessions at the back to note down the students' progress into a mutually shared diary. The students were initially asked to compose a draft of a writing task 2 topic according to the IELTS format. Afterward, they received feedback from the researchers, prior to attempting another take on the same writing topic. Based on what was found out, the researchers proceeded to introduce appropriate tasks aiming at the frequent, generalized errors of the students to them, before letting them work on another writing task 2 topic. Without a doubt, the study adopted the form of action research due to its reflective nature as well as its compatibility to finding out pedagogical solutions (Cohen et al., 2013).

The purpose of this action research is to shed light on the nature of teacher feedback by investigating what teachers do as writing task 2 feedback providers in a private language learning center. It also aims to investigate the level of effectiveness and students' perspectives on the teacher's feedback in writing task 2 in order to better understand the rationales behind specific practices.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1. The IELTS writing test

### 2.1.1. *A general view of the IELTS examination*

IELTS stands for International English Language Testing System. The test provides a measurement of the English proficiency of an individual through a single test administered regardless of existing ability. The purpose of the test is usually to predict a test-taker's readiness for study or residence in an English-speaking country (Coleman et al., 2003). The test comprises four modules, each representing the four macro skills: listening, reading, writing, and speaking. Performance is measured in bands from 1-9, with 9 representing the highest level of language ability.

### 2.1.2. *The IELTS writing test*

In IELTS, writing is assessed through two tasks, the overall band score being more heavily weighted towards Writing Task 2. Task 2 assesses a candidate's ability to write a discursive composition in response to an open-ended prompt, question, or issue using appropriate content, style, register, and organization (Moore & Morton, 2005). Writing Task 2 is assessed by trained and certified examiners using confidential band descriptors. Candidates' compositions are evaluated by one examiner using four equally weighted criteria.

The first criterion is task response. It assesses how test-takers address the prompt that has been presented, how relevant the presented position is, how the main ideas are supported and extended, and how test-takers clarify and justify their conclusions.

The second criterion is coherence and cohesion. It tests the test-takers' abilities to arrange and organize ideas, to use paragraphing, referencing, and substitution, and to employ cohesive devices.

The third criterion is lexical resource. It evaluates test-takers' range of lexis, use of uncommon lexical items, accuracy of lexis, spelling and word formation.

The final criterion is grammatical range and accuracy. It tests the ability to use a wide range of grammatical structures: the accuracy of grammar, the complexity of structures and correct punctuation.

## **2.2. Written corrective feedback**

### ***2.2.1. Definition of corrective feedback***

Corrective feedback refers to the feedback that learners receive on the linguistics errors that they have made in their oral or written production of a second language (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). There are two types of corrective feedback: oral corrective feedback and written corrective feedback.

### ***2.2.2. Written corrective feedback***

Written corrective feedback always involves delayed corrections of the errors that students have committed in a written text. Written feedback can involve both input-providing feedback, usually referred to as direct correction, and output-prompting feedback, or indirect correction (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Direct correction involves providing learners with the correct form of the language or reformulating the entire text. Indirect correction involves indicating that an error has been committed either in the margin of the text or within the text where the error occurs.

### ***2.2.3. Teachers' focus in written feedback***

A recurring finding in written corrective feedback is that teachers generally focus on mechanical, lower-order textual concerns, namely surface-level errors of grammar, syntax and lexis (Lee, 2008; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Errors in second language writing can be defined by Ferris et al. (2011) as when the learning writer deviates from the norms, rules and expectations of the target language. Montgomery and Baker (2007) also found that teachers

had a tendency to give substantial amounts of feedback on issues such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation, defined as local issues, but relatively little on content, organization, and discourse, defined as global issues. Similarly, Lee's (2008) study revealed that 94.1% of teachers' feedback items were form-focused: grammar and vocabulary, but with only 3.8% content related, and just 0.4% on organization (the remaining 1.7% on other aspects).

#### **2.2.4. Teachers' provision of written feedback in l2 writing**

In error correction in second language writing, teachers can respond either directly or indirectly (Ferris et al., 2011). The former denotes the direct correction of the error while the latter features the use of strategies for learners' self-correction through cognitive linguistic discovery (Ferris et al., 2011), or sometimes through the use of metalinguistic information (Ellis, 2009; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

#### **2.2.5. *Students' perspective on teachers' feedback***

Previous literature on teacher feedback has consistently shown that students value teacher feedback more significantly than any other form of feedback such as audio feedback and peer evaluation (Yang et al., 2006). Other studies have also discovered that students are especially positive about receiving feedback related to language issues, but they also would like teachers to give comments on their writing ideas and its content (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993; Saito, 1994). Furthermore, students of foreign language are also eager to have all their mistakes pointed out by the teachers (Komura, 1999; Lee, 2005; Leki, 1991; Rennie, 2000). There have been some contradicting studies on how students wanted to receive feedback from teachers. While research by Radecki and Swales (1988) and Lee (2005) show that students would appreciate overt feedback, most of the other studies suggest that students prefer being given clues to being given direct feedback.

### ***2.2.6. Some limitations of teachers' feedback***

Although a lot of studies have reported positive attitudes that students have toward teacher feedback, its contribution to writing development and improvement is still unclear, in terms of both immediate effect on revision and long-term development of the general writing skills. Scholars have suggested that students may have misunderstood, ignored, or misused teacher comments when revising their drafts (Ferris, 1995; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999). Sometimes, they understand it, but are unable to come up with an appropriate revision. Research is inconclusive on this matter since previous research done to explore teacher feedback has been done in a non-contextual and non-social setting and has only been done largely focused on text and the linear relationship between teacher feedback and students' revision (Goldstein, 2004).

### ***2.3. Synthesis***

Literature on written corrective feedback is broad and extensive. However, not much research has been conducted focusing on IELTS writing task 2 specifically. As mentioned above, the study of corrective feedback has not focused much on the contextual elements of the relationship between students and teachers and students' perception towards teachers' corrective feedback.

## **METHODOLOGY**

In this section, firstly, information of the participants obtained in the study is provided. Then, the research questions are presented. Next, the process of data collection is described in detail. Finally, the data analysis method is shed light on in the last part.

### **2.4. Participants**

Participants in both cycles were students who were between the age of 16 to 32 years old. All of them were non-native English speakers with the pre-intermediate level of proficiency

participating in the IELTS Writing Course within 10 weeks. There were 3 lessons per week with an allotted time of 2.5 hours for each lesson. Cycle 1 consists of 10 participants; Cycle 2 included 9 participants. Details of the participants' range of age along with their gender are provided in tables 1 and 2. Besides, due to some ethical issues concerning the participants, the names of them were changed into other ones.

The teacher-researcher (Khoi Nguyen) was teaching an IELTS writing course at an English center. Before conducting each cycle, the approval was obtained from the manager of the campus the teacher-researcher was teaching at the time as well as from the director of the English center. In Cycle 1, all ten students in his class were willing to take part in the study. In the second Cycle 2, there were nine students participating in the study since one of them asked to stop the course for 2 weeks to prepare for the mid-term tests at their college.

**Table 1.** *Participants in cycle 1*

Age range	Female	Male	Total
16-18	1	1	2
19-23	4	2	6
24-32	1	1	2
Total	6	4	10

**Table 2.** *Participants in cycle 2*

Age range	Female	Male	Total
16-18	1	1	2
19-23	3	2	5
24-32	1	1	2
Total	5	4	9

## 2.5. Research questions

The first research question aimed to shed light on the students'

effectiveness of the teacher's feedback on helping the students improve their writing skills in IELTS writing task 2. Additionally, the second research question was intended to enlighten the students' points of view about the feedback regarding their IELTS writing task 2 from the teacher.

1/ How effective is the teacher's feedback about the students' IELTS writing task 2?

2/ What are students' perspectives on the teacher's feedback about their IELTS writing task 2?

## **2.6. Research instruments**

There are two research instruments that were used in this study which were documents and semi-structured interviews. Specifically, the documents consisted of the diaries written by the researchers and the pieces of writing of the students in both Cycle 1 and Cycle 2.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Vietnamese since the interviewees' level of English proficiency was not so good. All the contents of the interviews were translated into English by the researchers. There were rationales behind the interviewee figure of four. First, COVID-19 was looming about, so towards the end of the researching time span, it was getting harder and harder to get ahold of the student-participants. Second, Since the population only amounted up to ten at the maximum, four interviewees were randomly chosen and deemed homogeneous enough for the sake of validity.

On another note, every time one member of the researching team conducted an interview, that individual was also responsible of tracking to the mutually shared diary, with Khoi – the lead researcher – as the final editor.

## **2.7. Action research cycles**

This study consists of two research cycles. The study used

Stringer's (2007) action research model. It includes three major steps which are Look, Think, and Act. The action research process is best reflected by a spiral of looking, thinking, and acting (Creswell, 2011). Creswell (2011) also said that this model pointed out that action research is a process of 'repeating and revising procedures and interpretations.'

### ***2.7.1. Cycle 1: Look, think, act***

**Look:** In the model of Stringer (2007), the phase of 'looking' emphasizes building up a picture to help the researchers understand problems they are likely to conduct research on (Creswell, 2011). Researchers wondered whether the feedback from the teachers in the class helped the students improve their writing skills in IELTS Writing Task 2. Accordingly, the researchers had a decision to conduct an action research to elucidate this issue. Then the researchers started writing diaries to record all the feedback given in pieces of writing of each student. The feedback was based on four main criteria to assess a writing task of the British Council which are Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Task Achievement, and Coherence & Cohesion.

**Think:** In this phase, the teacher-researcher gave a topic in IELTS Writing Task 2 and asked students to write it within fifty minutes. After the allotted time was up, the pieces of writing were collected. Then, each writing was given feedback based on four main criteria which were Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Task Achievement, and Coherence & Cohesion. Later, the contents of the given feedback were recorded in the researchers' diaries. All the writings were returned to the students with feedback on them. Those pieces of writing were considered as drafts. As a result, the students were asked to have their writing written again with the same topic. They were also reminded that the feedback should be used in their new writings. Next, the second version of the students' writing was collected again. Also, the diaries were recorded. Those diaries aimed to notice and record common mistakes students

made in their writing. Based on the documents of the diary, the researchers analyzed common mistakes that were frequently encountered in their writing. The mistakes were generalized into four key domains which are Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Task Achievement, and Coherence & Cohesion.

**Act:** Through the diaries, the researchers evaluated how each student used the given feedback from the teacher to improve their writing. To be specific, the researchers compared two pieces of writing of the same student to see if the same mistakes were repeated. If the mistake mentioned in the teacher's feedback already was found again, the student did not make use of the teacher's feedback. Additionally, based on the diaries, the researchers found out which of the four aforementioned specific domains that students were likely to make mistakes. This task aimed at enabling students to improve their writing skills specifically in IELTS task 2.

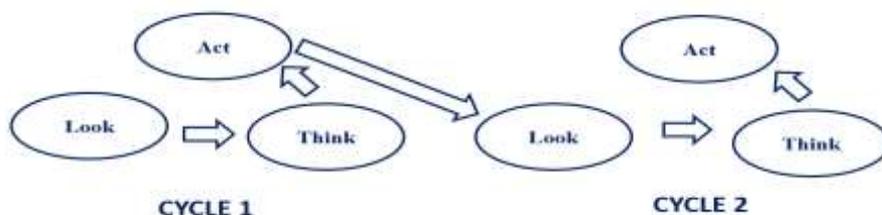
### ***2.7.2. Cycle 2: Look, think, act***

**Look:** After realizing the most common domains of mistakes the students were likely to make in Cycle 1, the researchers asked students to write another topic in task 2. The pieces of writing were collected. Based on the mistakes the researchers encountered most in the students' writing in Cycle 1, the students were reminded of those mistakes to avoid them in their writing in the second cycle. All the pieces of writing from nine participants in Cycle were collected.

**Think:** The feedback products of writing from nine students in cycle 2 were recorded in the teachers' diaries. The researcher took all the notes in the diaries through both cycles into consideration.

**Act:** The researchers decided whether the mistakes which were mentioned by the teacher during the first cycle were eliminated. Recommendations along with implications of the study were generated.

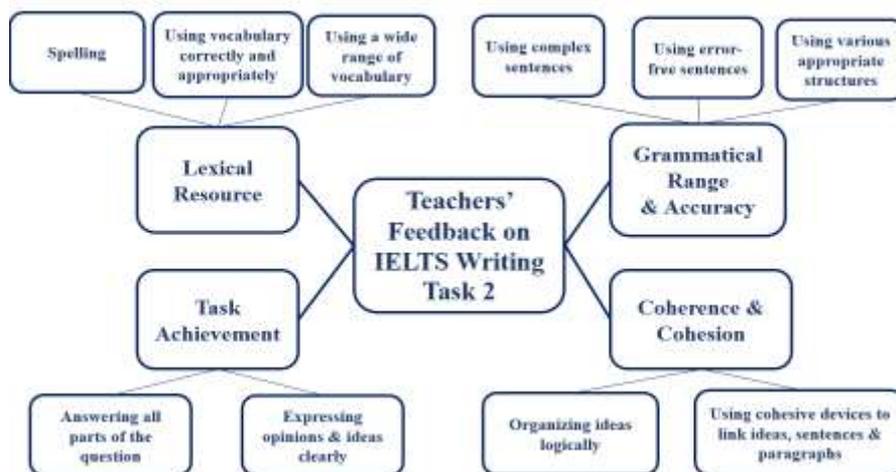
**Figure 1** *The research phases for cycle 1 and cycle 2 in the AR framework*



## 2.8. Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the obtained data in the study. According to Creswell (2011), themes are key elements in qualitative data analysis. In this study, there were three major layers in the thematic framework. The global main theme of the whole study is Teachers' Feedback on IELTS Writing Task 2. From this theme, there are four major organizing themes which are Lexical Resource, Grammatical Range & Accuracy, Task Achievement, and Coherence & Cohesion. These four organizing themes were followed by ten basic themes. The thematic framework in this study was presented in Figure 2.

**Figure 2** *Thematic framework in the study*



## FINDINGS

With the aim to explore the effectiveness of the teachers' feedback in teaching writing, along with the students' perspectives on the teacher's feedback about their IELTS writing task 2, data was collected from ten participants through teaching and learning experience and four semi-structured interviews. This chapter presents the data analysis in response to the two research questions.

### **3.1. The level of effectiveness of the teacher's feedback about the students' writing task 2**

The study will now examine the writings of the students and the diary entries recorded by the researchers with view to shed light on the effectiveness of teacher feedback.

#### ***3.1.1. Cycle 1***

In cycle 1, there are four criteria to be analyzed with the students' papers: task response, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, and grammatical range & accuracy.

##### ***3.1.1.1. Task response***

This criterion focuses on the way students understand and develop their ideas and opinions. The most important aspect of task response is the extent to which the ideas developed by the students are relevant, can answer the questions persuasively and fully address all the aspects of the question.

In half of the students writing, the main ideas were not made relevant and logical enough to answer the question. The main ideas given by the students did not tackle all the aspects of asked in the question. As for supporting ideas, they were still weak, and did not seem to be closely supportive of the main ideas proposed. Supporting ideas were too few to be able explain and clarify main ideas. There were little examples given in these writings to make

the main ideas more persuasive. However, in the rest of writings, main ideas were relevant to address the questions. Supporting ideas were well made and sufficient examples were given to exemplify the main ideas.

After receiving the teachers' feedback, in the writings of half the students who still needed revision, main ideas were made better, more relevant and to tackle and address the question. However, supporting ideas were still long-winded and repetitive (Student 2).

### *3.1.1.2. Coherence and cohesion*

The second criterion explores how students organize the ideas and the way they use cohesive devices to link ideas, and how they use discourse markers to organize their writing into a logical and connect whole.

In terms of cohesion, before the teacher gave feedback, it was found that, in students' writings, the sentences were not yet well linked to one another, and they still lacked cohesion. The majority of cohesive devices employed by the students were lexical cohesion, followed by conjunctions, reference and substitution. The use of linking words or cohesive devices in one-fifth of the writings were insufficient. In these writings, the students did not place cohesive devices to connect the sentences and therefore broke flow of the writing. In the rest of the writings, the students appeared to have an overuse of cohesive devices. Therefore, this causes a redundancy in their writing and renders the texts difficult to understand. The finding is similar to those in previous studies (Todd & Darasawang, 2007; Ahmed, 2010; Bahaziq, 2016).

As for coherence, the students were able to use discourse markers. The findings shows that students employ a variety of discourse markers in their compositions with some types used more frequently than others. Sequencing markers formed the largest percentage of use, followed by illustrating markers, emphasizing markers, and cause-and-effect markers. However, it was observed

that the students did have problems with the misuse and overuse of discourse markers. The overused of sequencing discourse markers led the writings to be redundant and the frequent misuse of cause-and-effect markers negatively affected the logic and argument of the writings. These findings have also been found in the studies of Martínez (2004), Jalilifar (2008), and Al-khazraji (2019).

In the revised versions after the students received the feedback from the teacher, there were some changes in the students' writing papers. In more than half of a students' writings, cohesive devices were used well for sentence connection. The researchers could also find in the papers an appropriate reduction of the cohesive device redundancy. However, in one-fifth of the writings that had an insufficient number of cohesive devices, not many changes were observed.

### *3.1.1.3. Lexical resources*

The third criterion focuses on exploring whether students use a wide range of vocabulary in a correct and appropriate way or not. In the first draft, the researchers found that some students were able to use advanced vocabulary. However, many of them had a lot of spelling mistakes and inappropriate uses of expressions and collocations.

In the revised version after receiving the teachers' feedback, most of the students were able to use a variety of high-level words, i.e., perspective, affection, resume, decrease. There were no spelling mistakes found in their writing.

### *3.1.1.4. Grammatical range and accuracy*

This criterion concerns using complex sentences, using error-free sentences, using various appropriate grammatical structures in the students' writing papers.

The students' writings were not good in using complex sentences

and the students have problems in using dependent clauses. There were many mistakes with plurals and singulars of nouns in their writings. Some students committed errors with subject-verb agreement. It was also found in the writings that students usually made mistakes in using the correct word classes and that they had troubles with run-on sentences. In addition, the wrong use of gerunds and infinitives in their writing was common.

These mistakes in grammar belonged in the list of common mistakes made in students learning as a second language introduced in the study of Zheng & Park (2013) based on the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) vs. Creative Construction Hypothesis (CCH).

In the revised writings, all of the students were able to correct their mistakes in using plural and singular nouns. They were able to fix most of the mistakes that the teacher pointed out in the feedback. However, the students who had problems with run-on sentences still could not correct their sentences. In this regard, they could not identify the main subjects and the predicate of the subjects. Wrong use of gerunds still persisted in their papers.

### ***3.1.2. Cycle 2***

In Cycle 2, the same four criteria from Cycle 1 will be used again to evaluate the students' writings.

#### ***3.1.2.1. Task response***

It can be derived from the diary entries that the students were able to analyze the topic better. In comparison with Cycle 1, the students' writings in Cycle 2 improved a lot in two regards.

First, the main ideas given by the students were relevant to the main issue in the question. The questions in the IELTS task 2 usually had more than one aspect. While the majority of the students' writings in the first cycle did not address or mention all the aspects of the question, their writings in the second cycle were

able to tackle all of the aspects. Additionally, main ideas were more relevant to the question. Second, the supporting ideas were made better. Most of the students provide or think up of evidence and give example information to clarify or support the main ideas that have been proposed.

### *3.1.2.2. Coherence and cohesion*

Compared with the writings from Cycle 1, the students' writings in Cycle 2 had some improvements in terms of cohesive devices and discourse markers, as well as idea organization.

The use of cohesive device improved in two regards. First, the students were able to reduce the overuse of cohesive devices, which ultimately led to the fact that their writings were easier to comprehend. Second, there were no instance where the cohesive devices were misused.

For discourse markers, the repetitive use of sequencing markers was reduced, making the writings become smoother and more natural. No instance of misuse in discourse markers were spotted in the writings of Cycle 2. Discourse markers are better used well to signal idea transitioning. However, in some students' products of Cycle 2, in comparison with those in Cycle 1, the organization of ideas is not yet satisfying. Moreover, transitions between ideas were still not clear and difficult to follow.

### *3.1.2.3. Lexical resources*

In this criterion, it can be seen apparently from the diary entries that there was an improvement in every single writing. Students were able to use a variety of words, including some high-level words, i.e., perspective, affection, resume, decrease. Moreover, the use of advanced words and uncommon ones were more frequent and accurate. Besides, the biggest change in Cycle 2 is that there was no spelling mistake of words. However, some inappropriate uses of expressions and collocations still appeared in the students'

writing. For some cases, there was no apparent improvement in terms of lexical resources.

#### *3.1.2.4. Grammatical range and accuracy*

In comparison with the writings from Cycle 1, grammatical range and accuracy is improved but there were some mistakes that still appeared frequently in the students' writings. First, the problem in using dependent clauses, i.e., relative clauses and noun clauses, still persisted at some places. Errors in using relative pronouns were present in students' writings. The students had difficulty distinguishing between restricted and unrestricted relative clauses. Plural form errors and wrong use of gerunds and infinitives were reduced but still present. In addition, run-on sentences still persisted in some papers. The inconsistency between present participle and past participle disappeared. Mistakes between word classes were not found the students' writings. It was also found that there was a moderate use of complex or compound sentences.

### **3.2. Students' perspectives on the teacher's feedback about their IELTS writing task 2**

The answer for the second research question was derived from the interviews of four students. There are also four main criteria that the researchers could identify after analyzing the results of the interview.

#### ***3.2.1. Task response***

In terms of Task Response, all participants showed that they could improve much after receiving the feedback from teachers. According to the students, teacher's feedback was helpful and clear enough for them to understand and to improve for future writings. Students understood more about how to analyze the elements of the questions, how to brainstorm ideas in a way that they can be relevant. One student shared that:

“First one [sic], I was told that need to write a hook, and then you write a paraphrase the question, and write the thesis statement. I need to think about what is related to the keywords in the question.” (My Tran).

It could also be found in another student that:

“The teacher taught me to use keywords: qualifying words, action words, and how to write the thesis statements. Normally, in the introduction, I only write one or two sentences, which is not enough to hook the readers’ attention to the writing.” (Khanh An)

Students thought that they needed feedback in this criterion, and the feedback was really useful to them. One of the students also claimed that she could answer all the part of the question and express her opinions and ideas clearly after she had received the feedback.

### ***3.2.2. Coherence and cohesion***

This criterion explores how effective the feedback from teachers was from the students’ perspective. All the students thought that they were indispensable. They could improve a lot after receiving the feedback about coherence and cohesion. Students claimed they were able to link the sentences in a paragraph more effectively and they could organize their writings more logically and comprehensibly. The answers from one student were:

“I think coherence and cohesion because I cannot link the previous and following sentences and I don’t know how to fix that type of error. After receiving feedback from the teacher, I’ve realized that I’ve put up too many linking words in the sentences, and it makes the paragraph sound weird. The teacher has taught me to split the sentences in a clear way and use appropriate linking words that retain the meaningfulness.” (Khanh An)

The teacher's feedback helped the students to string ideas together more logically and with fluidity by using correct linking words, and discourse markers. The students were also aware of the effectiveness of teacher feedback, which made them satisfied and felt it was useful. Evidently, My Tran said that:

“He give [sic] me some linking words... so that I can use to link sentences and ideas together, make [sic] my paragraph more enhanced.”

### ***3.2.3. Lexical resources***

About this criterion, most students liked to be given direct feedback on it because it was hard for them to find the mistakes as well as the alternatives by themselves. The fact that teachers gave suggestions in the way using vocabulary and forming sentences was effective to help students improve after that. One student had shared his opinion in the interview that:

“I use wrong vocabulary, grammar; I don't know what exactly the structure is, so I use it in wrong situations' (Long Vu)

The students did not have enough knowledge of words, i.e., which context to use them in correctly, the co-text of the words, the connotations of the words. They are introduced to new words via a multitude of ways but not the knowledge of how to use them correctly. This ultimately led them to using the words wrong. So, they thought that teacher feedback was quite beneficial for their improvement of lexical resources

However, one of the interviewees thought that this criterion was the thing that she could improve the least. She believed that it took her time to practice by herself until she was able to use vocabulary correctly and appropriately. She said that “each topic has [sic] a different vocabulary so if he gives some new words, I think I cannot apply for another topic.” (My Tran)

### ***3.2.4. Grammatical range and accuracy***

There was a difference in the answers of the interviewees about this criterion. The first group thought that the feedback of teacher was really useful and helped them write better for the next topics. In contrast, the others thought that it was hard for them to improve from the feedback because while they were writing, they could not notice much about the grammar and accuracy at the same time. It was stated in the words of the following student:

“I feel that the respect [sic] I’ve improved the least is grammar because I can only fix my grammar mistakes in the writing that has the teacher’s feedback. For other writing pieces, I cannot reuse the feedback to improve my grammar. So, I think I need to improve on this part for [sic] myself.” (Khanh An)

It was also found in one student’s answer that teacher did not need to give feedback about grammar points for those who were able to use them well:

“It’s kind of... Because the feedback does not focus on my grammar, so I can’t see my mistakes. Frankly, I don’t think your feedback concentrates too much on my grammar. That, and the fact my grammar is pretty on point already, so I suppose I am not keen on your feedback in this regard.” (Long Vu)

## **DISCUSSION**

The following part of the study discusses the effectiveness of teacher feedback on students’ writings in four regards: task response, cohesion and coherence, lexical resources, and grammatical range and accuracy.

### **4.1. Task response**

Task response deals with how well the students can handle a given question and tackle the situation with logical reasoning and sound

arguments. Different students would have different ways to tackle the situations and questions given in the writing task 2 and how well they answer the questions greatly depends on their level of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. These skills require the students' constant practice and exposure to different questions and situations, and it would thus definitely be difficult to improve or fix with just teacher's feedback. After two cycles, the researchers have noticed in the students' writing that they still need to work with idea brainstorming and logical thinking. The ways students answer the questions still lack persuasiveness and sometimes ignored some important aspects raised in the question of the writing tasks. In this regard, the researchers believe that in order to improve the students' ability to respond to the questions, learning sessions focusing on critical thinking and problem solving should be incorporated in to the curriculum.

## **4.2. Cohesion and coherence**

The findings of this study revealed that learners lacked the variety of cohesive devices, implying that the use of cohesion still needs improvements. After Cycle 1, there was little improvement in the use of cohesive devices in students. Half of the students still could not find better replacements of some cohesive devices, which made the sentences lacked cohesiveness. After Cycle 2, the students did make improvements in using cohesive devices in their writings after the task practice.

The teachers have observed that in order for the feedback to be effective on improving the use of cohesive devices and thus enhancing cohesion, the teacher's feedback needs to satisfy some requirements. First, the teacher's feedback should be explicit on the features of the cohesive devices found in the writings where the students make mistakes. Second, the feedback should also contain explicit features of the cohesive devices that should be used instead. Finally, in places where the cohesive devices should be omitted or placed, the teacher's feedback should also include

explanations. Feedback on cohesive devices is beneficial in terms of helping the students understand and remember some cohesive devices that they have misused or should have used. However, to holistically improve students' knowledge of cohesive devices and cohesion, lessons focusing on these should be implemented. According to Ahmed (2010), the lessons should attempt to focus and include exercises on co-reference, which might include synonyms, hyponyms, collocations, and partial repetition of words and phrases.

In terms of the coherence in the students' writing, after Cycle 2, the students were able to demonstrate the communicative purposes of sentences and their interactive relationships. The students were able to get their ideas across and organized the writing well as a coherent whole. The researchers have observed that in order for the teacher's feedback to be useful in students' writings, it need to explain the places in the writings where the students made mistake that led to the writing being incoherent. Furthermore, the feedback should also provide a direction or a pattern of organization for students to take that would make it more coherent.

As far as the second criterion is concerned, the detailed feedback about the cohesive devices and the pattern of organization was observed to be beneficial for students' improvements in the writing. However, the researchers did not cover other ways of giving feedback in students' writing. So, it is suggested that further research exploring other ways of giving feedback should be conducted to project a more holistic framework for giving effective feedback.

### **4.3. Lexical resources**

The findings from the students writing and from the diary entries revealed that contribution of teachers' feedback to student's lexical enhancement is partially confirmed.

After two cycles, the researchers have only noticed that half of the students actually made improvements with spelling and how to use the words more appropriately. The teacher's feedback of in this regard included the correction of spelling, and other correct alternatives of the words that the students made mistakes with. A fair amount of feedback also provided some more academic and advanced words to use in replacement of the low-level words by students. The number of instances of students reusing the suggest words recorded by the researchers were not many. From the interviews with the students, the researchers have noticed that students who noted down the corrections in the feedback made more improvements in this regard than students who did not. This could suggest that the more students revise the teacher's feedback, the more they can improve their lexical range. The same findings were also found in the study of Link & Rahimi (2020) about the relationship of teacher's feedback, students' revision and writing improvement.

Some students also claimed that vocabulary is an aspect that they have to work on and study to improve and they would prefer that the teacher gave more feedback on some other aspects such as idea structuring and how to make the writing better. In order to maximize the effectiveness of teacher's feedback in terms of lexical resource, the teacher suggest that the teachers can take note of words, mistakes, and misuses of students' and address all of them in one formal lesson focusing on vocabulary.

#### **4.4. Grammatical range and accuracy**

The findings from the students' writing suggested that the teacher's feedback was beneficial in improving their grammatical competence, but only in some regards. The direct feedback from the teacher pointed out the mistakes that the students made and provided some corrections. The aspects of grammar that students improved the most was the incorrect uses of subject-verb agreement, singular and plural misuses, and tense misuses. It

should be noted that the students made improvements in these aspects because they become more aware of their language use whereas they were more careless before the two cycles. Other aspects related to more complex grammar structure saw little improvements in students' writings.

From the interviews, the students expressed their opinions that they can understand feedback of easy grammar points and can remember them for future writings. For more complex grammar structures such as complex sentences containing multiple subjects or predicates, the students cannot readily comprehend the structures and still makes mistakes in future writings. Teacher's feedback cannot address such complex grammar points either. So, it can be said that teacher's feedback is only partially useful to improve students' awareness of some simple grammar features but not complex grammar structures.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The action research has provided value in the fact that it has proven that feedback given by the teachers on the students' IELTS writing task 2 is effective to some extent. Though the feedback does not contribute much to the idea brainstorming process, they manage to steer the students' grammar, word choice, spelling, as well as cohesion and coherence in the appropriate path.

On another note, the action research framework proves to be ideal for teaching progressing academic writing. Via a series of action, feedback, and handling out instructional tasks based on the former, a standardized, well-written format without trivial errors can be reached by the students. If properly executed and spread, this can become part of the work culture of an educational institution, knowing that teachers as researchers can perform their dual role sufficiently and that students receive something in return for their effort. Additionally, teachers can help each other improve thanks to a mutually shared diary, disclosing the academic progress from

which they can retrieve their students' pros and cons in IELTS writing task 2 in a generalized manner (Burgess, 2006).

However, given the action research's limited sample size within a purposeful context (Checkland & Holwell, 1998), much work still has to be done. In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the framework on larger scales, further research into the problems at hand should be conducted. Potentially, quantitative research could be carried out to find out the attitude of all the teachers and students of an educational institution on the framework.

## **AUTHOR**

Khoi Duy Nguyen is an English instructor at Foreign Trade University – Ho Chi Minh City Campus. He also teaches IELTS at IPP language center while pursuing ELT mastery. It is sufficient to say that one would have a hard time differentiating between his classrooms and a live-action circus since all the cues from which they manage to retrieve are joy and laughter thanks to an entertaining approach to teaching English.

Nhi Ho Y Nguyen is an English teacher at the Vietnam USA Society English center. She is also working at the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature of the University of Social Sciences and Humanities as a staff supporting academic and research endeavors. She is known as a person who is interested in the second language acquisition aspects of ESL learners.

Son Hong Nguyen is an English instructor at Nguyen Tat Thanh University. He also teaches IELTS at ALES language center while gaining his grasp on ELT on a daily basis. He is particularly interested in teaching and wants to help his students conquer English successfully in earnest.

Nguyen Ngoc Khoi Pham is an English instructor at Dong An Polytechnic. He loves applying the skills and knowledge he has acquired from his M.A. classroom to master the roles of a teacher.

He excels in interacting and supporting students with a range of abilities in their lessons and activities thanks to his behavior management strategies.

Binh Thanh Nguyen is an English language teacher while studying for a master's degree in TESOL. He also works as a translator-editor of academic papers hailing from diverse backgrounds. His research interests involve linguistics, teaching writing, and lecturing on and on about translation-interpretation.

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## Appendices

### *Interview Questions*

1. How have you improved your IELTS Writing Task 2 after receiving the feedback from the teacher?
2. What aspects do you feel that you have improved the most?
3. What aspects do you feel that you have improved the least?
4. Do you prefer direct or indirect feedback from your teacher? Why?
5. How clear is the teacher's feedback to you?
6. How effective do you think the teacher's feedback is? (in terms of improving your vocabulary, your grammar, task achievement, coherence and cohesion?)
7. What are your suggestions for further feedback in IELTS Writing Task 2 from the teacher?

### *Common Mistakes in Writing Post-Feedback: Tasks*

Underline the incorrect part(s) of each sentence and then write a new one.

*(tasks to identify lexical, grammatical, and spelling mistakes in individual sentences)*

1. I was born in Viet Nam and grew up there for 18 years.  
.....
2. Now we have lots of malls, convenient store and shopping centers.  
.....
3. The traffic in Hanoi changed steeply.  
.....
4. I didn't stayed there for 3 days and 3 nights like you said!  
.....

5. The first way, we have to stop using plastic bag.  
.....
6. I can not forget this trip.  
.....
7. I have gained a lot of skills in the office then.  
.....
8. When we arrived, a staff of hotel just picked the luggage up quickly and drive us to the hotel immediately.  
.....
9. I very pleased with their service.  
.....
10. Another way to learn, students can study in groups, that will help them to study and reduce stress.  
.....
11. Stress is just appear in people who is working.  
.....
12. Spanish food is expensive, so I would better buy it and cook it myself.  
.....
13. However, the one thing I do not like about the city its pollution.  
.....

Common errors:

- a. Spelling mistakes.
- b. Lack of appropriate articles (a/ an/ the).
- c. S-V agreement.
- d. Use of tenses.
- e. Punctuations.

Read the following passages, check out for writing errors.

*(tasks to identify lexical, grammatical, and spelling mistakes in passages/ essays)*

Text 1:

Hello, everyone! My name is Tom, your english teacher. Though there are only 8 students sit here, it does not change anything. Befoer we begin our class, I would be like to tell you something about myself. I am from Hanoi, despite being born in the Ho Chi Minh City. My place of birth's the district of Tan Binh. My family's seven people are me, my parents, my grandparents, my brother and his wife. This year, I turn twenty2 years old. I love traveling as a hobby, too! I've gone to north of Vietnam. However, my favorite destination are Dalat – a mountainous city. That destintion has a lot of things to do, so I love that destintion. I go there frequently, so I know a lots of accomodations both in and around the city. How about you? Do you like traveling? Do you have any favorite place of your own? Tell me!

Text 2:

Every year on September, the Magellanic penguins return to land beyond the sea to mate. This extraordinary happening occur year after year. Each pair of mating birds return to the same spot every time. The adult penguins left their home to search for food from sea. The chicks needed plenty of food for survival. Many die from starvation. Some are ate by foxes, seagulls nor armadillos. Wildlife biologists fear that these penguins could be in danger of extinction.

Text 3:

The world has made tremendous progress in eradicate polio. Globally, the incidence of polio cases have declined by 90 percent. However, certain parts of South Asia and Africa are still threaten by this disease. The health authorities have still get plenty to do towards wipe out polio. Polio is a high infect disease. Thus, when there is a threat of epidemic many social activities are call off. Schools are also close. People are scarced and they avoid contact with those infected with the disease.

There are run-on (incomplete clauses/sentences) errors in each sentence. Find then correct them.

*(tasks to identify the run-on errors in sentences)*

1. The man who was handsome worked in Hollywood.  
.....
2. The students study at our school come from all over the world.  
.....
3. The cake was selected came from an Italian bakery.  
.....
4. Seattle is famous for its seafood is a beautiful city.  
.....
5. The towels are on the chair can be used in the club showers.  
.....
6. The men are working on the project come from India.  
.....
7. Tom was responsible for sales made the presentation.  
.....
8. The telephone is on the desk is broken.  
.....
9. The bicycle was featured was made by Tom Nguyen!  
.....

Complete the following letter by underlining the correct linking words.

*(tasks to identify linking words in passages/ essays)*

Dear Jane,

It's wonderful to hear from you. Of course, I remember you, because/ although/ so/ even it's been over ten years since or last meeting. Who gave you my address? It was great to learn a bit about you and your family. You asked what I'm doing at the moment, so/ however/ although/ but here's some of my news.

First of all - I married John! I know you never liked him very much, so/ then/ because/ however you'll probably be pleased to hear that we're now divorced. However/ When/ Although/ So, we still see each other a lot because/ while/ although/ but we have two children. The twins are now six and they're good boys, while/ however/ although/ but of course, they're sometimes a bit difficult to handle.

We moved from Birmingham so/ however/ because/ although I didn't want the boys to grow up in a big city. Now, we live in an old farmhouse in Wales. It's really beautiful because/ but/ while/ so it's expensive to look after although/ however/ because/ while it's so old. However/ So/ But/ Although John still lives in Birmingham, he often visits and the boys always spend part of their holidays with him.

I know you're busy however/ so/ because/ but I'd love to see you again. Maybe you can come over and meet my new husband. Yes, I'm married again. Do you remember Harry King? Even/ Although/ When/ So I could never get on with him when we were young, we somehow fell in love. We got married a year ago.

I can't wait to hear more of your news, because/ but/ however/ so write very soon.

Rewrite the following passages filling in the blank spaces with suitable linking words from the lists given at the end of each passage.

*(tasks to identify cohesive devices and/ or linking words)*

1. One of the most wonderful inventions of modern times is television. It is now possible to sit in the comfort of one's home – ----- watch on a screen events ----- are happening hundreds of miles away. We can ----- get entertainment from films, dances, plays and sports ----- are shown on the screen. It is difficult to imagine ----- life would be like without television.

*[what, and, also, that, which]*

2. The methods of reading usually differ in accordance with the contents of books, -----all books should be read with equal seriousness. Amusement is not the main objective of reading ---  
--- a good book, ----- it is a novel or a biography or a drama, always deals with some aspect of knowledge ---- helps us to know life better. It is ----- said ---- books are the best teachers.

*[therefore, because, but, whether, and, that]*

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# Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Collaborative Writing in an EFL Context

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**Truc Doan Hoang Duong**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*truc.ddh@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

This study examined perceptions of teachers and students of collaborative writing in an EFL instructional context. The participants included four teachers and 120 second-year students from five intact writing classes at tertiary level. The classes wrote three types of essays collaboratively during the course. At the end of the course, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, and questionnaires, including open-ended and closed-ended questions, were administered to the students in each class. The findings showed the teachers and the students perceived various advantages and problems of writing essays collaboratively. While they appreciated the helpfulness of the activity in students' learning and writing quality, they pointed out the notable problems of conflict management and fair assessment. The findings of the study can be useful for making informed decisions in implementing this activity in teaching and learning writing.

**Keywords:** *collaborative writing, writing essays, EFL, writing in pairs, writing in groups*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The use of pair/ group writing activities in writing classes have originated from the approach of communicative language teaching (CLT) and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. CLT encourages collaboration and interaction between learners, and Vygotsky (1978) states that language used interpersonally is subsequently

internalized in the developmental process. A number of research studies have found multiple positive effects of pair/ group writing, or collaborative writing (e.g. Fernández Dobao, 2014a; Fernández Dobao, 2014b; McDonough, De Vleeschauwer, & Crawford, 2018; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). In teaching contexts in which class sizes are large, collaborative writing is suggested being used (Boughey, 1997; Hess, 2001).

It has been indicated that a great deal of research on collaborative writing activities has been conducted in second language (SL) rather than foreign language (FL) learning contexts (Coffin, 2020; Shehadeh, 2011). Storch (2005) also notes that one issue that collaborative writing research needs to investigate further is learners' views of the activity, as research findings have been mixed with several studies reporting mostly positive perceptions while others revealing negative attitudes. Empirical findings on teachers' perceptions, especially in EFL contexts, have also been rather scant.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Benefits of collaborative writing**

Collaborative writing refers to a task or activity in which two or more writers jointly produce or coauthor a text (Storch, 2011). Storch (2005) comments that the implementation of pair/ group work in writing classes tends to be restricted to the brainstorming stage or the peer feedback stage of the writing process, while several scholars argue that it should be maintained throughout the writing process. Collaborative writing has been applied in a variety of writing tasks and activities, including dictogloss, jigsaw, summaries, paragraphs and essays of different types, to name a few. Collaborative writing can be carried out in courses at university such as group assignments (Storch, 2011) as well as in professional environment, particularly with high-stakes writing tasks (Bush & Zuidema, 2013). The number of writers can vary from writing in pairs (e.g. Swain & Lapkin, 1998), groups of three (e.g. Edstrom,

2015), groups of four (e.g. Fernández Dobao, 2012), groups of five (e.g. Coffin, 2020), to groups of six students (e.g. Boughey, 1997). The task can be technology-enhanced by using wikis and chats, Moodle, multimedia programmes (e.g. Elola & Oskoz, 2010; McDonough & Sunitham, 2009; Zeng & Takatsuka, 2009). It can be seen that the scope of collaborative writing is ample; however, this study operationalized collaborative writing as the task of writing in pairs and/ or groups in instructed EFL writing courses, and this collaboration is maintained throughout the entire writing process.

When compared with individual writing, collaborative writing was found to yield no significant differences in fluency and complexity, but in terms of accuracy, texts produced by pairs contained fewer errors (McDonough, De Vleeschauwer, & Crawford, 2018; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2009). Even so, Storch (2005) found pair texts to be shorter but more grammatically accurate and linguistically complex. More specifically, collaborative writing was reported to show effectiveness in improving content, organization, and vocabulary in learners' writing (Sajedi, 2014; Shehadeh, 2011).

These effects are further explained that when learners write collaboratively, they are involved in discussions of language use, both in L1 and L2, which results in generating and testing hypotheses of language features, reflecting on them, and using the mutually built knowledge to solve a language problem (Swain & Lapkin, 1998; Swain, 2000; Swain, 2001; Swain & Lapkin, 2002). In other words, during these "collaborative dialogues", learners talk about language and build knowledge together (Swain, 2000).

Another body of research has delved further into whether collaborative writing contributes to language acquisition, especially for the individual after participating in pair/ group writing. Kuiken and Vedder (2002), for example, carried out an experimental study using dictogloss targeting at the passive voice with high school students. Their results, however, showed that interaction in

collaborative writing brings no acquisition of the passive. Abadikhah (2012) examined the effectiveness of pair writing on the learning of relative clauses with female learners at a private language school registering for an intensive English programme. It was neither clear whether the learners would retain what they learned, nor was it certain whether collaboration led to acquisition. On the other hand, Kim's (2008) experimental study found significant improvement on vocabulary after working in pairs from Korean as a second language (KSL) learners. Fernández Dobao (2014b) found the learners were able to retain the lexical items they previously discussed in their writing groups of four. Whilst it is not clear whether collaborative writing has a positive influence on grammar development, it can be tentatively concluded that it may still be useful for vocabulary learning.

### **Teachers' and students' perceptions of collaborative writing**

A number of studies investigated learners' attitudes towards and perceptions of collaborative writing activities. These studies instructed their learners to work in pairs and/ or groups throughout the entire writing process. Storch (2005) interviewed her students after they, in pairs, wrote a short text commenting on a graphic prompt. It was found that most of the participants felt positive about collaborative writing. They realized they learned from each other through comparing their different ways of expressing ideas and, because they were able to correct their peers' errors and learn the words their peers used, improved their grammar accuracy and vocabulary learning. Several students said the collaborative activity was new and fun. In this study, only a small number of students in the study expressed reservations about the activity. These included feeling unconfident about their own English skills, reluctance to criticize other members, and thinking that writing was rather an individual activity.

Shehadeh's (2011) survey on students' perceptions of collaborative writing showed similar positive results. Having written many texts

in pairs during their writing course, the students recognized they could 'generate ideas, pool ideas together, discuss and plan, generate their text collaboratively, provide each other with immediate feedback, and put their text in better shape' (Shehadeh, 2011, p. 296). They realized the activity improved their self-confidence in writing when they became less anxious about making mistakes. It was not clear whether the students encountered any problems, apart from only two students stating they preferred to have a choice of writing individually or collaboratively.

Fernández Dobao and Blum's (2013) compared the attitudes and perceptions of the students working in pairs and in groups of four. The results showed that there were not large differences in attitudes and perceptions between the students writing in pairs and those writing in groups. Most of them expressed positive attitude towards the condition (i.e. either in pairs or in groups) in which they worked. Although a small number of students commented pair work provided more opportunities to speak and contribute than group work, those who wrote in groups did not consider this to be a problem and felt it was more fun, creative, and motivating, as well as generated more ideas and language (grammar and vocabulary) resources, thereby producing higher quality texts. A majority of students then perceived that collaborative writing (in pairs and in groups) was helpful for grammar accuracy and vocabulary use of their texts. There were a variety of ideas, though this made organization more difficult leading to incoherent texts. For target language development (subsequent learning of grammar and vocabulary), most learners felt collaborative writing created opportunities to acquire vocabulary and consolidate grammar.

Collaborative writing was also perceived to enhance life-long learning skills, as reported by the students working on a report in groups of four in Brown (2008). The skills that were specified were problem-solving, critical thinking, focus on common efforts,

individual and collective responsibility, communication skills, and team spirit.

Lin and Maarof (2013) found more problems from the students writing summaries in groups of three. Their analysis of questionnaires and interviews showed the students realized their speaking proficiency was limited for discussing in English in groups, they spent more time completing the writing task in groups than alone, there were certain group members who dominated during discussions, distributing work was unfair in a group, and they had arguments and conflicts as they had different opinions.

There seems to be more problems when there are more members. Arguments and conflicts were also reported in Boughey (1997) by the students who wrote assignments in homogenous groups of six. The same problem was found in Coffin (2020) with the students writing in groups of five members. The students in Sajedi's (2014) study were more willing to collaborate in pairs than in groups of three because they perceived collaboration in pairs was beneficial to both members.

On the other hand, McDonough (2004) mentioned the EFL instructors' beliefs regarding collaborative activities. Specifically, they were not convinced by the effectiveness of pair and small group work activities in helping their students achieve the course objectives and prepare for exams. They reported that when working collaboratively, the students, in fact, did not pay much attention to the language forms emphasized in the course objectives. In addition, checking or giving feedback to all pairs or groups in a large-sized class could be very difficult. Coffin (2020) interviewed the teachers and found that they saw both advantages and downsides of collaborative writing. While they acknowledged that group work was a good learning strategy in which the students could exchange interesting thoughts about the topic, communicate, and improve academic writing skills, and their writing could be better, they pointed out that there were several problems that, from their perspectives, remained unsolved. One problem was that the

level of participation of each individual in a group may not be equal because, in some cases, there could be only one person working and the others taking advantage. Another problem was the quality of the final written product they received. As they put it, 'like patching pieces of writing together without a review', which meant 'each team member writes his/ her own part without a clear designated stage of collaboration during the writing process' (Coffin, 2020, p. 188). Finally, fairness in assessment could be problematic.

From these studies, it can be seen that research on teachers' and students' perceptions of collaborative writing, especially in the face-to-face EFL classroom, is not abundant. Several studies focused only on pair work, while others investigated only group work. One exception is Fernández Dobao and Blum's (2013) study looking at both dyads and groups. The studies such as Brown (2008) combined both collaborative writing and speaking tasks and McDonough (2004) explored pair and small group oral activities in an EFL context.

### **Research questions**

This study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of collaborative writing?
2. What are EFL students' perceptions of collaborative writing?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Setting and participants**

The participants were four teachers and 120 second-year students from five intact classes at a university in Vietnam (I did not teach any of these classes and only acted as observer). All of the teachers, including three females and one male, had 10 to 20 years' experience of teaching writing and used to apply collaborative writing in their classroom. They also taught other language skills and areas such as Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Translation, in

both general and academic English. One of the teachers taught two classes; the others instructed one class each.

The student participants were at the intermediate level of English. Their ages ranged from 19 to 22. At the time of the study, the students were taking the course of Writing 3. Prior to this course, they had taken the courses of Writing 1 and Writing 2 and had experienced both individual and collaborative writing in these courses. There were 21 students in Class A, 26 in Class B, 23 in Class C, 25 in Class D, and 25 in Class E. Both the teachers and students shared the same first language background which was Vietnamese.

All of the classes followed the same syllabus. In this Writing 3 course, the students learned to write three types of essays which were process analysis, argumentation, and narration. For each type of essay, they were required to write a five-paragraph or six-paragraph essay of 450 to 500 words. These assignments were all assessed. The course lasted for 10 weeks, with one session per week and approximately three hours per session. All of the teachers used collaborative writing in their classes, though they may be different in using pairs or groups in each type of essay and in deciding the number of members in a group.

### **Research instruments**

The study involved an interview schedule and a questionnaire. The interview schedule consists of three parts with questions on the teachers' teaching experience, their perceptions of collaborative writing (specifically, the reasons why they do use/ do not use collaborative writing in their writing classes; the benefits and challenges they perceive in collaborative writing; and whether they perceive it is helpful for content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and target language development), and their implementation of collaborative writing in the specific course of Writing 3 (for Interview schedule, see Appendix A). The questionnaire included closed and open-ended questions (see

Appendix B) designed based on that of Fernández Dobao and Blum's (2013) study. The questions focused on learners' experience of writing in pairs/ groups in the writing course they had been attending to ensure they still retained what they had been doing. The open-ended questions asked the students to comment freely on the benefits and challenges they found in pair/ group writing. The closed-ended questions used a 4-point Likert scale to ask the students to rate the helpfulness of pair/ group writing in the content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar of their jointly written essays, and in developing the target language.

Although the purpose of the study was pair/ group writing, parallel questions on individual writing experience were included in both the interview schedule and the questionnaires so as to hinder the participants from figuring out its aim, thereby giving answers in favour of the variable under investigation.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The teachers and students were interviewed and surveyed on Week 9 of the course. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the teachers. Each interview lasted approximately 15 to more than 20 minutes. Three interviews were taken notes; one was recorded (with permission) and transcribed verbatim. Questionnaires were administered to the students. Explanations on the content of the questionnaire and instructions on how to complete it were given to the students, and they were encouraged to ask questions (in case they did not understand any part of the questionnaire) and to feel free to withdraw any time if they wished.

Two out of 120 questionnaires left the open-ended question on benefits and problems of collaborative writing unanswered, one did not fill in the benefits of collaborative writing, and four did not write down opinions on the problems. However, it was decided these questionnaires could be kept as the number was minor, and they still answered the closed-ended questions.

The raw interview data and answers to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were numbered and input into Microsoft Word. Content analysis was applied to find common themes: The data were read through to identify and code emerging themes, and the reading was repeated several times to revise, merge, and finalize the themes. The answers to closed-ended questions were coded numerically and input into SPSS. The function of descriptive statistics on SPSS was used to export frequencies and percentages.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Teachers' perceptions of collaborative writing**

All four teachers stated that when writing together, the students supported one another in revising the content and organization as well as correcting language errors. They learned from one another during the process of discussing and exchanging ideas. Two out of four teachers further explained that in this process the stronger student assisted the weaker one. As one teacher said, 'When the students worked in groups, they helped one another to correct certain errors without the need for the teacher. They could detect even some small mistakes of ideas or structure and reminded each other.'

Another teacher explained,

In a group there will be some good students and some weak. The good students will have those good ideas and available sentence structures. When these students read the writing parts of the other group members, they will be able to point out this is good and this is not good. And the whole group will revise together to produce a better essay.

This helped the teachers to reduce the heavy workload of giving feedback to a large amount of writing. "I can give feedback to the group, which means to several students at once. The workload is reduced" (Teacher of Class D and E).

It reduces the number of assignments that a teacher has to give feedback and marks. The students are happy because it reduces the workload for them too. When a teacher has more time, they can provide feedback faster and more carefully. And the students receive common feedback and they know their strengths and weaknesses (Teacher of Class A)

Two other teachers said collaborative writing brought a dynamic learning environment in which the students work actively together in order to share ideas, exchange information they found, and distributing tasks.

When they marked group papers, they realized better writing quality. For example, Teacher of Class C commented, 'There will be more ideas. When they write in pairs or groups, their reasons, arguments, and English are better than when they write individually.' Teacher of Class B said, 'The ideas and structure are discussed and revised by the whole group so they're better. The language is refined by the whole group so it's better.'

All of the teachers agreed that there were many arguments in groups. One teacher said, 'one student writes and another disagrees and they argue. In the end the best student in the group will have to read the whole essay again and make revisions. It takes time.' Another teacher asserted, 'The students quarreled fiercely. No one made concessions. They could even bring their laptop to me to ask which idea was more reasonable.' She went on suggesting,

The teacher must support. When I asked them to write in groups, I would approach a group in case there was a student doing something else and remind them to work together, or I would give some suggestions if I see a group has conflicts.

Teacher of Class B said that these problems of arguments and conflicts took her students a lot of time to complete the writing task

and they even missed the deadline for submission that she set.

Responding to whether they perceived collaborative writing can develop target language learning, three out of four teachers said it could because the students learned from one another, but individual effort and awareness were also vital. One teacher said, 'these days there are many distractions so it's very challenging for students to be motivated to study individually. So if they are able to work in groups, they will have more motivation than if they work individually.' One teacher, however, said, 'They went to class and they practiced, so they would improve. Some students improved a lot and realized it. Some didn't recognize their improvement but in fact after the course they improved to some extent.'

### **Students' perceptions of collaborative writing**

Responding to the two open-ended questions in the questionnaire, in each class, many students stated that writing collaboratively helped generate various and better ideas for their essays. They had opportunities to discuss, argue, and listen to their peers' opinions. More vocabulary was also produced, and they learned vocabulary from one another. They felt their shared essays became 'more vivid', 'of higher quality', and 'more creative'. One student from Class A wrote, 'There are many good ideas and opinions from many people of different views'. Another student from Class E wrote, 'Learned more vocabulary, good phrases that I haven't known before'.

The students in all five classes also stated that in collaboration, they could assist one another in correcting many errors. These errors ranged from content and organization problems to language errors such as grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. Several students, for instance, wrote, 'each person can check the others' paragraphs and revise more' (Class C), 'discovered, revised the errors for one another during the writing process' (Class D), and 'can revise the errors in terms of sentences and words, structures and grammar' (Class E). Most students were also aware that they had learned and practiced group/ team work skills.

On the other hand, a substantial number of students pointed out there were many arguments and conflicts within a group. Some members could be uncooperative: 'easy to quarrel, don't know which ideas are better' (Class A); 'there are many individuals who lean on others and don't want to work' (Class D); 'sometimes miss the deadline because the members can't agree with one another' (Class B). This problem took them a lot of time to discuss and try to reach agreement. Several students stated they did not have chance to express their individual opinions: 'My writing part will be affected by the other members' (Class A); 'Many ideas were rejected or they did not listen' (Class C); 'Many members won't be able to show their ability and knowledge' (Class C).

If, to be equal, they divided the essay into paragraphs and assigned each paragraph to each member of the group, they realized their collaborative essay was not coherent and connected, and each individual was unable to practice writing an entire essay. The marks given to a group essay were also thought to be unreliable and did not reflect each individual's ability. One student from Class B, for instance, wrote, 'A mark is given to all members of a group so if only one member doesn't do well, the group as a whole suffers.'

The analysis of the responses to the closed-ended questions in the surveys showed several general trends. It could be seen that the majority of students in all five classes perceived collaborative writing in either pairs or groups as beneficial to the quality of their writing and their target language development. More than 40% of the students in Class B and Class D (taught by two different instructors), for example, opted for 'very helpful' in all three Likert-scale questions. The participants from Class A rated collaborative writing extremely helpful for content and organization (38.1%) and grammar and vocabulary (47.6%). There were 11 students (47.8%) from Class C perceived collaboration as helpful in improving the grammar and vocabulary in their essays, and 14 students (60.9%) thought it was helpful in developing their English.

With respect to the usefulness of collaborative writing for content and organization, a large number of students realized it was very helpful, with 38.1% in Class A, 46.2% in Class B, 47.8% in Class C, 44% in Class D, and 64% in Class E. Class A and Class B had the same number of 8 students noticing that it was extremely helpful. Only one student in Class A and two in Class C perceived it as unhelpful.

Regarding grammar and vocabulary, in each class, a considerable number of learners perceived that collaborative writing was useful, as opposed to a minority having chosen 'not helpful'. However, while the activity received a high rating of 'extremely helpful' in Class A with 10 students accounting for 47.6%, it was rated helpful only by most students in Class C (11 students making up 47.8%). A majority in Class B, D, and E selected 'very helpful'. Class C also had the highest number of four students who rated collaborative writing unhelpful.

As for target language development, in four classes including Class A, B, D, and E, most students were aware that the activity was very helpful, accounting for 42.9%, 42.3%, 56%, and 48% respectively. A minority of students perceived it as either unhelpful or extremely helpful. One student in Class A stated it was not helpful at all. In Class C, there was 14 students perceived it as helpful and 3 students as not helpful.

Tables 1. to 5 illustrated the results of five classes

Table 1

*Class A's ratings on the helpfulness of collaborative writing*

	Content and organization		Grammar and vocabulary		Target language development	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	1	4.8	Not helpful	4.8	Not helpful	4.8
Helpful	4	19.0	Helpful	23.8	Helpful	28.6
Very helpful	8	38.1	Very helpful	23.8	Very helpful	42.9
Extremely helpful	8	38.1	Extremely helpful	47.6	Extremely helpful	23.8
Total	21	100.0	Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Table 2

*Class B's ratings on the helpfulness of collaborative writing*

	Content and organization		Grammar and vocabulary		Target language development	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	0	0.0	Not helpful	0.0	Not helpful	0.0
Helpful	6	23.1	Helpful	38.5	Helpful	38.5
Very helpful	12	46.2	Very helpful	42.3	Very helpful	42.3
Extremely helpful	8	30.8	Extremely helpful	19.2	Extremely helpful	19.2
Total	26	100.0	Total	100.0	Total	100.0

Table 3

*Class C's ratings on the helpfulness of collaborative writing*

	Content and organization		Grammar and vocabulary		Target language development	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	2	8.7	4	17.4	3	13.0
Helpful	8	34.8	11	47.8	14	60.9
Very helpful	11	47.8	4	17.4	4	17.4
Extremely helpful	2	8.7	4	17.4	2	8.7
Total	23	100.0	23	100.0	23	100.0

Table 4

*Class D's ratings on the helpfulness of collaborative writing*

	Content and organization		Grammar and vocabulary		Target language development	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	0	0.0	1	4.0	0	0.0
Helpful	1	44.0	7	28.0	7	28.0
Very helpful	11	44.0	11	44.0	14	56.0
Extremely helpful	3	12.0	6	24.0	4	16.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

Table 5

*Class E's ratings on the helpfulness of collaborative writing*

	Content and organization		Grammar and vocabulary		Target language development	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Not helpful	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Helpful	5	20.0	5	20.0	8	32.0
Very helpful	16	64.0	12	48.0	12	48.0
Extremely helpful	4	16.0	8	32.0	5	20.0
Total	25	100.0	25	100.0	25	100.0

## DISCUSSION

The results of this study support those of previous research (e.g. Fernández Dobao & Blum, 2013; Lin & Maarof, 2013; Shehadeh, 2011; Storch, 2005). It can be seen that though they were in different classes, the teachers and students gave relatively similar responses. Overall, the teachers carried out collaborative writing in their classes because they would like to bring out a lively learning atmosphere in which the learners interact with one another, help one another write, and learn from one another, which is scaffolding in language learning. The students also recognized this. In addition, it can be realized that when asking the learners to compose together, the teachers had an expectation of the stronger students providing scaffolding for the weaker. It should be noted, however, that in the case of a higher proficiency learner working with a lower proficiency peer, the former can absorb more grammar and vocabulary than the latter. When the proficiency difference between the two peers is large, the lower level learner may find it difficult to internalize the linguistic forms discussed with the higher level peer (Watanabe, 2008).

Arguments and conflicts were obviously inevitable and seem to be a noticeable result in this study. There was also the problem of non-collaborative group members. When these happened, the students tended to consider the teacher as the most reliable person to settle disputes, or at least the best student in the group that they could trust. These issues might have deterred the students from ranking collaborative writing as 'extremely helpful' for all three variables. More students in Class A selected this option for content and organization as well as grammar and vocabulary. However, in reality this class consisted of the students who were a little higher in proficiency level than those in the other classes. Thus, even though they worked in groups in this study, this result seems consistent with Leeser's (2004) and Watanabe's (2008) findings that higher level learners are more likely to learn language when they are paired with peers at the same level or at higher levels than

with lower level peers. Even so, there were more students in this class opting for 'very helpful' for target language development rather than 'extremely helpful'. Research has also confirmed that, regardless of their proficiency levels, learners need to be collaborative for the activity to be successful (Storch, 2002); little participation in the discussion is less likely to enhance learning, or at least strengthening memory, of linguistic features (Storch, 2008). In this study, it is recognized that in the classes which the teachers also gave instructions on how to work in pairs and groups, the students seemed to have worked more effectively, thereafter rating the value of collaborative writing highly. Watanabe (2008) found that the learners felt positive towards the activity when they had the chance to write with the peers who were collaborative, that is, being willing to discuss and share. In contrast, writing with those who were non-collaborative, that is, showing little participation and discussion, they expressed a negative attitude towards the experience. Thus, scaffolding the necessary skills for working collaboratively should also be carried out when requiring learners to compose together.

The issue of assessing group writing was found to be mismatch between the teachers' and the students' perceptions in this study. While the teachers did not mention it (except one teacher who asserted that she often intervened to ensure the students' equal participation and contribution), the students expressed their concern. This issue has also been indicated in Neumann and McDonough (2015). In reality, teachers encounter difficulties in deciding what is in a collaboratively written text that is completed by each individual student. This may be the reason why collaborative writing activities are not frequently used by writing teachers in the writing classroom. Strauss and U (2007) found that the difficulties, especially in tertiary level education, included how to assign students to groups, whether randomly or not, and how to ensure fairness and reliability in giving marks.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine perceptions of teachers and students of collaborative writing in an EFL instructional context. The findings showed the teachers and the students perceived various advantages and problems of writing essays collaboratively. While they appreciated the helpfulness of the activity in students' learning and writing quality, they pointed out the notable problems of conflict management and fair assessment. The findings of the study can be useful for making informed decisions in carrying out this activity in teaching and learning EFL writing.

One limitation of the study is the sample size is not large enough to make generalizations to different EFL teaching and learning situations. Thus, further research into EFL settings is necessary. Research in the future may compare writing groups of different numbers of members. It may also explore how to train learners to compose with others and teachers how to assess group assignments, in order to make the most of the activity.

## AUTHOR

Duong Doan Hoang Truc is currently a teacher of English at Ho Chi Minh City Open University in Vietnam. Her research interests include second/ foreign language writing, discourse analysis, and language acquisition.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A. Interview schedule*

#### Personal information

How long have you been teaching writing?

Do you teach any other language skills and/ or areas?

#### Teaching writing in general

When teaching writing, do you often ask students to write individually, in pairs, in groups, or do you use a combination?

Why do you ask students to write in pairs and/ or in groups?

Why do you not ask students to write in pairs and/ or in groups?

When teaching and marking writing, what benefits and challenges do you perceive in individual writing?

When teaching and marking writing, what benefits and challenges do you perceive in pair/ group writing?

When teaching and marking writing, do you perceive individual writing is helpful for students in terms of:

- the content and organization of their essays?
- the grammar and vocabulary of their essays?

When teaching and marking writing, do you perceive pair/ group writing is helpful for students in terms of:

- the content and organization of their essays?
- the grammar and vocabulary of their essays?

When teaching and marking writing, do you perceive individual writing is helpful for students in developing their English?

When teaching and marking writing, do you perceive pair/ group writing is helpful for students in developing their English?

#### Teaching the Writing 3 course

In this Writing 3 course, did you ask the students to write individually, in pairs, in groups, or do you use a combination?

In this Writing 3 course, which type(s) of essay(s) of the three types of essays required in the syllabus including Process Analysis, Argumentation, and Narration did you ask the students to write individually?

In this Writing 3 course, which type(s) of essay(s) did you ask the students to write in pairs and/ or in groups?

### ***Appendix B. Questionnaire***

1. In this **WRITING 3** course, how did the teacher ask you to write? (Please tick the option(s) you choose; you can choose more than one option)

- Individually
- In pairs
- In groups of 3
- In groups of 4
- In groups of 5
- Other: ...

#### Notes:

- If, in this Writing 3 course, you have written your essays individually and in pairs/ groups, please answer all of the questions in this questionnaire.

- If, in this Writing 3 course, you have only written individually, please answer the questions on individual writing and skip the questions on pair/ group writing.

- If, in this Writing 3 course, you have only written in pairs/ groups, please answer the questions on pair/ group writing and skip the questions on individual writing.

2. In this **WRITING 3** course, which type(s) of essay(s) did you write **individually**? (You can choose more than one option)

- Process Analysis Essays
- Argumentative Essays
- Narrative Essays

3. In this **WRITING 3** course, which type(s) of essay(s) did you write **in pairs and/ or in groups**? (You can choose more than one option)

Process Analysis Essays

Argumentative Essays

Narrative Essays

4. In this **WRITING 3** course, what **benefits** and **challenges** did you find in **individual writing**?

Benefits: .....

.....

Challenges: .....

.....

5. In this **WRITING 3** course, what **benefits** and **challenges** did you find in **pair/ group writing**?

Benefits: .....

.....

Challenges: .....

.....

6. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **individual writing** in building the **content** and **organization** of your essay(s)? (Please choose one option only)

Not helpful

Helpful

Very helpful

Extremely helpful

7. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **individual writing** in improving the **grammar** and **vocabulary** of your essay(s)? (Please choose one option only)

Not helpful

Helpful

- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

8. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **pair/ group writing** in building the **content** and **organization** of your essay(s)? (Please choose one option only)

- Not helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

9. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **pair/ group writing** in improving the **grammar** and **vocabulary** of your essay(s)? (Please choose one option only)

- Not helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

10. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **individual writing** in **developing your English**? (Please choose one option only)

- Not helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

11. In this **WRITING 3** course, how helpful did you find **pair/ group writing** in **developing your English**? (Please choose one option only)

- Not helpful
- Helpful
- Very helpful
- Extremely helpful

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# The Attitudes of First-year Students Towards the Use of Peer Review Using Facebook to Enhance Their Writing Performance

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**Linh Thi Thao Le**

University of Economics - Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
*linhltt@ueh.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

One constraint in teaching writing faced by several teachers is the provision of timely and effective feedback to students. In this scenario, peer review has been found to be beneficial in various ways such as lessening teacher's burden of massive workload, developing learners' autonomy, creating a friendly and social learning atmosphere as well as having students develop multiple writing skills at the same time. Besides, the application of Facebook as a platform for peer feedback to take place is also regarded to add further advantages, mostly in terms of its convenience and effectiveness. Trained peer feedback via Facebook use could greatly support teachers in providing students chance to practice giving and receiving comments for their pieces of writing at various stages. The process is expected to improve the quality of their written performance. This paper aims at scrutinizing participants' attitudes towards online peer feedback activity. Furthermore, the project took one step further by examining aspect of the extent to which they incorporate those received feedback into revising their drafts with a view to shedding light on the bridge between students' perceptions and their practice. Data collection includes informal observations and focus group interviews. Overall, the detailed analysis of data supports the application of online peer feedback in motivating learners and gradually enhancing their writing quality altogether.

**Keywords:** *peer feedback, writing performance, Facebook platform.*

# INTRODUCTION

## Rationale

Learning to write in English has been integrated in many tertiary education programs with a view to helping students use language effectively. Nonetheless, reality reveals that writing are till problematic to teachers and students alike. Those problems are identified as low motivation and the poor quality of students' written texts.

As a matter of fact, students face troubles in writing regarding both fluency and accuracy. The former involves content, coherence, cohesion devices and organization. Regarding students with low proficiency levels, problems even expand to local aspects such as grammatical errors, tenses, subject-verb agreement, spelling, pronouns, punctuation and word missing (Pham & Usaha, 2015). Those aforementioned issues, in turn, may demotivate learners. Moreover, students are not so keen on writing mainly because they make numerous errors. Besides, in comparison with speaking, most writing in the classroom is not communicative and happens in a tense ambience.

Research has also pointed out several reasons for students' poor writing performance. Inadequate practice is one since students in high school levels focus mostly on grammar or vocabulary to cater for exams' requirement (Huynh, 2008). Students, therefore, coming to universities with scanty experience with writing skill. Furthermore, writing is regarded by many as a passive skill as there is little interaction among learners, which may cause boredom and demotivation. Previously, product-based writing was prevalent in different school contexts and relied mainly on teachers' feedback to assess students' performance. However, even comments from instructors are sometimes ambiguous and offer little value to students (Rollinson, 2005). Teachers' correction may not be effective since students keep making the same mistakes.

Another real issue is that feedback, however critical it is to writing, is rarely used for revision since teachers seldom ask to receive the revised versions. Otherwise, teachers' workload will increase significantly (Yoshizawa, 2009). Therefore, students get no chance to rewrite their papers and accordingly develop their writing skills.

Following detailed analysis of the problem, it is supposed that the traditional writing practice may hinder students' writing advancement and also their enjoyment in learning. Indeed, it is the teachers' duty to figure out ways to enhance students' writing quality as well as shape their attitude towards writing. Consequently, to help students improve their writing, specifically in reducing errors and develop interests, peer feedback has the potential to be a valuable tool.

In such a technological era, taking advantage of computer technology in the classroom has drawn much attention with a plethora of related studies. University of Economics HCMC has also implemented several online learning strategies. After relating particular problems to the available resources and situation, online peer feedback is expected to tackle those the issues.

### **Aims of the research**

This small-scale research investigates students' attitudes towards the use of Facebook-based peer review. Simultaneously, it also examines roughly the degree to which students use peer feedback to revise their writing. The study addresses the following research question:

- What are the students' perceptions of the use of peer review using Facebook?
- To what extent do students revise their writing using the received peer feedback?

## **Significance of the research**

The results of this study are expected to offer value in terms of developing students' writing ability as well as increasing their motivation. Additionally, the introduction of this strategy contributes to existing pedagogical practice for writing and simultaneously, it informs other teachers within this school or even educational contexts in Vietnam about the effect of peer review.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Peer feedback and peer feedback activities**

#### ***Peer feedback***

There are a number of key words related to “peer feedback”, which are also known as peer response, peer review, peer correction or peer assessment. Huynh (2008) points out differences in those definitions in his study. However, I decide a working definition for my project as peer feedback, peer review or peer response used interchangeably, in which students' interaction is fostered and learners themselves contribute to improving their written products. Besides, my EFL learning context follows the process-writing approach, so formative assessment in which peer feedback is exchanged at various stages of the writing process is employed.

#### ***Peer feedback activities***

Participants in this practice read and give responses to their peers' writing drafts. The nature of feedback is suggested to students such as what to focus and how to express their comments. Feedback received from peers then can be used for editing and revising of their final draft. Thus, during this activity, interaction, discussion, clarification or negotiation of meaning are critical in gaining positive results (Rollinson, 2005).

Besides, peer feedback is integrated in the process writing, which is a common approach suggested by various researchers (Ur, 2012).

This is a spiral and dynamic process with 4 main stages, namely planning, drafting, getting feedback and revision (Creswell, 2012). Process writing characterizes teacher's invention at any stage, not merely fixing errors but instead, providing constructive comments to help students improve their writing (Pham & Usaha, 2015). In this respect, feedback plays a critical role in optimizing learning effectiveness.

In this practice, Facebook is used as platform for feedback exchanging activities. Students, once finish their assignment post it to receive comments from the other members of the group. Subsequently, students can improve their texts by making necessary changes based on their peers' comments and suggestions.

### ***Role of peer feedback***

Peer feedback in the writing process is critical and offers multiple benefits, which have been confirmed through many past studies. First of all, peer review fosters interaction among students both inside and outside the classroom (Rollinson, 2005; Kurihara, 2017). Working in a group and making frequent contact with peers create an interactive environment and subsequently, contribute to communicative approach in language classrooms. This is also supported by social learning strategies (Yu & Hu, 2017).

At the same time, the use of peer feedback promotes learner-centered classroom. Students are allowed to take control of their own writing process, taking the usual role of instructors to comment on others' work. This echoes the constructivism theory in learning and learners develop themselves by taking ownership of their texts (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Also, studies pointed out that peer comments help raise students' consciousness of the audience as well as reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses. Moreover, autonomy in learning is expected to accelerate through this process since teachers do not intervene much, but just act as a role of a facilitator (Pham & Usaha, 2015). Additionally, while responding to

others' work, students have chance to reflect on themselves and as Lu (2016), Kurihara (2017) indicate, their cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies will develop simultaneously.

## **Feedback in online environment**

### ***Traditional and online peer feedback***

Compared to traditional class room which includes face-to-face discussion, lecture or note taking, the online instruction happens both in and outside class thanks to the availability of technological devices. According to Huynh (2008), higher education puts more emphasis on online learning, especially in Vietnamese context. Fortunately, advance in computer technology has added an advantage to teaching and learning. Actually, teachers have taken advantage of online discussion and communication for some decades (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). It is undeniable that technology facilitates learning in creating authentic communication, motivating students and providing them with plenty of language exposure and practice.

Regarding the use of online peer feedback opposed to traditional practice, the former is considered superior due to its convenience and effectiveness (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). For one thing, online feedback is not restricted to the classroom and it is almost constant. As Yusol, Manan and Alias (2012) suggest, using online platform gives enormous space for students to interact regardless of distance and time. Furthermore, employing online peer review provides less threatening environment for students to give comments on each other without trying to be kind and avoid hurting their partners (Pham & Usaha, 2015). Additionally, the underlying principle is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC), which allows students to take more initiatives to participate and discuss with peers. It also creates favorable condition for shy and not so confident students (Yoshizawa, 2009). As a matter of fact, writing becomes more communicative and can raise students' awareness of various audiences (Ertmer et al., 2007). Hence, with

the popularity of social network currently, online peer review has potential to bring out better educational outcomes in teaching and learning writing.

### ***Peer feedback using Facebook platform***

Among the widespread popularity of technological advances, social media has become an integral part of many personal lives. With higher education, social media can be taken advantage of as platform for sharing, interacting and socializing (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). Facebook is currently the most popular net-working site with numerous users. Nonetheless, educators have been reluctant to embrace technology into the classroom, especially the use of social media partly due to its privacy matters (Gardner, 2013). There is a growing interest towards the adoption of Facebook in higher education since it proves to be a useful educational tool. Indeed, Facebook is considered as socially and pedagogically beneficial though its integration into real practice still remains challenging (Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). Looking through literature, it is evident that there is still a gap when it comes to the use of Facebook in peer feedback activities.

Peer feedback is not a new concept and has been used in many EFL/ESL classrooms for the past couples of decades. Literature has focused on various aspects of this practice, namely its effectiveness, participants' attitudes, the role of proper training as well as the degree of revision that students incorporate into rewriting. Many studies have been conducted on peer reviews regarding those areas but still with some conflicting findings.

### **Learners' attitudes toward peer feedback practice**

First of all, regarding studies on learners' attitudes towards peer review, results suggest that learners generally have positive attitudes when doing tasks of peer comments. For instance, Xu and Yu (2008) carried out an action research on second year students at university level to explore their attitudes through the use of

questionnaires and interviews. Findings highlight participants' positive perception of feedback practice. Nonetheless, long-term effect of online peer feedback can be examined by analyzing students' assignments and a variety of genres may as well be included. The same result is also confirmed in the study of Kurihara (2017), in which students confirm their enjoyment and motivation.

Huynh (2008) investigated how the online peer feedback enhances students' motivation and subsequently improves their writing performance. An experimental research was carried out following pre and post-test design. 75 second-year students at Can Tho University took part in the study, which lasted for 15 weeks. Research instruments included questionnaires on students' motivation, interviews on students' attitudes and academic writing tests. Findings indicate that students in the experimental group were strongly motivated. Besides, statistical data shows that participants' writing performance was improved considerably after the study. Furthermore, participants show preferences for this collaborative learning mode to tradition teacher feedback only. This study would have been better to include participants from various levels for the possibility of generalization. Besides, with the use of peer feedback as the only formative assessment, some students may not work seriously as their results will not be affected by this activity.

Lu (2016) did a research on students' attitudes toward peer review of giving and receiving feedback. It was then concluded that students hold positive attitudes towards this practice in classroom. This was also a longitudinal study, lasting for one semester. Students practiced giving and receiving feedbacks on their essays with adequate training in advance. Areas of focuses on the questionnaires involved its usefulness (different elements of writing), motivation and enjoyment. In the end, findings indicate participants' positive attitudes and satisfaction with peer feedback.. Nonetheless, this includes too small sample (13 students) for generalization. Furthermore, subjects of this study possess high

proficiency level, so for other groups, the results may vary. However, it is evident that many past studies aim to explore students' attitudes with reference to their increased motivation in learning.

In contrast, no significant changes in students' motivation in learning writing was concluded by study of Ertmer et al. (2007). However, participants admitted that online peer feedback was still valuable. As a result, research has generally suggested participants' positive attitudes towards peer feedback practice so far. Their research highlights the quality of online discussions and postings. Nonetheless, its small sample size and short duration of time also make it inapplicable to other contexts.

### **Degree to which students incorporate peer feedback into their writing revision**

Another focus of research is categorized as level of revision that students incorporate peer feedback into editing and rewriting their drafts. In this aspect, Min (2006) has researched extensively on the effect of trained peer feedback concerning students' revision types and overall writing quality. The participants in this study were 18 second-year students at tertiary level and the results indicate that students did incorporate their peers' comments into their revision with a significant proportion (77%). Thus, the researcher concludes that with proper and sufficient training, peer feedback can have positive impact on students' writing performance. Likewise, study by Yoshizawa (2009) points out that a high percentage of participants (80.77%) confirmed that they incorporated peers' suggestions to modify their essays.

Pham & Usaha (2015) conducted a study on the blog-based peer response to examine the nature of comments as well as the ratio that students incorporate received comments into refining their writing. This involved second-year university students at Nong Lam University. Data collection includes students' drafts, comments on blog and in-depth interviews. Findings of this study

confirms the effectiveness of using blog-based peer review on writing revision. Besides, it is supplemented by specifying areas of focus (global versus local), which previous research failed to mention. However, the use of single group for pre and post-test design may not be well supported through literature. However, study of Kurihara (2017) shows very minimal impact of peer feedback or even no significant influence on revision despite its positive impact on motivation.

### **Effectiveness of online peer feedback**

Research on the effectiveness of peer feedback received less attention compared to other dimensions. However, in recent years, there has been a shift of focus to examine the real effect of this technique on improving learning. Some demonstrate obvious relationship between peer review practice and learners' written improvement while other studies yield conflicting findings on the effectiveness. Nonetheless, a myriad of recent studies concludes that with the well-designed and thorough training, peer review can contribute significantly to the improvement of students' subsequent drafts (Min, 2006; Huynh, 2008).

Another empirical study on the effect of peer review in EFL writing classroom was completed by Yoshizawa (2009). The experiment was conducted at Japan University with 104 participants. Students' first and final drafts after revision at home by the use of peer comments were collected for assessment. Analysis indicated that more than 70% of the essays received better scores on the revised versions compared to the first drafts. Moreover, those who were reluctant initially and were not confident enough in their abilities to deliver good quality comments actually did give some comments by the end of the practice.

On the other hand, Yusof, Munan and Alias (2012) conducted an exploratory research with 20 university students at low intermediate levels. It investigated the potential of using Facebook as a means of giving feedback to peers' writing. The results showed

that feedback practice facilitates the learning process for both feedback givers and receivers, though it is still inconclusive about the significant improvement of the experimental groups. Nonetheless, it is evident that ongoing comments and reviews on Facebook page have potential to help students refine their outline and draft stage and may gradually improve their written work altogether.

Other aforementioned studies by Huynh (2008) also gave consensus on students' writing improvement after the practice of peer feedback. Similarly, Pham and Usaha (2015) came to the same conclusion. As a result, after reviewing literature, the effectiveness of online peer review outweighs non-significant findings regarding students' improvement in writing.

### **Conditions for online peer feedback to take place**

Another critical issue touched on by several researchers in this matter is the required conditions for online peer feedback to take place. It is especially important in this context due to the adoption of social media into teaching and learning.

### ***Resources and required knowledge for conducting peer feedback activity***

Computer-mediated learning utilizes some online platforms such as e-mails or class web pages for interaction and discussion (Gardner, 2013). According to Huynh (2008), creating a class web page will be the most convenient and it is the most practical board for implementing online peer review practice. Since this activity can work with many kinds of networks. Teachers may create a class website to facilitate students' discussion and practice peer review. Other instructors may as well take advantage of available resources school e-learning systems. Nonetheless, for my study, the use of social media, namely Facebook will be employed in light of the previous discussion on social media.

Since information technology can be a separate field, technical knowledge is essential for participants to fulfil their tasks. As discussed in Huynh's (2008), Chugh and Ruhi's (2017) studies, students need to be computer illiterate, knowing how to use Internet browser, search engine; copying; editing information on the web. With the use of Facebook, it is also vital to know how to post, comment, tag their friends as well as functions such as "like" button (Yusolf, Manan, & Alias, 2012).

### ***Teacher's role in peer feedback practice***

Teacher's role in peer feedback practice has also been subjected to discussion in past studies. It is argued that in applying peer feedback, teacher gives students autonomy to take control of their own learning (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Ertmer et al., 2007; Kurihara, 2017). Having said that, the instructor still plays a critical role in conducting online peer feedback since the activity needs to be well-prepared to ensure its positive outcome (Berg, 1999). Prior to peer feedback exchange, teacher should give training sessions, allocate groups and present appropriate content to learners. Besides, teacher needs to intervene if necessary to promote students' interaction, encourage students' participation or tackle any unexpected problems.

### ***Potential challenges and importance of training***

The first consideration concerns the validity of feedback (Huynh, 2008). It is often reported that students value teachers' comments more than those from peers since they suppose only teacher is capable of evaluating and giving useful feedback (Tsui & Ng, 2000; Yoshizawa, 2009; Lu, 2016). Also, there is a common perception that students with low proficiency levels cannot produce accurate and meaningful feedback. To deal with this, Yu and Hu (2016) looked at whether students of high proficiency level can benefit from peer feedback when working with lower proficiency partners. Their case study in Chinese context brings evidence that peer feedback can be valuable to both groups alike.

While aforementioned studies indicate that students appreciate peer feedback and do the practice seriously. In fact, the majority of them reveal that peer feedback is an enjoyable activity and can have positive impact on their writing performance. Nonetheless, students may show resistance to this strategy (Rollinson, 2005; Chugh & Ruhi, 2017). For one thing, since students may undervalue their friends' comments, there can be reluctance to take part in the activity. Additionally, students may not be fair in their comments for fear that their peers may feel offended or vice versa (Huynh, 2008). In light of those issues, training proves to be indispensable and the effect of training has been quoted by a number of past research (Berg, 1999; Rollinson, 2005; Min, 2006; Pham & Usaha, 2015; Lu, 2016; Xu & Yu, 2018). The purpose of including training is twofold: raising participants' awareness of the value of peer review and providing them with sufficient guidelines, explicit procedures and criteria for assessment. That is why training is the most critical part for this project and there is detailed plan on how to train students well for peer feedback practice based on studies by Berg (1999), Pham and Usaha (2015).

### **Research gap**

Review of literature did point out positive effect of peer review on students' motivation, engagement and their writing performance. Almost all described studies involve participants at tertiary levels, thus it is possible that this practice works well with this group of learners. Nonetheless, there has not any research in this field at this university. In fact, this pedagogical practice is novel to many teaching contexts in Vietnam. As far as I am concerned, traditional teaching practice may fail to engage and motivate students and the use of online platform is promising in bringing out much more positive results.

Furthermore, there is a dearth of research to see how peer feedback applies to students with lower L2 proficiency level and enables learners to make the most out of this activity. Certain

research also sheds light on areas of focus for students' revision, which makes me aware of the focus points in my project (first looking at local levels). Last but not least, online peer review has been in favor to many researchers, though the use of social media such as Facebook platform has not been given much attention. Therefore, this study looks at how the popular and widespread use of Facebook with students' daily lives can be adopted to enhance their performance in a social and collaborative learning environment. The focus is on students' attitudes towards peer feedback activity, such as whether it can increase their motivation in learning writing and how this perception can shape their practice in using the received feedback in their writing revision.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Setting and participants**

The study employed convenience sampling to collect data since its main purpose is to tackle the author's practical issue in his/her classroom. Thirty-two first year students, non-English major of Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics HCMC took part in this study. This English program was called ECP (The English Consolidation Program) which developed students' communicative skills in replicating real life situations. Students' English proficiency was categorized as pre-intermediate level.

When they took part in this study, students had finished the first semester during one month and hence, had some time to adapt to the new learning environment. Each week, students had 3 class meetings, 2 hours each. The students attended classes at normal hours as scheduled and instructions followed the course's syllabus. The study, therefore, did not make any interruption to the teaching process.

### **Research design**

This is an action research design which is conducted on small-scale

context and deals with practical problems. As discussed earlier, this instructional strategy is new to this teaching, it is not plausible to aim at investigating its effectiveness, which can only reveal itself after quite some time. Instead, students' reactions to this practice is scrutinized, with their revision taken into account as an initial step for further research on its effectiveness.

As defined by Creswell (2012), Griffee (2012), action research characterizes a recursive cycle and initially includes exploratory stage to get an insight into the identified matter. The subsequent step is to decide on action plan and implement the intervention, followed by evaluation and reflection on its effectiveness. This cycle is iterative until a sufficient knowledge and solution to the problem is attained.

Advocates for action research point out various advantages of this design. First of all, Creswell (2012) argues for action research as the most practical and applicable design. It is, therefore, related to solving immediate or direct problem in the classroom. Additionally, action research provides an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their own practice and thus is considered as a self-reflection spiral (Kemmis, 2005). It is likely to help teachers get exposure to a large amount of knowledge and experience; hence, this action research cycle has potential to become a learning cycle for teacher-researcher. As Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000), Creswell (2012) suggest, this kind of research characterizes a collaborative team within a school context. Several individuals or groups participate in the project, providing support with problem identification or data collection. Interaction and sharing are central to this kind of research and finally the findings can be shared even to the wider community. Furthermore, the notion of "dynamic process" is applied to action research since it is not linear, but instead, moves back and forth between looking, acting and thinking (Kemmis, 2005).

## **Research instruments**

Observations were used to illuminate the reality picture of peer review activities and as mentioned, work well with action research design (Creswell, 2012; Griffiee, 2012). This involves looking at how well they participate in discussion, their writing drafts and differences between first and final versions. In this scenario, online medium such as Facebook enables the researcher to observe and scrutinize the ongoing activity conveniently.

Focus group interviews employing open-ended questions were utilized to examine student' attitudes towards online peer review. This research instrument has the advantage of promoting group interaction (Creswell, 2012) and as participants take part in facilitated discussion, they can build upon each other's opinion. Indeed, students were given freedom to talk to others and interactive feature is prominent in this research tool. Moreover, this is beneficial with short duration of time and when individuals are reluctant to raise their voice. Towards the end of the study, nine students were interviewed consisting 8 women and 1 man. Participants were chosen based on the level that they incorporated peer comments into writing revision. One of the groups included 5 students, whose differences between the first and final drafts were not significant and the other group had 4 students who showed discernible application of received peer reviews. All these students represented different 8 groups with a view to taking a more general views across all participants. The main purpose of interviews is to examine students' perception, particularly their feelings and attitudes towards Facebook-based peer feedback. The data then was translated into English, analyzed and grouped into various themes. The results were displayed, followed by the in-depth discussion over the matter.

## **Procedure**

At the beginning, an informal in-class survey was conducted to find out students' use of Facebook, particularly whether they had an

account or not. Those who were not would be provided help to familiarize themselves with Facebook use.

In phase II, teacher instructed students how to write a paragraph in English and gave some revision of essential grammatical points in writing. Following the theoretical part, students practiced writing paragraph in class and then, receiving feedback from teachers and other students. In fact, this practice helped students to be aware of the standard paragraph and how to respond to a peer's product. Phase III included feedback training session for 1 period with a view to enabling students to deliver effective and useful reviews to their peers. For instance, comments such as: "I really like your paragraph" or "You did a good job!" alone seem rather vague and offers little meaning to help their peers enhance their writing quality. Actually many past studies have mentioned the indispensable part of training to ensure the success of this practice (Rollinson, 2005; Min, 2006). Besides, this orientation period would shape students' attitudes towards the effect and value of peer feedback since they have tendency to put higher value on teachers' comments and have doubts about feedback from their classmates who have more or less the same English proficiency level (Ertmer, et al., 2007; Yu & Hu, 2017).

In the next phase, students were divided into smaller groups of four. Official class hours gave them the chance to work on related vocabulary and grammar, analyze topics together, brainstorm and exchange ideas with their peers. Afterwards, they practiced giving online feedback outside class time. This peer review activities took place from week 2 to week 4, with the topics from the book American English File, second edition.

**Table 1** Writing tasks

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<b>Unit 8</b>	Give a person description
<b>Unit 10</b>	Write a description of a favorite photo
<b>Unit 10</b>	Write and informal email to a friend

---

Coming to the final stage, interviews were conducted to figure out participants' attitudes towards the use of peer responses in helping them correcting themselves prior to final writing product. Also, students were questioned about the rationale for level of feedback application in their writing.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Responding to research question 1: What are the students' attitude towards the use of peer review using Facebook?**

Students' attitude towards online peer feedback practice is figured out by discussing some emerging themes within some predetermined categories.

**Table 2** Categories of interview questions

Q1: Do you like the peer feedback activity? Why (Why not)?	<b>enjoyment</b>
Q2: Are you comfortable with the use of Facebook in doing peer feedback?	<b>Facebook-based platform</b>
Q3: Which one do you prefer: only teacher's comments on your writing or both teacher and peers' comments?	<b>preferences</b>
Q4: Do you find your peers' comments useful to you?	<b>usefulness</b>
Q6: What do you learn from peers through peer feedback practice?	
Q5: Do you use peer feedback to revise your draft? If yes, to what extent?	<b>level of revision</b>
Q7: What do you suggest for this activity to be better?	<b>students' suggestions</b>

## ***Enjoyment***

Eight out of nine participants (88.9%) said they liked this activity due to multiple benefits generally mentioned such as improving writing, learning from different styles, sharing experiences and discussing ideas. Also, this activity activated their thinking, especially when there were conflicting ideas. Additionally, some students stated that this practice was novel to them and hence, they found it interesting.

*I like this activity because it helps members of the group connect with each other and share learning experiences in writing such as structure of one piece of writing [S7]*

*I can learn more things from my friends' feedback, such as grammar and vocabulary use [S9]*

*I especially like this activity since it's the first time I've done it. It is really useful to my grammar since to me, grammar is very important [S6]*

The findings correspond to those of several studies of Rollinson's (2005), Kurihara's (2017), Yu and Hu's (2017) on the interactive and communicative aspects of peer feedback as well as students' enjoyment discussed earlier. Nonetheless, one student did not vote for this practice explaining that she found there was too much work to do compared to traditional writing.

*I don't like this because there is too much work for me to do. But I think if sometimes we do this peer feedback, it will be beneficial since this creates a connection among friends [S3]*

Another student felt ambivalent about this activity. She added later that several comments received confused her, not knowing what to count on. However, she appreciated this practice in that they could learn new words or grammar from other better students.

*Sometimes, my friends give me comments that are apparently wrong or vocabulary suggested is not suitable for my text. And I suppose my original word use is better [S3]*

*When my friends comment on my text, I can learn many good words from them [S3]*

### **Using Facebook Platform**

Similar to Chugh and Ruhi's (2017) belief that online peer comment offered the advantage of being convenient and effective compared to the traditional peer feedback. All interviewees (100%) cited that they were comfortable with the use of Facebook in peer feedback. In fact, they unanimously agreed upon the familiarity and convenience of online platform which could allow easy editing, uploading photos; thus several students believed that this online practice saved them a significant amount of time from typing and editing.

*Typing saves me a lot of time [S2]*

*I feel more comfortable using Facebook since it's familiar in our daily life [S5]*

*I feel more comfortable. I can read my friends' posts and take some ideas from them as well as learn a lot of new vocabulary [S6]*

Besides, 5 students pointed out that Facebook use gave them more time to think over their topics beforehand and allowed reading other's pieces of writing. Besides group members, students seemed to pay more attention to the writing of those having high level of English proficiency and the publicity of writing products enables available assess to several of them simultaneously.

*I have more ideas at home and can make use of dictionary [S7]*

*I think using FB is better since if I am sitting in the class, I don't find out any ideas immediately and it's also so convenient [S7]*

It is also supposed that the inclusion of Facebook in this practice enhanced sense of usefulness of social media tool, not only for entertainment but also for learning.

*Instead of just interacting online, doing this activity seems to upgrade Facebook's functions and I find it more useful to my life, instead of just surfing the net all the time. Now every time I open it, there's a lot of writing that I find very interesting [S9]*

Nonetheless, one student revealed the fact that some classmates might not feel easy to post their writing in Facebook because “they are not confident about their writing and afraid that their peers may criticize them”. At this point, group two revealed that before post their writing in the class group, students actually got feedback from their personal groups in advance. This contradicts Yoshizawa’s (2009) contention that peer comment practice was advantageous to reserved students who were not always comfortable with face-to-face interaction.

### **Preferences for Types of Comments**

The questioned students all ideally preferred both teacher’s and peers’ comments in their writing. Some of the arguments include getting more ideas from both teacher and peers. Sometimes, those opinions may contradict each other, which initiate more thinking, analyzing and checking information.

*Teacher may give some straight feedback, but if I have peers, there will be more ideas for me to choose those suitable ones.*

*When there are conflicting ideas, I will compare and check mine, peers’ and teacher’s and decide by myself [S6]*

The same results were discovered by Yusol, Manan and Alias (2012), Chuh and Ruhi (2017) that peer feedback initiated a lot of discussion and communication among students, which brings variety of ideas in the classroom. This process would in turn develop students’ critical thinking and enhance their language proficiency level. One student stated that he needed teacher’s comments for more advanced stuff such as sentence structure, content arrangement while peers’ comments were necessary in

terms of checking vocabulary, spelling or other minor grammatical errors.

*Through my experience, peer comments mostly help me with things like grammatical mistakes, punctuation, spelling while my teacher can comment on more difficult things like ideas or advances structures, which I think students are not able to do [S9]*

Pham and Usaha (2015) also mentioned students at lower level of proficiency often focus on superficial aspects when checking their peers' writing. More global level such as content or cohesion required adequate training and teacher's support in advance.

Another student, from her own experiences, contended that teacher's comment tended to be more general while her peers can provide her with more details and timely, so the combination would optimize the learning writing process.

*Teachers' comments are sometimes very general and peers can give me continuous feedback and waiting for the teachers sometimes takes a long time [S6]*

Likewise, Yusol, Manan and Alias (2012) discussed the need for teachers' feedback to be timely. Furthermore, peer feedback could reduce learners' anxiety of showing their weaknesses to the teacher and help learning take place in a non-threatening condition.

Peers are easier to make contact with each other and we can even use teen codes while doing that with teacher may put a lot of pressure on us to produce accurate grammar [S1]

Rollinson (2005) and Pham and Usaha (2015) supported the idea that peer review created a non-threatening learning environment for the students to express themselves. Yoshizawa (2009) claimed that it was of great benefit for shy students since they felt more comfortable writing feedback than discussing it in person.

Although all participants opted for both types of comments they received for their writing, one student said that she preferred teachers' feedback in light of the quality of peer comments. Additionally, it is stressed that peers could give them some more references and it is all up to the students to make use of the comments or not. Two participants also agreed that they would only consider peers' comments as references and might make some modifications to their writing accordingly. In this matter, it was expected that comments were of good quality.

*I need my peers to give me useful and serious comments instead of following teacher's request and picking out some mistakes in my writing. However, if I find the comments correct, I am willing to check my work accordingly [S2]*

This finding confirmed what Pham and Usaha (2015) found out in their study that students remained responsible and made their own choices for their writing.

In short, students' interviews discussed their perception regarding Facebook-based peer comment. Analysis of data supports learners' enjoyment and positive attitudes towards this activity in this context. This finding was also confirmed by the studies of Huynh (2008), Xu and Yu (2008), Lu (2016), which also pointed out students' preferences of this novel activity compared to traditional mode.

### ***Usefulness***

Among 9 participants, 8 (88.9%) said that they found the peer feedback practice beneficial with two of them claimed that it was "very useful" to them. Most of the explanations surrounded the fact that participating in this activity is beneficial to students in terms of vocabulary expansion (77.7%), grammatical accuracy (88.9%), getting more ideas from peers (55.6%), and avoiding repetition (44.4%)

*So far, teachers' comments can follow certain patterns, but together with peers' comments, I got more ideas and learn some new stuff such in vocabulary, my friends can help me to vary my vocabulary use to sound more beautiful [S8]*

*It is beneficial to me since I have ideas for my writing but my grammar is so bad with a lot of errors. I can complete my writing thanks to my friends' checking of tenses, punctuations. I also get rid of my familiar words used again and again [S7]*

As can be seen, it was especially of great benefit to students who admit themselves to be weak at grammar or lack vocabulary. Others added that the social atmosphere in learning helped them achieve better results and be in good terms with other classmates. One group also revealed the establishing of another group chat to pre-check their writing before publishing it. In fact, it was consistent with what Yu and Hu (2017) referred to as social strategies in which students supported each other in learning.

Most students mentioned various advantages of this practice to improving their language as well as communication skills. Firstly, it benefited their writing since students could learn from their classmates through a lot of writing posted in the group. Comments from their peers surrounded vocabulary use, grammatical structures or punctuation which in turn help students refine their work.

*This helps me improve all skills in English [S6]*

*I get more friends and connect with them, so I have to learn how to make myself understood [S8]*

*I learn how to check writing and it increased my experiences because this is the very first time we've done writing activities like those [S5]*

Many of them referred to the extensive reading as one of the advantage of this online peer feedback. Particularly, those having

difficulties generating ideas could draw inspiration from reading others' pieces of writing.

*When I got stuck with ideas, reading my peers' writing can arouse some thoughts in me so that I can start jot down some of my own ideas [S1]*

Additionally, students also benefited from giving feedback to their friends since this process requires them to do more research before producing any comment or suggestion. As a feedback giver, participants conceded that it offered some advantages of commenting on others' writing, such as they got chance to review some linguistic aspects.

*If I see my friends' errors, I frequently have to do research to give a good comment. I am personally very lazy to read, but if the teacher asks me to do peer feedback writing, I have to read them carefully [S3]*

Most of them stated that they could review their grammatical knowledge and also pick up some new words. And since the writing drafts as well as their comments appeared publicly, participants actually wished to do a serious job so as to save their face. As Tsui and Ng (2000), Pham and Usaha (2015) maintained, learners' autonomy could be developed through doing this practice since participants put more time and effort in giving comments. Furthermore, some participants highlighted the social aspect of peer review activity, especially when it is conducted through social media.

*I learn how to point out my friends' errors in a proper and direct way, not to offend them. I also give my friends some solutions for them to pick from [S8]*

*I can discuss with my friends more comfortably than the teacher. Some students are afraid of the teacher, so they avoid raising their opinion [S7]*

Students were contented that they had opportunities to discuss, interact and share with others. Besides, learning through this practice occurs in a non-threatening environment, since they feel more comfortable to discuss with classmates as opposed to teacher. This also help students be aware of various types of readers and plan their writing accordingly. Ertmer et al (2007) also agreed with the notion that doing peer review raises students' awareness of different audiences and level of formality. One student believed that this practice could improve their writing skill, which was critical to their learning since they all aimed at achieving Ielts certificate. Therefore, they took part in this activity seriously once it dawned on them that writing was vital to second language learning.

Nonetheless, one interviewee when enquired about its usefulness said it did not offer significant benefits to her, explaining that she would expect more from this activity and a longer period of time may yield more obvious results. However, many other comments admitted the advantages of this activity in several ways.

*They are good at picking mistakes, like every punctuation.*

*I can learn many things from serious comments such as sentence structure, vocabulary use and how to be concise [S2]*

*I think it's very useful since I am aware of the role of vocabulary in learning English. Some of my friends' use of vocabulary is excellent, very concise and appropriate that I can learn from [S9]*

*Sometimes I don't know where to start, reading others' work can give me some ideas that I can develop for my topic [S4]*

*I also think the same as others, but I would like to add that this practice is beneficial to my communication in exchanging with my classmates [S5]*

*To me, peers' comments work as references, but what I really like is that I can read from a lot of writing. When I realized my friends' mistakes, I will look back to see if I myself did make some errors like this [S5]*

Particularly, the last quote revealed another merit of peer review activity, which also echoes several past studies of Tsui and Ng (2000), Lu (2016), Kurihara (2017) on participants' self-reflection when doing peer comments.

### ***Observation***

The informal observation was carried out to help the researcher get a bird's eye view of the practice in particular classroom context. During the research period, the researcher continuously observed the students' peer feedback activities and necessarily provided them with some prompts and guidance accordingly.

Firstly, participants in all groups took place in the activity actively, with plenty of feedback and discussion exchanged for various writing tasks with 4-week period. Participants also reminded their peers to comment on their work in case of lateness. Additionally, learners' communication was especially concerned since interaction is at the core of peer feedback activity. As observed, students did have a lot of communication, discussion and consequently, most of them attempted to finish their task on time.

Students were allowed to use Vietnamese, so as to maximize their open sharing, particularly for those with low proficiency level. It is noticed that students were willing to exchange ideas and opinion with peers and their language use was informal as well as intimate.

While some students took initiative in completing the task, others showed procrastination until the deadline. It is especially true for male participants who needed some reminders from peers or the teacher. As one interviewee revealed, her group members, which consisted of all males, hardly commented anything on her work. This also explains for the fact that only 1 out of 9 interviewed participants (11.1%) is male. Thus, learners' awareness and autonomy plays an essential role in the success of this practice.

Overall, preliminary observation illustrates students' active participation in peer comment practice. Through the researcher's monitoring and observing via Facebook, this activity was conducted quite smoothly and could arouse students' interest.

### **Responding to research question 2: to what extent do students revise their writing using the received peer feedback?**

Firstly, data from observation sheds light on the extent that participants apply their received comments in writing revision. Though analyzing the first and final drafts, rough estimation by the researcher is around 40% of revision following received comments. In comparison to the study of Min (2006) – 77%, Yoshizawa (2009) – 80.8%, this proportion is much less significant. It can be accounted for by the fact that compared to other longitudinal studies, the project lasted for only a short period of time and thus, participants may need quite some time getting familiar to a totally new practice.

Observation also serves the main purpose of determining the participants for the two different interviewed groups based on drafts. This aspect illustrates the most discrepancies between the two groups, which were formed according to the level of revision in writing. Altogether, one group predictably demonstrated low level of applying feedback to modify their drafts while the other claimed to depend much more on their peers to help them check their work. One student in the first group explained:

*Yes, to me it's only vocabulary since they can suggest more suitable words for me and help me avoid repetition. Other basic errors such as spelling, I will check and modify accordingly. But for bigger stuff like sentences, I think I will consider since my friends' suggestions are sometimes worse than mine [S4]*

Interviewed students gave appropriate proportion of their level of revision based on peer comments in the below table:

**Table 2** Proportion of revision using peer comments claimed by interviewed students

Group 1 (Lower level of revision)	Student 1	20%
	Student 2	30%
	Student 3	0%
	Student 4	0%
	Student 5	0%
Group 2 (Higher level of revision)	Student 6	50%
	Student 7	70%
	Student 8	20%
	Student 9	40%

One participant said she got no comments from the group members, so she did not apply the feedback at all. Two of them cited 0% as the level of revision from peer feedback: “When I read and think, I still thought my first choice is better and some suggested points are not even correct”.

Those participants claimed that they did not use the comments at all or very little to check their writing and elaborated on the reason that students did not value partners’ feedback as well as teacher’s. Besides, participants supposed some of the received comments offered few benefits since they were “superficial, general or something obviously wrong.” This has already been highlighted in literature that students considered feedback from peers who had somehow the same level of proficiency as them less valuable than teacher’s (Rollinson, 2005; Huynh, 2007).

The other group possesses evidently higher percentage of revision following peer comments. Nonetheless, it is apparent that students supposedly with low proficiency level, in comparison, perceived more advantages of this practice than those with higher levels. The

latter group explained that considering their writing to be quite good at the beginning, students made little use of the feedback. Moreover, the content was kept and only modifications were made to grammatical points or vocabulary use. Nonetheless, they all unanimously agreed that this practice offered some other advantages to them.

*I use about 50%, because I have to keep my own writing. I can't take them all but need to show my originality [S6]*

*I appreciated my friends' comments a lot, though with some suggested ideas, if they make my writing change, I will not consider replacing them [S4]*

*Since my own writing is not too bad, I just use comments on spelling or my producing not natural language [S1]*

*I mostly use peer feedback for more complex vocabulary, but if they are not relevant to my contexts, I will not use them [S2]*

In short, determining level of writing revision is necessary in bridging what students actually think and do. It is also the preliminary step before proceeding to examine the effectiveness of peer feedback practice at subsequent stages. Through aforementioned analysis, this activity has the potential to bring about successful outcome in enhancing teaching and learning of writing.

### ***Suggestions***

From participants' points of view, there is still room for improving peer feedback activity. One student suggested the inclusion of more interesting topics "such as hobbies or some more interesting things" although they could not agree on the number and the frequency of tasks given. Some would like more writing per week while others said it was overloaded to them ("it should be more frequent due to its usefulness in our writing learning").

Besides, students in both groups referred to the idea of more proper training for them to give and receive meaningful, clear and qualified comments and also to improve writing skills. One even added that peer feedback activity should require good quality of comments from students and she found it disappointing when her peers were just trying to complete the task by generating superficial feedback.

*I think we not only pick some errors but also give explanations. Otherwise, they cannot know why they should use this tense instead that tense, for instance. And they may repeat the mistakes [S9]*

One interviewed student suggested that this practice should not be restricted to members of the groups, but instead open to everyone. Consequently, they would have more chance to read and learn from a diversity of writing styles.

*It should not be restricted to groups but open to everyone. In A's situation, we should encourage others to give comments since there is no among his group members [S7]*

Last but not least, it is suggested that there is more competition among classmates to motivate them. Some students admitted that things like bonuses or little rewards could boost their enthusiasm for this learning activity. In fact, those suggestions are valuable to plan for the next stage in this action cycle. Frequent revision and modification to the practice is vital in maximizing its potential to provide learners with a dynamic, exciting and effective writing lessons.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusion**

The findings of this present study confirms the positive effect of peer feedback using Facebook. For instance, the positive impacts of

online peer feedback include motivating students to learn writing and adding variety to the classroom. Additionally, since learners perceive some benefits of this practice in their writing performance, most of them favored the inclusion of online peer comments instead of only traditional teacher feedback. Although less able students claim to get more benefits from this activity than those with higher English proficiency levels, excellent students still confirm the advantages of giving and receiving feedback on their reflection as well review of knowledge, for example. Furthermore, the use of Facebook as platform for communication is proved to add more merits to this practice. The results of this study also highlight the extent students review their draft writing based on the received comments. Two groups with different levels of revision were interviewed and their sharing reveals key explanations for their application of peer feedback. Nonetheless, cautions and considerations needed to be taken when conducting this practice emerge through students' concerns and suggestions such as overloaded work. On the part of the teacher, every preparation is required to maximize favorable conditions for the learners.

### **Implication**

According to those aforementioned findings, much communication with teachers and also among peers can facilitate learning process and lead to students' improvement in their writing skills. Moreover, teachers' role may shift from knowledge transmitter or errors checker to the facilitator and monitor of feedback practice giving adequate support and promoting learners' autonomy (Huynh, 2008). All in all, teachers at UEF context now have another potential teaching tool in order to enhance students' experiences of learning writing in and outside the classroom.

### **Direction for further research**

There are some unavoidable limitations to the present study. One of them is listed as the limited time and students may not get

enough exposure to this practice in order to generate more reliable results. Furthermore, this research was conducted on a small size group, so for the possibility of generalization, a larger population coming from various levels is required.

The focus of peer comments for this study is at local level (grammar, word choice, spelling or punctuation). The content was discussed in class and students just went on writing up at home. Therefore, the study was mostly designed to examine participants' attitudes of a novel teaching practice. Cycle 2 of this action research can proceed to check the effectiveness of peer feedback activity and work on more global levels such as content, structure or coherence. Additionally, future research can involve peer feedback into every stage of the writing process, which means students give comments on multiple drafts.

## **AUTHOR**

Linh Thi Thao Le is a lecturer at the School of Foreign Languages, University of Economics - Ho Chi Minh City.

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# Appendixes

## Appendix A: Interview questions

1. Do you like the peer feedback activity? Why (Why not)?
2. Are you comfortable with the use of Facebook in doing peer feedback?
3. Which one do you prefer: only teacher's comments on your writing or both teacher and peers' comments?
4. Do you find your peers' comments useful to you?
5. Do you use peer feedback to revise your draft? If yes, to what extent?
6. What do you learn from peers through peer feedback practice?
7. What do you suggest for this activity to be better in the future?

## Appendix B: Examples of coding process

Students' names in this transcript are pseudonyms and following is an example of how the coding process works towards figuring out some emerging themes of the matter.

Transcript	Comment
<p>Q Now we move to another question: Are you comfortable of using Facebook in doing peer feedback?</p> <p>A <i>Nhung</i>: With Facebook I can type, and it saves me a lot of time compared to hand writing. Moreover, it allows easy editing</p> <p><i>Khanh</i>: I think using social media for this activity is more comfortable to me, since with normal writing in class, I am usually stuck with the ideas and it's so convenient</p> <p><i>Thuy</i>: I also feel more comfortable since if I my fiends posted on Facebook, I can read them and learn more, such as new words. Then, I can start</p>	<p>time-saving</p> <p>thinking over the topics</p> <p>reading</p>

<p>writing my own. In our class, I find the writing pieces of good students like Nhung and Vy ro read, for examples</p> <p><i>Khanh</i>: I agreed. Their writing is very smooth and it seems they really care about every task they do.</p> <p>Van: For me, I am really comfortable with Facebook but as I know, there may be some who don't feel easy with it. They can feel shy if they don't know the structure of a writing task, appropriate vocabulary and grammar to use. And they are afraid of being criticized by others. So, those students can feel uncomfortable but for me, I am so pleased with the use of Facebook since my writing is pretty good and I have extra writing classes as well.</p> <p>Q Did anyone tell you that they felt uncomfortable with Facebook?</p> <p>A No, not in this class. However, it happened in my old school and a lot of people told me so.</p> <p>Khanh: Honestly speaking, those comments that you see on our class group have already been checked in our private group. It is to save our faces, in case we produce a lot of errors and our peers point out for us. There is some pressure about this and also there is the teacher in the group as well.</p> <p>Q And Nhi, what is your opinion?</p> <p>A Nhi: Yes, I feel comfortable since I think it's convenient and saves a lot of time. Besides, I can read others' tasks and improve my knowledge. With the same ideas, I can know different ways to express thanks to my friends.</p>	<p>reserved students private checking</p> <p>time-saving improving knowledge</p>
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# English-majored Students' Difficulties in IELTS Academic Writing Task 1 Accomplishment

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**Trung Thi Nguyen**

Quang Nam University, Vietnam

*dtrungtk@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

Among the four language skills of English assessed by the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), academic writing is viewed the most challenging by many test-takers in their efforts to gain high scores. English majored students at Quang Nam University are known to face such hindrances in completing academic writing, especially IELTS Task 1 as identifying key features of the graph, providing adequate data given in the task to support statements, making comparisons between relevant figures, shaping paragraphing sufficiently and properly, logically arranging information and ideas, using a wide range of cohesive devices appropriately, or having enough lexis for describing data. The study is aimed at investigating the students' perception of academic writing Task 1 and identifying their challenges in Task 1 accomplishment. 43 fourth- year English-majored students participated in this study. Data were collected through questionnaires and then quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Based on the difficulties the students face, this paper presents some practical strategies of which English-majored students at Quang Nam University in particular and IELTS candidates in general can make good use in order to highly accomplish the IELTS academic writing Task 1.

**Keywords:** *IELTS Academic writing, Task 1, difficulties, perception, strategies*

## INTRODUCTION

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is managed by three main institutions namely the British Council, IDP: IELTS Australia and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. It is an English test that assesses the test-takers' language competence in terms of four skills: listening, reading, writing and speaking skills. It is now accepted by over 10,000 organizations in more than 140 countries (<https://www.britishcouncil.in/exam/ielts>). As a result, the IELTS test may be viewed as a gate-keeping one for those who would like to study in English-speaking countries or work in international environment.

The IELTS test has two forms: The Academic module, which is necessary for those who intend to study at universities (undergraduate or postgraduate courses) and the General Training module of IELTS, which is for candidates trying to gain admission to secondary schools, vocational training courses, or for those who wish to apply for immigration to countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand,... The reading and writing tests are different; however, the listening and speaking skills have the same requirements in both modules.

After teaching IELTS academic writing Task 1 for many years, I have realized that the English-majored students face a lot of difficulties in completing Task 1 effectively. For example, the students do not understand the task achievement and do not have enough lexis for describing data. They may give false or wrong factual information or copy the information from the original question without paraphrasing. They do not present enough data to support the information about the chart. Therefore, I would like to investigate the English-majored students' perception of and difficulties in IELTS academic writing Task 1 and then suggest some strategies to help IELTS learners to deal with IELTS academic writing Task 1 efficiently.

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Previous studies

There have been a number of IELTS academic writing Task 1 related studies conducted so far. For example, Mickan et al. (2000) examined how candidates put an interpretation on academic writing Task 1 prompts and planned their writings. O'Loughlin and Wigglesworth (2003) undertook an investigation into the extent to which the difficulty of academic Writing Task 1 was influenced by the quantity and the manner of presentation of information in graphs. In a similar vein, Yu et al. (2007) explored the cognitive processes of IELTS test-takers at two particular time points: before and after test preparation activities for academic writing Task 1 using a grounded and multi-layered case study approach and found that the sorts and conventions of graphic prompts impinged on the way the participants processed the graphic information and the candidates' English writing capacities, desires and experiences of academic writing also moulded the way that they produced a report in response to the given graph.

Another study undertaken by Chan (2014) investigated the contextual and cognitive validity of advanced writing Task 1 in comparison with real-life academic writing tasks using textual analysis and questionnaire survey. The results revealed that there was a close correlation between test and real-life conditions, which demonstrates the context and cognitive validity of the GEPT advanced writing Task 1.

More recently, Ahmadi et al. (2019) analyzed two kinds of IELTS writing Task 1 namely bar charts and tables written by Iranian IELTS candidates to find out the test takers' strengths and weaknesses in terms of all four IELTS writing assessment criteria including task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and grammar range and accuracy. The study showed that Iranian IELTS test-takers were better at producing bar chart

reports than table reports in the IELTS academic writing Task 1, particularly task achievement, and grammar range and accuracy.

It can be seen from the reviewed literature that a limited number of studies focus on Task 1, to the best of our knowledge. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the students' perception of IELTS academic writing Task 1 to uncover the difficulties the students face in performing academic writing Task 1, then giving some implications for effective Task 1 performance, thus contributing to score enhancement in the IELTS writing test.

## **Theoretical background**

### ***IELTS academic writing Task 1***

The academic writing test takes one hour, and IELTS test-takers must complete two tasks, of which Task 1 requires an at-least-150-word interpretation of factual information provided in the form of a line graph, a bar chart, a pie chart, a map or a diagram.

### ***IELTS writing Task 1 assessment***

In IELTS academic writing Task 1, candidates are assessed on the basis of four criteria of equal value (25%) of the total marks for writing Task 1.

- **Task achievement:** This criterion examines the candidate's ability to answer the question properly, that is, the ability to present the information accurately, highlight key features and support details with data given in the task. The response which must be at least 150 words at length should be supported by factual data without personal opinion.
- **Coherence and cohesion:** This criterion refers to how well the writing is structured. Coherence is related to the logical sequences of information and ideas while cohesion involves a range of cohesive devices appropriately to assist in making the relationships between and within the sentences clear.

- Lexical resource: This criterion is based on the range of vocabulary the test-taker uses to present data with its accuracy and appropriateness.
- Grammatical range and accuracy: This criterion assesses how variedly and accurately the candidate uses grammatical resources at sentence-level.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of the study is to identify the senior English-majored students' perception of IELTS writing Task 1 in order to find out their difficulties in IELTS academic writing Task 1. Questionnaires were used as instruments for the study to obtain the students' attitudes to and difficulties in IELTS academic writing Task 1. The questionnaire was written in English with careful and clear instructions as well as guidance to make sure that the respondents could easily understand and give appropriate answers to the questions. To complete the questionnaire, students were carefully instructed and they were free to discuss so that the research could get higher accuracy, reliability and objectiveness. The data collected from the students' responses to the questionnaire were then quantitatively analyzed.

The participants for the study were forty-three English majors from two English classes: DT17TA01 and DT17TA02 at Quang Nam University. All participants have had considerable exposure to IELTS academic writing as they have learnt IELTS writing Task 1 for two semesters: one in the third year and one in the fourth year.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Students' perception of IELTS academic writing Task 1**

The survey reveals that most of the senior English-majored students (67.5%) found academic IELTS writing Task 1 in English average and under a third confessed that Academic IELTS Writing

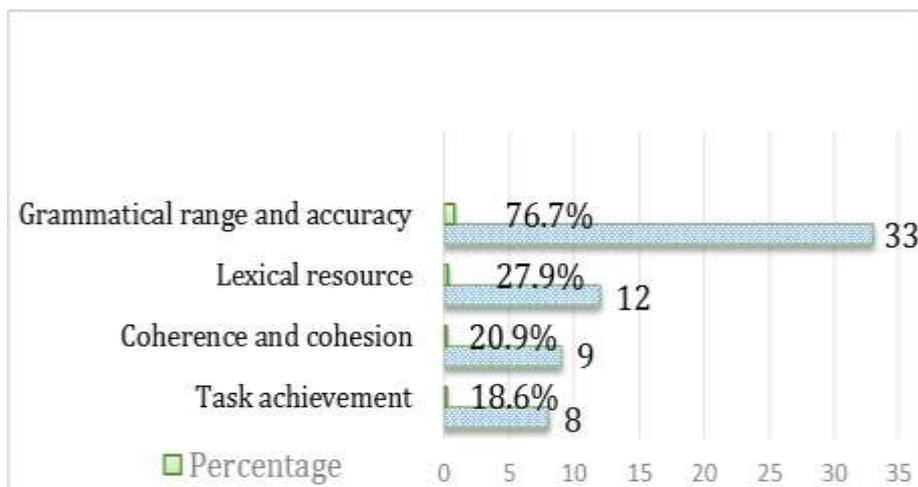
Task 1 was difficult while a small minority of participants (2.3%) thought that Task 1 was easy. No students viewed IELTS academic writing Task 1 most difficult.

**Table 1** Students' attitudes towards IELTS academic writing Task 1

No.	Questions	Rate (%)			
1	How do you find Academic IELTS Writing Task 1 in English?	<i>Easy</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Most difficult</i>
		1	29	13	0
		2.3%	67.5%	30.2%	0%

It is widely believed that good awareness of the marking criteria is of great significance in achieving a high score since knowing how their piece of writing is evaluated, candidates can thus reach their goal of communicating clearly and effectively. However, unlike our expectation, the students seemed to have no idea about IELTS writing Task 1 marking criteria.

**Figure 1** Students' perception of academic IELTS writing Task 1



As shown in Figure 1, 76.7% of the students realized *Grammatical range and vocabulary* as one of the criteria while only 27.9% of the participants viewed *Lexical resource* as one criterion. Moreover,

just around one fifth of the students recognized *Coherence and cohesion* and *Task achievement* as the marking criteria with 20.9% and 18.6% respectively. Obviously, the data from the questionnaire revealed that the students did not know much how their academic writing Task 1 was marked. Surprisingly, these figures were not in accordance with the results obtained from the third question in which 38 out of 43 students stated that they paid attention to these criteria in IELTS academic writing Task 1, and just five participants confessed that they sometimes scrutinized these criteria.

**Table 2** Students' attention towards academic IELTS writing criteria

No.	Questions	Rate (%)		
		Yes	No	Sometimes
3	Do you pay attention to these criteria (task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, grammatical range and accuracy) while you practice academic IELTS writing Task 1?	38 88.4%	0 0%	5 11.6%

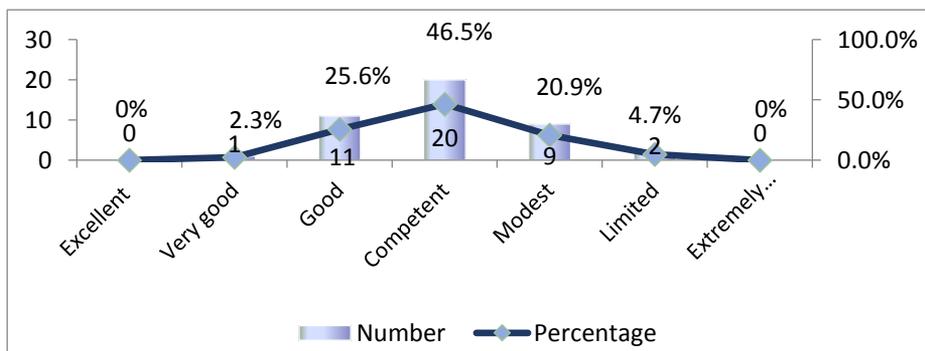
With regard to the students' own perception of the level of difficulty related to marking criteria they faced when producing IELTS academic writing Task 1, over half of the students (39.5% for grade 1 and 18.6% for grade 2) revealed that *Coherence and cohesion* was the most challenging in their writing. *Lexical resource* occupied the second position, with 23.3% for grade 1 and 34.9% for grade 2. Approximately 53.5% of the students (20.9% for grade 1 and 32.6% for grade 2) claimed that they struggled with *Grammatical range and accuracy*. Just under a third of the participants came up with obstacles in *Task response*.

**Table 3** Students' perception of academic IELTS writing criteria

No.	Questions	Rate: 1= the most difficult, 4 = the least difficult			
		1	2	3	4
4	What criterion do you think is the most difficult to achieve?				
	a. Task response	7 16.3%	6 14 %	9 20.9%	21 48.8%
	b. Coherence and cohesion	17 39.5%	8 18.6%	10 23.3%	8 18.6%
	c. Lexical resource	10 23.3%	15 34.9%	15 34.9%	3 6.9%
	d. Grammatical range and accuracy	9 20.9%	14 32.6%	9 20.9%	11 25.6%

In terms of the students' self-evaluation of writing ability in academic writing Task 1, none of them claimed to be *excellent* or *extremely limited*. Only one student, accounting for 2.3% perceived themselves to be very good at writing. Another eleven participants (25.6%) rated themselves as good writers. A large number of students (46.5%) viewed themselves as competent writers in academic writing Task 1. Additionally, nine out of forty-three respondents (20.9%) evaluated themselves as modest writers. Even two students (4.7%) confessed that they were limited at writing Task 1.

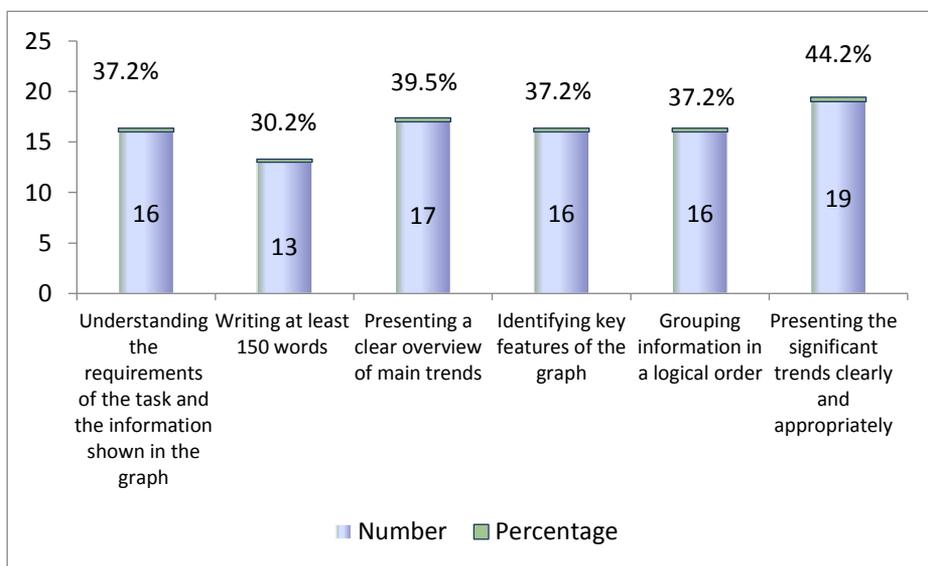
**Figure 2** Students' self-evaluation of writing ability in Task 1



## Students' difficulties in IELTS academic writing Task 1 and the causes

The data from the questionnaires also elicit the students' difficulties in relation to each criterion in IELTS Writing Task 1. The findings reveal that a considerable number of respondents were faced with adversity to fulfilling the requirements of Task achievement, particularly in presenting the significant trends clearly and appropriately, and presenting a clear overview of main trends with 44.2% and 39.5% respectively. The same proportion of students (37.2%) confessed that understanding the requirements of the task and the information shown in the graph, identifying key features of the graph, and grouping information in a logical order were challenging. Noticeably, just under a third of the students revealed that the requirements of writing a summary of a least 150 words was problematic.

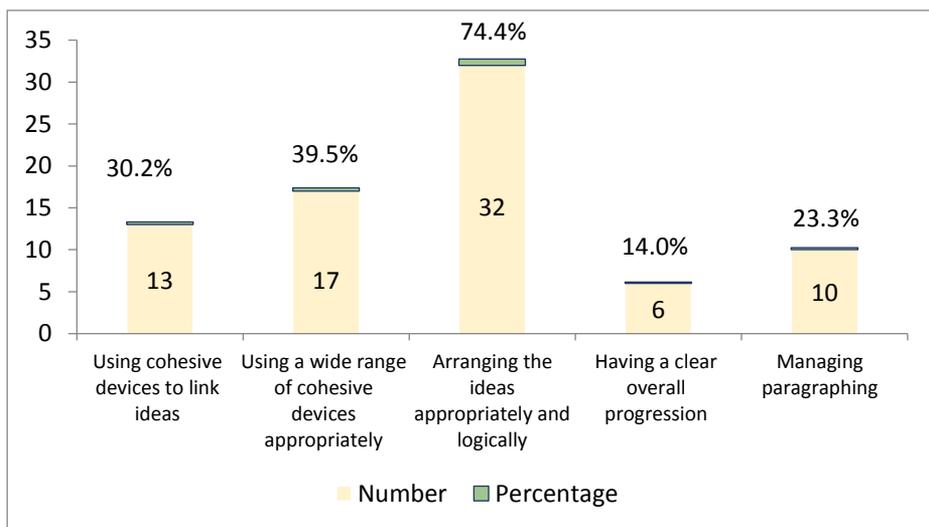
**Figure 3** *Students' difficulties in Task achievement*



As far as the students' impediment to Coherence and Cohesion is concerned, Figure 4 shows that 74.4% of the respondents were unable to arrange the ideas appropriately and logically. About

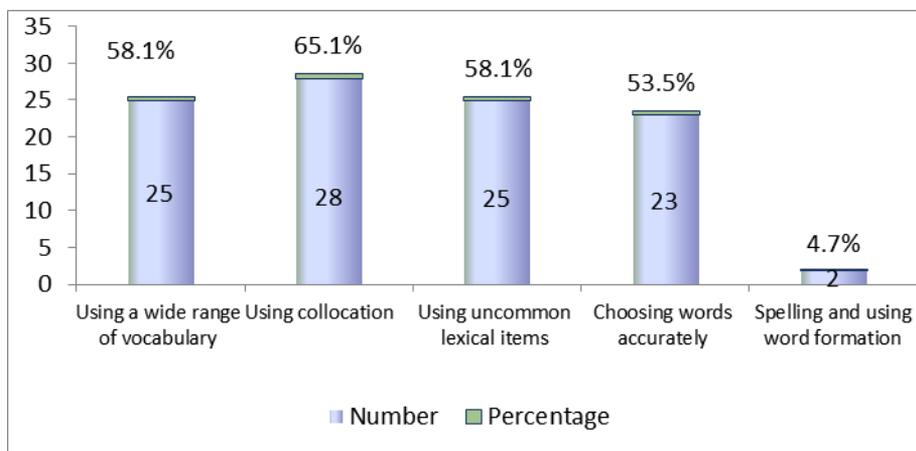
39.5% of the students claimed that using a wide range of cohesive devices appropriately was really challenging. Under a third of the participants believed that using cohesive devices to link ideas was a major hinderance to achieving cohesion and coherence in the report. In addition, around a quarter of the students stated that managing paragraphing was not an easy task while the minority of students (six students) encountered obstacles to having a clear overall progression.

**Figure 4** *Students' difficulties in Coherence and Cohesion*



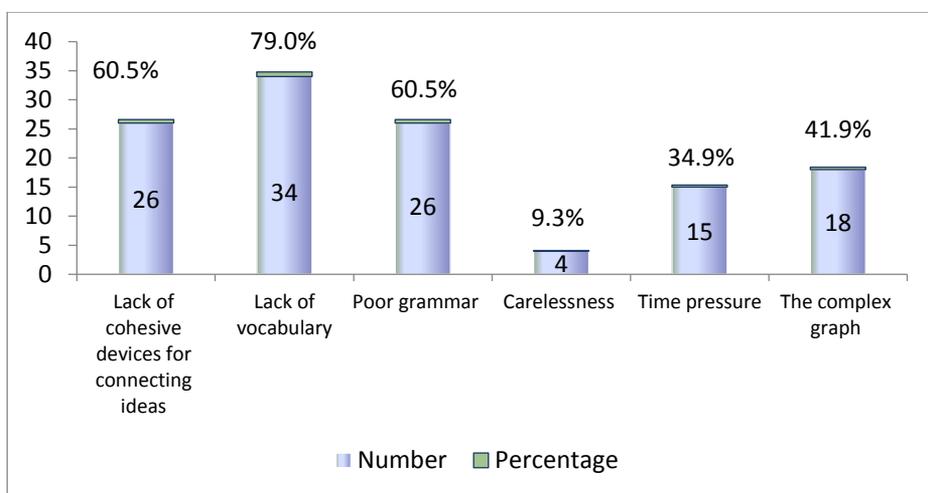
In terms of Lexical Resource criterion, a large number of students (65.5%) was struggled with using collocation. Around 58.1% of the respondents faced many problems in using a wide range of vocabulary as well as uncommon lexical items. Over a half of the participants (53.5%) stated that choosing words accurately was a main impediment to fulfilling the lexical demand. Spelling and using word formation were considered to be less difficult for the English majored students to achieve.

**Figure 5** *Students' difficulties in Lexical Resource*



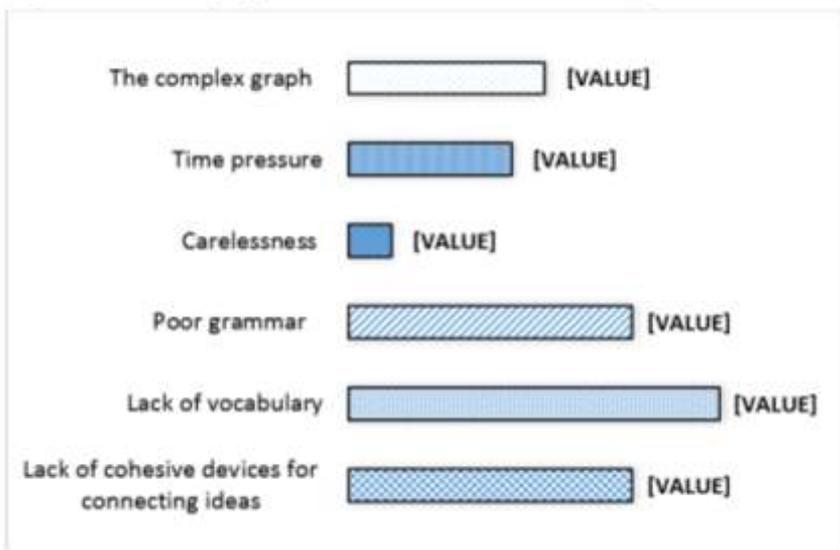
With reference to the Grammatical Range and Accuracy criterion, Figure 6 indicates that 55.8% of the students found paraphrasing the rubrics in the task requirements caused obstruction in meeting this criterion. Just over a half of the majors complained that using a wide range of structures was challenging while under a third of the participants had difficulties in using the appropriate tenses. Especially, nearly half of the students had trouble with using right punctuations.

**Figure 6** *Students' difficulties in Grammatical Range and Accuracy*



Another aspect examined in the study is the causes of difficulties. As illustrated in the Figure 7, the majority of students (79%) confessed that they had difficulties in IELTS writing Task 1 due to lack of vocabulary. Poor grammar and lack of cohesive devices for connecting ideas occupied the second position with 60.5% of the students' choices. 41.9 % of respondents indicated that they were not successful in completing Task 1 owing to the complex graph. The fourth ranking cause was time pressure. Besides, about 9.3% of the participants blamed the drawbacks of performing academic writing Task 1 successfully on account of their carelessness.

**Figure 7** Causes of difficulties in IELTS academic writing Task 1



### IELTS academic writing Task 1 strategies

Based on the findings, it is suggested that the English-majored students in particular and IELTS test-takers in general should take the following points into consideration in order to gain high scores in the academic writing Task 1 of the IELTS:

First, before writing, the students have to understand the task and the information shown in the diagram. It is common to have the

structure of a report passage including three main parts: introduction, body, and conclusion.

In the introduction part, IELTS test-takers need to state what the chart is about and the overall trend without giving any details. The writers may use synonyms and grammar transformation to paraphrase the title of the graph to explain what they describe and pay attention to a time frame if there is one. The introductory paragraph may be one or two sentences long.

In the body, when discussing the data presented in the task, candidates ought to identify significant trends and give examples or more specific details that relate directly to the given information to support their statements. They should not try to describe every piece of data and make sure that each paragraph has a main idea. If they are explaining a process or an object and how it works, they need to group the information so that it follows a definite logical order. The key to organizing the body paragraphs for an IELTS writing task 1 is to group data according to their patterns. The writers need to think of the most logical approach to describing the data (chronological, by gender, by country, etc.). The secret here is to select what is important, organize it, and compare and/ or contrast.

In the conclusion section, it is better to restate the main points or trends. It is suggested that the writers should introduce the final sentences by using cohesive devices such as: *overall, to conclude, in conclusion, to summarize* ...The writers may sometimes see the overview as a conclusion. It does not matter if they put it in the conclusion or the introduction when producing an IELTS writing Task 1.

Beside the three-main-part structure, IELTS test-takers should not give their personal opinion in the Task 1. In order to get high scores for the criterion 'task achievement', it is necessary to identify, illustrate and report the key features of the information in the task effectively. Some common errors with task achievement are giving

false or wrong factual information, copying information from the original question without paraphrasing, presenting insufficient data to support the information about the chart.

In terms of cohesion and coherence, the writers ought to organize the information and ideas well and know how to link the ideas. In addition, they need to use a wide range of structures with accuracy and make good use of vocabulary.

The candidates should also pay attention to the information and check what period of time the data relates to in order to decide what tenses are appropriate and passive voice is often appropriate when giving a description of a process or procedure. They need to remember to plan their essay, write it and check it. Timing is essential; therefore, they should not go over 20 minutes. They are suggested to spend about two minutes planning, and approximately three last minutes revising, checking spelling and grammar after finishing the task. 150 words is the minimum, thus, candidates must make sure they write at least this amount, 20 or 30 more words would be fine but they should not waste time counting them.

What's more, the students should enhance their lexis including words for describing the line graphs, associated prepositions, words for describing bar and pie charts, quantity expressions, the use of approximations, comparisons, comparative links such as *whereas, in contrast, on the contrary, however, similarly, in the same way, etc.* in order to produce a wide range of vocabulary for precise meaning. They should also use a variety of complex sentence structure, that is, a wide range of grammatical structures, and know how to manage punctuation well.

## **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, the data generated from the questionnaire reveal that the English-majored students still encounter numerous difficulties in fulfilling the academic writing Task 1's requirements in terms of

four criteria. Although good awareness of the marking criteria plays an important role in achieving a high score, the English-majored students seemed to know very little about the IELTS writing criteria. Particularly, a small number of the students were able to recognize Task achievement and Coherence and cohesion as criteria. As a result, students should have a deep theoretical insight into the marking criteria of IELTS academic writing Task 1. More importantly, students should know how to overcome their difficulties in completing Task 1 by using the strategies mentioned in the paper so that they can produce their own IELTS academic writing Task 1 successfully.

## **AUTHOR**

Trung Thi Nguyen- Dean of Faculty of Foreign Languages, Quang Nam University. She received her BA degree in English from Hue University in 2001, MA in English Linguistics from Danang University in 2008. She attended a course in English Language and Teaching Methods for International English Teachers at Carleton University, Canada in 2006. She is a Ph.D student in English linguistics at Danang University. Her research interests involve Teaching Methodology, Curriculum Design, Discourse Analysis and Functional Grammar.

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# Applying Grammarly as an Online Grammar Checker Tool to Enhance Writing Skills for English-Major Students

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**Ngan Hoang Kim Vo**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*ngan.vhk@ou.edu.vn*

**Quang Tan Nguyen**

University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam  
*quangnguyentan@ueh.edu.vn*

## Abstract

It is undeniable that writing is one of the two important productive skills in language learning that learners need constant feedback to improve. In this teaching practice paper, the authors report their adopted teaching procedure of Grammarly- an online grammar checker tool in Writing 2 classes in the College of Economic Relations. After a 3-month course, improvements can be witnessed in the class encouraged to use the tool as a proofreader compared to the one without its usage. This paper also suggests some pedagogical implications which have paved a path for the future study about the effectiveness of online grammar checker tool and learners' attitude towards the usage of these tools

**Keywords:** *writing, evaluation, technological tool*

## INTRODUCTION

Information technology (IT) has changed a lot in recent decades and there have been more and more applications to effectively support language teaching in general and English writing skill teaching in particular. Cramer & Smith (2002, p.8) argued that when lecturers apply IT to teaching, students would be able to

improve their writing skills and create articles with many unique ideas as well as more correct grammar. Sharing the same point of view, Van Leeuwen & Gabriel (2007) once said that IT affected students both in what they write and how they write and IT also made it easier for students to prepare, write and edit by themselves. Due to the difficulties faced by students in learning how to write and the benefits of using IT in language teaching, many tools have been created to support the process of teaching and learning Writing. One such tool is Grammarly. This tool is considered to be useful and is widely used in many colleges and universities around the world. Based on the practical needs as well as the usefulness of Grammarly, in this teaching practice paper, the authors would like to propose the procedure of applying this tool into teaching and learning Writing 2 at the College of Foreign Economic Relations (COFER) and suggest some practical recommendations in effectively taking advantage of the tool to minimize students' writing mistakes.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Writing quality**

Mc Namara (2010) stated that an essay at standard quality can be evaluated based on linguistic features including lexical diversity, word frequency, and appropriate language. Language sophistication is also one of the requirements in having high-quality writing and to improve this, learners have to be taught to develop writing strategies and critical thinking. In line with this discussion, Fowler (2007) claimed that the writer's perception and exploration into their own world through the tools of language can be meaningful in delivering good writing. To have a qualified piece of writing, the writer has to consider some stages ranging from Brainstorming, Outlining, Drafting, Revising, and Editing. It is obvious that while the first two steps of brainstorming and outlining can be done as an oral discussion, the last 2 stages Revising and Editing would be implemented under the support of

peers or teachers. This revision includes giving feedback in terms of coherence, cohesion, writing styles grammatical errors, accuracy, and word sophistication. Consequently, there should be a tool to lessen the burden for teachers or peers in this stage.

### **The efficiency of online grammar checker tool in improving English writing skill.**

Thanks to the proliferation of technology, teachers and learners today can easily access some reliable checker tools namely Prowriting aid, Ginger, Spellcheck plus, grammarcheck, Grammarly, these tools allow students to get automated and prompt feedback on not only grammatical but also punctuation, capitalization and spelling. According to Chen and Cheng (2006), Kim (2014), they considered this use of the tools could lessen teachers' workload and motivated learner's autonomy when they received instant feedback. The appearance of grammar checker tools gradually proves their positive impacts and attracts more researchers' interests. Subsequently, there have been plenty of studies investigating this subject. Domeji, Knutsson (2002) discovered the precision and effectiveness of learners using a Swedish checker tool to detect errors. The participants were given a text with 37 grammatical mistakes, they were divided into 2 groups of using the tool and without the tool to revise errors. The results revealed that the group using the tool found 85% of the errors compared to 60% of the ones without the tool. Their findings supported the fact that grammar check tools have a promising impact on improving writing accuracy. In line with the discussion above, The research of Yulianti & Reni (2018) focused on applying Grammarly in using genre-based approach to teach narrative writing. There were 210 participants who were high-school students were involved in the research, The data collection and analysis indicated that students attitude towards the use of Grammarly were significantly positive and the presence of Grammarly in genre-based approach made a considerable contribution in bettering student's narrative writing in particular and their writing process in general.

## **Overview of Grammarly tool**

According to the introduction of the producer on their website, Grammarly is a tool introduced by Google in 2012 with the desire to support and assist computer users in writing English.

Grammarly's target users include English users as their first and second language around the world. With a variety of functions, not only being confined to grammar correction like normal English error correction software, Grammarly is also used to correct spelling errors of users, advising on using more advanced, more complex, and contextualized vocabulary. Besides, the software is also capable of identifying more than 250 grammar points from basic to advanced levels. Thereby, it can give more accurate advice on English style. In addition, the product also helps users to identify plagiarism and its correction scope is not only limited on Microsoft software but also on the entire Windows operating system and on Chrome web browsers. One of the other outstanding features of the tool is its ease of use, installation, and high accuracy. Not only can it be used on Google Chrome, but Grammarly can also be used on the entire Windows 10 and Microsoft Office. Therefore, fixing errors will become more convenient and easier than ever.

With these improvements, Grammarly is now being used by more than four million people worldwide and its copyright is purchased by more than 600 universities and language solution providers. Currently, the tool has three main account packages: Premium package, Free package, and Edu package which are customized for a specific user. With the Free account package, Grammarly has some limitations on vocabulary and grammar in some areas and also a limited function of exact word suggestion. However, the Premium or Edu account has especially extensible features. The Edu and Premium accounts have no big difference in features. However, with Edu account, users have to make a one-time payment and can use it permanently while for Premium account, users have to pay monthly, quarterly or yearly fees, depending on the period of use.

## **The function of Word Error Correction**

Without a large lexical resource for each field and specific contexts, the writers will have many difficulties in expressing their ideas. Fox (2008, p.31) once stated that we could not convey any information without vocabulary. This proves that learners will not be able to write without vocabulary, and vocabulary is the core of the language. With the function of detection and correction of word usage errors from Grammarly, the authors hope to partly help students improve their vocabulary and know how to use words effectively and appropriately in the writing process. Students will make the most of their self-study with this tool. Besides, this will also be a premise to help students learn, and be more confident in using words and develop their writing skills in the best way. At the same time, this function will also assist lecturers a lot in detecting students' mistakes and responding to these mistakes quickly and effectively. For example, when the students' essay has some errors, the tool will classify and specify the lexical errors in their writing, word repetition in particular. Simultaneously with the function 'Vocabulary enhancement', students are fully explained about their errors, and most importantly, the tool also offers the most suitable corrections for students.

## **CLASSROOM CONTEXT AND PROCEDURES**

### **Classroom context**

During the time working at the College of Foreign Economic Relation (COFER), the authors had a chance to teach 2 classes of Writing 2. This is a compulsory subject in the curriculum of English major in this college for 2nd-year students. Although some students are more active and voluntary than their peers, all of them had already passed the subject of Writing 1. Therefore, the issue of mixed-level is somehow avoidable.

The coursebook used in this course is *Effective Academic Writing 2: the short essay* (2006), Oxford University Press by Alice Savage and Patricia Mayer. The course was in 6 weeks and the book included different types of a short essay, which was well-structured and reader-friendly.

After the first session of introducing short essays, they soon realized that many of the subjects were troublesome with some students, most of the problems include the shortage of ideas, grammatical errors, and inappropriate word choices. Through discussions with the lecturers of this course, more than half of the students could not apply the grammar points they learned in the writing process; for example, they regularly made mistakes when using different tenses, basic sentence structures and put words in inappropriate positions. Moreover, students were not aware that self-study and writing practice at home apart from studying in classes would be greatly beneficial for them in improving their writing skills. Lack of ideas and lack of knowledge for current social or academic topics were also among the pressing problems that needed to be addressed in students. With the difficulties mentioned above and because of the short duration of the course, both lecturers and students had difficulties in teaching and learning this subject. For these reasons, it took a lot of effort for any writing teachers in this college to correct students' assignments.

With the time constraints, teachers had to face a dilemma whether to correct all students' assignments- "not-so-carefully" or to correct some random assignments very carefully and ignore the rest. With the hope that no one would be left behind, they opted for the first choice. they finally came up with the help of Grammarly with the belief that their essays were carefully corrected before their submission. Alongside the addition of this tool to better students' writing skills, the authors also want to observe whether learners' attitudes and motivations towards accomplishing their own writing are positively nourished or not.

## Procedures

The authors decided to introduce the tool for one of the two classes that they taught. Therefore, the class introduced with the tool was the treatment group (with 17 students) whereas the other is the non-treatment group (with 20 students). The same lessons were delivered in the 2 classes. The subject modules are ranging from descriptive, narrative, opinion, compare and contrast to cause and effect essays.

In the second session of the course, the teacher who was in charge of the treatment group asked students to work in groups and write a short paragraph about a given topic using their phones or laptops. Teachers then scanned all writings by Grammarly-free version and simultaneously explained the usage of Grammarly as well as elicited students' correction for each mistake before referring to the tool's alternatives. By this technique, the teacher could evaluate whether students were skillful enough to comprehend Grammarly's suggestions and decided if they should make modifications or not.

After each module lasted for 3 sessions, students in both classes were asked to write a short essay in 45 minutes about the topic given, this essay was a kind of benchmark test that focused on evaluating students' comprehension after each module. In the treatment group, students were encouraged to use Grammarly-free version to recheck their drafts before the submission, while the submissions of the non-treatment group were not proofread by any tools. After a week, the teachers of both classes returned the production with the corrections in terms of grammar, word choice, coherence and cohesion, writing style. The marks of all these writing will be averaged for mid-term results. In the end, the mid-term results of the 2 groups were employed to analyze to draw the findings

## RESULT

**Table 1** Mid-term test results of Treatment group

Min	1 <sup>st</sup> Quantile	Median	Mean	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quantile	Max
4.70	5.7	6.7	6.6	7.2	8.5

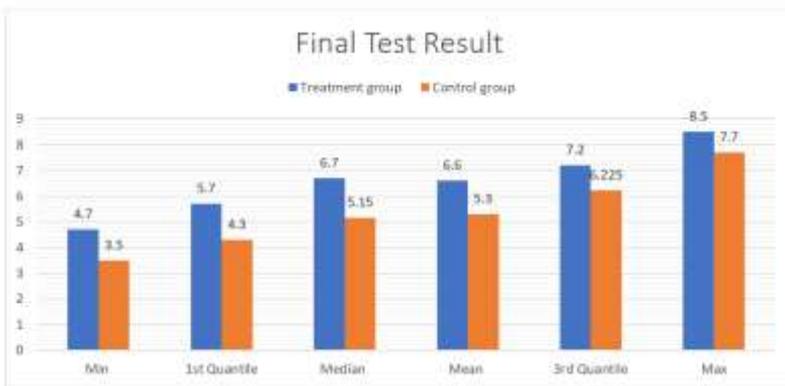
The table reveals that the mean value of the treatment group is 6.6. The lowest one was 4.7 whereas the highest one is 8.5. In general, there was only 1 student who achieved “below-the-average” whereas most of the students got from 5.7 to 7.2.

**Table 2** Mid-term test results of Non-treatment group

Min	1 <sup>st</sup> Quantile	Median	Mean	3 <sup>rd</sup> Quantile	Max
3.5	4.3	5.15	5.3	6.225	7.7

It can be seen from the table that the lowest test result of the non-treatment group was 3.5 whereas the first quantile of this group was 4.3. The mean result of students in this group was 5.3 and the highest score that students in this group could get was 7.7. It can be seen that among 20 students in this class, 8 students got an “under-average” score, which meant lower than 5.

**Figure 1** Mid-term test results between treatment and non-treatment group



# DISCUSSION

## Reasons for improvement

Put it all together, it could be seen from the above illustration that in general, students who used Grammarly in their class tend to have higher results than those who did not. In general, the mean score of the treatment group was 1.3 higher than those in the control group. Moreover, whereas the highest score that students in the treatment group were 8.5, this figure is 0.8 higher than those in the control group. In general, it could be concluded that Grammarly did play a part in this result of the control group. The reason behind this improvement is attributed to a process of self-correction by Grammarly. As a matter of fact that compared to the teachers' corrective feedback which was received a week after submission, Grammarly's feedback which instantly appears after students' accomplishment is more comprehensive to students when they still remember their intentions and ideas. Thanks to this awareness and replacing options by Grammarly, students can easily recognize the mistakes they made frequently and therefore be mindful to avoid the same mistakes in future assignments. In line with this finding, Ghufron, M. A., & Rosyida, F. (2018) also stated in their study that the use of Grammarly is more efficient in deducting mistakes of diction, language use, and mechanics. The researchers suggested the reason is that the software shows writing errors in word choice, spelling, and mechanics clearly and directly and gives alternatives promptly. However, the results of their study also stated that in terms of content and organization of the writing, Grammarly could not be effective because the tool can not evaluate whether the writing style and ideas are appropriate with the topic and therefore, this assessment must be done with the presences of teachers.

## Advantages and pedagogical implications for teachers

Regarding the mid-term results, from the teachers' perspective, it

took them less time to correct students' assignments in the treatment group. Therefore, the teacher had more time for giving feedback on other aspects such as ideas, unity, coherence, and cohesion. Moreover, less assistance was needed in the classroom with Grammarly application. The word "less assistance" here does not mean teachers do not need to give instructions or feedback in class, but it is about focusing on the exact flaws of students and give proper assistance. During the procedure, we noticed some students at a lower level whose writing showed no improvement both in terms of grammar and organization despite the use of Grammarly. These students were not skillful enough to respond to grammatical feedback as they had a weak grammar foundation. In this case, we gave them in-class instruction based on their writing scanned by Grammarly and showed them the reasons behind each correction so that they could use Grammarly as a preliminary check before their next submission. Nevertheless, as students in these classes were in Writing 2 subject and have 100% passed Writing 1 and Grammar course which focused on writing sentences and reinforcing grammar accuracy, they mostly could take advantage of grammatical corrective feedback effectively. Aligning with this practice, Ghufon, M. A., & Rosyida, F. (2018) claimed in their research "one of the negative findings was some students could not optimally self-correct their works. This mostly happens in the case of grammatical feedback for long sentences." Van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuken (2012) suggested that learners with insufficient linguistic awareness may not be likely to deal with the interlanguage process when they are self-corrected. Due to their limited knowledge, the software was not well-exploited. Jones et al (2013) concluded the same point in his study when suggested that to some learners, they did not achieve the required level of conceptual thinking to comprehend some certain grammatical points, therefore transferring them into their writing would be a cognitive challenge. Consequently, teachers had to work initially to explain some feedback from Grammarly.

## **From students' perspectives**

As far as students' perspective is concerned, they reported that it was more convenient for them as the tool did help them in improving their grammar awareness during the process of conducting their assignment. Moreover, the explanation provided whenever it corrected students' essays, it helped them to improve their grammar and writing skills significantly as well as avoid repeated mistakes. The result of the procedure leads to the implication that confidence in students' assignments was improved upon their submission. This fact is possible thanks to instant and consistent feedback. Therefore, students are aware of their mistakes and hence, correct them timely. Psychologically speaking, in comparison with teachers' corrections, being corrected by Grammarly is more comfortable to students as they do not have to show their weaknesses to the other(s) or the whole class. Moreover, being carefully corrected the assignment before handing it to the teacher give students more confidence. This finding is consistent with Erni Yulianti, Reni (2018), the researcher stated in his study that 93% of students in his experiment had positive perceptions when using Grammarly in learning writing recount text. Holding the same view, Michelle Cavaleri & Saib Dianati (2016) mentioned some students' comments about Grammarly "I only use Grammarly for proofreading and while it has found several mistakes I have missed, they were very minor issues and could probably have been noticed if I took better care in reading my work". As can be seen from the comment that, this learner was more aware of the importance of proofreading to reduce errors before submission thanks to this tool. Another comment from the same article also reported that even when students may not choose to accept the replacement by Grammarly, they also find it useful when thinking about the tool's suggestions.

## **Drawbacks**

As this is a machinery tool, drawbacks are unavoidable. First of all,

not all the errors that Grammarly detected are precise. For example, it could not identify some proper nouns. Hence, in case students apply it unconsciously, they make more mistakes. This finding is aligned with that discussed in Yang (2018) who suggested that the student's level of trustworthiness towards Grammarly is average because of its limited scope of error detection. Moreover, heavily dependent on the tool may lead to grammatical unconsciousness as students believe that the tool will help them correct later.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **For English teachers**

Thanks to the features that the tools offer, it is advisable for English teachers, especially teachers in writing-based subjects such as writing or translation to introduce this tool for students. However, teachers should ensure that students have enough grammatical knowledge to recognize and effectively use Grammarly's feedback.

### **For further research**

For the result to be more conclusive and applicable, a larger population should be applied in the experiment. Moreover, an experiment in other groups of students and contexts should be conducted about the effectiveness of Grammarly in enhancing learners' attitudes or comparing between Grammarly and teachers' corrective feedback.

## **AUTHOR**

Ms. Ngan Hoang Kim Vo is currently working as an English Lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City Open University. Her research interests cover second language acquisition, teaching methodologies.

Mr. Quang Tan Nguyen is currently a visiting lecturer of English at the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh city, and Ho Chi Minh city University of Technology and Education. He holds a Master's

degree in Education (Specializing in Teaching English as a Second Language) and a Master's degree in Social Interaction and Economic Dynamics. His research interest includes nudging in education, learner motivation, behavioral economics, teaching methodologies and approaches.

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# **SPEAKING INSTRUCTION**

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# Modified Input in Teaching Pronunciation for EFL Learners

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**Luu Thi Mai Vy**

Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam  
*vyltm@uef.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

In recent years, more attention has been given to global instructions in Second Language (L2) pronunciation teaching. This kind of instruction, emphasizing suprasegmental features such as stress, rhythm, and intonation, is considered to be consistent with a more communicative perspective in language teaching because it focuses on how speakers achieve meaning in discourse. This top-down instruction can help students not only transfer their learning to a spontaneous production but also enhance their intelligibility and fluency. Therefore, based on the principles of this approach, the present paper attempts to propose a technique for sensitizing students with the suprasegmental features by using modified input through lowpass filtering which refers to the process of removing lexical and syntactic information from an utterance while retaining its melody (Snel & Cullen, 2013). The purpose of this paper is three-fold: (1) to present the underlying reasons for choosing filtered input as an awareness-raising activity; (2) to give a step-by-step guide to creating a filtered input and how to implement it in classroom-based teaching as well as in a self-directed learning environment; (3) to discuss some pedagogical implications in terms of its significance in teaching pronunciation as well as in language learning and teaching.

**Keywords:** *pronunciation, prosody, lowpass filtered input, verbotonal approach*

## INTRODUCTION

According to Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019), pronunciation is regarded as a type of skill in spoken language performance. It involves “learning to articulate and discriminate the individual sound elements or phonemes making up the system of consonants and vowels”, referred to as segmental aspects, and “the features of connected speech making up its prosodic system”, referred to as suprasegmental aspects (p.4). It plays a vital role in contributing to the clarity of messages as well as the interpretations of meanings. Poor pronunciation can impact negatively both the reception and the production of the comprehension process (Kelly, 2000). Thus, it can be said that pronunciation lies at the very heart of the development of language skills (O’Brien, 2012). The idea that the priority of pronunciation teaching should be given to the eradication of those errors which interfere most with intelligibility, which was claimed decades ago by Joo (1973), still holds for the current situation. However, the acquisition of pronunciation is hindered by many factors including individual differences, input and output exposure, prior knowledge and experiences, etc. (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). Specifically, the negative influences of learners’ native language framework exert on the attainment of pronunciation at a perceptual level. To illustrate, since birth, the sound patterns of learners’ first language have become ingrained in a physiological sense as well as a psychological and socio-cultural sense (Pennington, 1999). In the former case, learners may react to the rhythm system of the target language in a way that is different from their mother tongue (Gimson, 1970). For the latter, this process of learning entails a great deal of conscious and analytical effort due to the L1 interference and inadequate teaching approach (Bowen, 1969).

It has been suggested that the appropriate use of prosodic features such as stress and intonation is found to be more crucial for intelligibility than the accurate production of individual segments

(Chun, 2002; Kuronen & Tergujeff, 2018). Indeed, pronunciation instruction with a focus on prosody can help learners overcome their perceptual problems to achieve intelligibility. This has been supported by a myriad of previous researchers (e.g., Derwing et al., 1998; Gilbert, 2008; Gordon & Darcy, 2016; Morley, 1991; Murphy, 2004; Yang, 2016, etc.). Among the techniques to direct learners' attention to prosodic information, manipulating input using the filtering method is supposed to be technology-driven and labor-saving. As stated by Sonntag and Portele (1997), filtering is the ideal stimulus manipulation for prosodic perception because it can render the lexical content of an utterance unintelligible while leaving the speech melody and temporal structure intact. There is no need for teachers' demonstration as they often have to do when using techniques such as humming or displaying nonsense syllables (Flores, 1997). Provided with training, learners can have a more personalized way to practice pronunciation on their own. Besides, the employment of gestures in coordination with humming along the speech is helpful for learners who need sensitivity to auditory input. This is considered as an enactment or process of embodiment (Littlemore, 2009; Negueruela et al., 2004). As Chan (2018) argues, incorporating movement and rhythm of large body muscles with stress and intonation serves three purposes. First, learners can gain awareness of spoken language. Second, this helps internalize these prosodic patterns into learners' body memory. Lastly, it can activate and link kinesthetic and auditory learning modalities. Meanwhile, Gullberg (2008) claimed that while learners are speaking or listening, their nonverbal behavior is closely tied to their internal practices and plays a vital role in linguistic processing. It can be said that nonverbal improves learning, general recall, and working memory in addition to internalizing prosodic structure. These arguments have been confirmed in several studies examining the effectiveness of gestures in second language development (McCafferty, 2004; Morett, 2017; Tellier, 2008; Stam, 2012).

Taken all together, in this paper, the author argues that lowpass filtered speech is an effective stimulus to raise learners' awareness of prosodic features in pronunciation teaching based on the principles of the top-down or prosody-focused approach and the verbotonal approach. Subsequently, a complete guide to generate a lowpass filtered stimulus using Audacity software is also given, followed by pedagogical procedures and implications in pronunciation teaching.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Pronunciation teaching approaches**

Literature has shown that there are two main trends in teaching pronunciation: the bottom-up or micro-level phoneme-based segmental orientation and the top-down or macro-level suprasegmental orientation (Pennington & Rogerson-Revell, 2019). According to Dalton and Seidlhofer, (2001), the two approaches differ in their pedagogical assumption about dependency and the focus of attention. Specifically, the basic idea of the bottom-up or articulatory approach is that segments should be taught, and the suprasegmental features will take care of themselves. The focus is aspects of pronunciation that cause common difficulties due to possible first language interference. In contrast, the top-down approach assumes that once the prosodic features are in place, the segmental discrimination will follow of their own accord. This approach tends to concentrate on the aspects of speech which more functionally significant in actual language use. As stated by Dalton and Seidlhofer (2001), this view is consistent with a more communicative perspective in language teaching because it focuses on how learners achieve meaning in discourse. Besides, it places more emphasis on fluency and intelligibility at the initial stage (Pennington, 1989). As proponents of this approach, Pennington and Rogerson-Revell (2019) argued that priority should be given to the top-down approach because it can provide a massive amount of listening input as a way of building learners' internal database of

L2 sounds or awareness of cognitive representations of L2 speech before using the support of the written language or detailed segmental instructions. Likewise, Lane (2000) posits that compared to mispronounced segmental, inappropriate use of prosodic patterns has been suggested to cause more communication breakdowns in communication. Other supporters (e.g., Gilbert, 2008; Jackson & O'Brien, 2011; Joo, 1973; Morley, 1991) claim that the broad approach to English pronunciation teaching is likely to be more effective than the narrow approach. It is suggested that there is a direct connection between prosody and meaning during language production and comprehension. Research in L2 pronunciation teaching also provides evidence demonstrating that suprasegmental aspects play a major role in affecting comprehensibility and intelligibility (Busà, 2008; Derwing et al., 1998; Gordon & Darcy, 2016; Hahn, 2004; Murphy, 2004; Yang, 2016). Given the importance of prosody in pronunciation, the author proposes a prosody-based technique, which is listening to lowpass filtered stimuli to raise learners' awareness at a perceptual level to enhance their pronunciation.

### **Theoretical support**

Verbotonalism or verbotonal approach coined by Petar Guberina (1913-2005) is considered as a theory of perception that suggests the existence of a close link between production and perception: a good perception would precede and allow good production (Billières, 2019; Boureux, 2016; Intravaia, 2013). In other words, the verbotonal system seeks to create the best possible (optimal) physical auditory input to facilitate foreign language learning by enabling learners to best make sense of the input and as a result restarting their perceptual mechanism in accordance with the language being learned (Lian et al., 2020). For this reason, it is necessary to re-educate L2 learners' auditory selective perception for their better pronunciation. In order to do that, the verbotonal approach focus on prosodic structures at the early stages of learning. Prosodic patterns are internalized based on the idea that

gestures and speech should be coordinated. This is because self-synchrony and interactional synchrony both take place in communication (Condon & Ogston, 1966). At this point, new input or prosodic patterns are supposed to be processed intuitively (Zhang, 2005). Results of prior studies suggest that the use of the verbotonal approach leads to the improvement of L2 learners' pronunciation skills (Garcia, 2018; He, 2014; Seguí, 2014; Yang, 2016). Taken together, the technique proposed in this paper is designed and implemented in the teaching of pronunciation based on the principle of the verbotonal approach.

### **Modified input: Lowpass filtered stimuli**

In L2 language acquisition, input refers to target language data to which learners are exposed (Smith, 1993). However, since learners do not take in everything, therefore, input has been modified in various ways to promote learners' processing. In this regard, technology can be exploited to enhance learners' perception in the auditory channel (e.g., synthesized speech, modified natural) as well as in the visual channel (e.g., displays of pitch contour, waveforms) (Mompean & Fouz-Gonzalez, 2015). According to Smith (1993), possible effects of directing learners' attention to a specific aspect of the input may engage many different processing mechanisms. Specifically, the input may be manipulated and registered by yielding interpretations, violating learners' current language system, and triggering some sort of restricting of that system. In the current paper, the auditory input was modified by masking the segmental features and enhancing the salience of prosodic features by the lowpass filtering method. The modified input or lowpass filtered stimuli are described as speech that is filtered to degrade segmental information (phonemic, semantic, and syntactic) but preserve the prosodic features (pitch, amplitude, and rhythm) (Perkins et al 1996). As stated by Sonntag ad Portele (1997), the filtering technique is regarded as an ideal stimulus manipulation for prosodic perception because it makes the prosodic features more salient and requires less listening effort

from the listeners. Compared to other techniques used for directing learners to the melody of the language such as nonsense syllables and hummed speech, it is more favorable in terms of providing authentic stimuli, promoting learning autonomy, and being less labor-saving (Flores, 1997).

With the advance in technology, the filtering method has become attainable with a variety of audio editors such as PRAA, Audacity, Ocenaudio, Adobe Audition, etc. In the field of language development, filtered stimuli have been utilized in numerous prior studies investigating the cross-linguistic perception of prosodic features (Kolly et al., 2014), identification of foreign accent (Munro, 1995), paralinguistic phenomena (Snel & Cullen, 2013), auditory perception regarding hemispheric asymmetry (Chan & Hsiao, 2013; Ischebeck et al., 2008), optimizing input for auditory processing (Lian et al., 2020), input for improving language skills (Luu, Lian, & Siriyothin, 2021). As indicated by these studies, filtered stimuli can be used as an effective way to direct listeners to the prosodic information of utterances. It is argued that when learners listen to the filtered speech, there is a stronger right-hemispheric activation compared to natural speech. To summarize, given the benefits of lowpass filtered speech, the paper suggests using this technique to teach prosody to learners. The software used to filter speech was Audacity (Audacityteam, 2021). This audio editor is user-friendly and suitable for language learners.

### **A step-by-step guide to creating a lowpass filtered stimuli with Audacity**

Step 1. Open Audacity. Select the File tab and choose Import to copy the audio from the computer to the program.

Step 2. Select the audio by holding Ctrl+A. Select the Effect tab and choose Low-Pass Filter

Step 3. Set Frequency (Hz) at 320 Hz and Roll-off (dB per octave) at 48dB

Step 4. After clicking OK, you have a lowpass filtered clip

Step 5. Select the Effect tab and choose Amplified.

Step 6. The Amplification (dB) is set automatically depending on each audio.

Step 7. After clicking OK, you have the amplified filtered clip

Step 8. Select the File tab and choose Export to save the clip as MP3 or WAV

**Figure 1** Screenshot of waveform display of a lowpass filtered audio in Audacity software



## **Suggested procedures for implementing filtered stimuli**

### ***In a traditional, teacher-led classroom***

Phase 1. Teachers play the filtered audio 10 times for students to listen. Students are encouraged to feel the melody with their body movements (such as moving head, fingers, hands, feet, body, etc.). After that, teachers ask them to guess what they just hear (e.g., is it a statement or a question?).

Phase 2. Teachers play the filtered audio 15 times again. This time, students are required to hum along while using body movements. After that, teachers ask some students to perform.

Phase 3. Teachers play the unfiltered audio 10 times. Students are required to hum along or repeat if possible. Then, teachers ask students to guess the meaning.

Phase 4. Teachers give feedback by showing them the transcript for their self-evaluation. Unfiltered audio is played 3 times before teachers ask some students to imitate the speech.

When the students become familiar with the procedures, teachers reduce their interruption and only play the audio for them. Demonstration of students can be done at the end of the process. For the frequency of playing the filtered and unfiltered audio, teachers can be flexible depending on the characteristics of students, the allotted teaching time, the level of difficulty of teaching materials, etc. Research investigating the frequency of repetitions remains inconsistent with numbers of repetitions ranging from 8 to 20 (Webb, 2007). Therefore, teachers can be flexible regarding the frequency of repetition provided that it can guarantee enough exposure for learners to sensitize to the prosodic patterns.

### ***In a self-directed, teacher-less learning environment***

A self-directed web-based platform can be built with the same principles applied in the classroom for students to practice pronunciation. Instead, the activities are embedded in a self-access website with some justifications. This self-assess venue can promote students' learning autonomy by providing them with a personalized space for practice and encouraging them to take responsibility for their learning (Pintrich, 1995). Suggested procedures are described as follows:

Step 1. Students click the button playing filtered audio 10 times and feel the melody with body movements.

Step 2. Students click the button playing filtered audio 15 times and hum along while using body movements.

Step 3. Students click the button playing unfiltered audio 10 times and repeat it while using body movements

Step 4. Students write their guesses from what they hear in the text box.

Step 5. Students click submit and the transcript will be shown.

Step 6. Students click the button playing the unfiltered audio and record their repetition.

Step 7. Students click the button playing their recording and submit it when they finish.

## **CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS**

In sum, the paper has presented the theoretical and empirical underlying reasons for adopting lowpass filtered stimuli as a means of raising learners' awareness of prosody in the teaching of pronunciation. The paper has also given a detailed description of pedagogical procedures in implementing the technique in classroom-based teaching as well as in a self-directed learning environment. Apparently, the exploitation of filtered speech in teaching pronunciation has some significant implications in pronunciation pedagogy. First, it stresses the importance of prosody in contributing to the improvement of intelligibility and fluency. In particular, at the earlier stages of language learning, the priority should be to offer learners optimal conditions to be sensitized to the prosodic features. Second, it highlights the opportunities of exercising autonomy among learners and exposing learners to authentic learning materials. In the case of traditional teaching, the application of this technique benefits teachers at a

psychological and physical level such as feeling more comfortable and spending less effort in giving the demonstrations. Their roles become less directive and more supportive. In another scenario, the use of this technique is suitable for creating a self-directed platform for practicing pronunciation. Regarding the ongoing global pandemic situation, resulting in the suspension of face-to-face classes, the self-assess venue embedded with this technique has become a promising alternative for students to practice and develop their pronunciation.

As only based on the extensive literature, this paper is limited by the absence of empirical evidence in the Vietnamese context. Further studies are needed to fully understand the effectiveness of implementing lowpass filtered stimuli in teaching pronunciation for Vietnamese EFL learners both in a traditional classroom and in a self-directed learning platform. This would be a fruitful area for future research.

## **AUTHOR**

Luu Thi Mai Vy is currently a lecturer at Ho Chi Minh City University of Economics and Finance, Vietnam. She got her PhD at Suranaree University of Technology in Thailand. Her research interests include theories in language learning and teaching, listening skills and pronunciation.

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# Using Flipgrid Activity to Improve Knowledge of Semantic Features of Household Items in English and Vietnamese Dictionaries

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**Phuong Thi Pham**

Thuongmai University, Vietnam

*phuongpt1204@tmu.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

Accompanied with syntax awareness, lexicon knowledge plays a paramount role in the acquisition of a language. For elementary and pre-intermediate level, household item vocabulary is among the basics that learners need to acquire to communicate effectively. A number of students, however, usually just know the name of a limited quantity of items in their homes and hardly know how to use them efficiently in their speech. This study, therefore, aims at activating students' knowledge of the semantic features of household items by informing them of these features and creating an activity for them to incorporate such features in their through a web-based platform. This study was based on a contrastive analysis and self-directed learning and action research with Fripgrid - an online video discussion platform to empower students to enhance their speaking skill. In their videos, they introduced their houses and how to use the items in their houses to a foreign friend who would stay with them during his/her holiday. Test results and focus group interviews with the students proved the positive impact of their knowledge of semantic features of household items on their speaking skill. The activities in Flipgrid aided in raising the number of semantic features that the students can use, and they, therefore, can develop their speech to a large extent.

**Keywords:** *semantic features, self-directed learning, household items, contrastive analysis, sense relations*

## INTRODUCTION

The study of dictionaries, lexicography, has offered substantial benefits for different stakeholders, especially linguists and language learners. A plethora of studies have been done to discover different aspects of lexicography so far. Those concentrate on discovering the theories in dictionaries, assessing dictionaries and steps to compile a good one. Others utilize dictionaries to discover how different groups of people or nations recognize and dissect the real world.

A number of studies have been conducted to investigate different aspects of words related to household items. Harare (2018) examined the translation ideology of category household goods and house surroundings and discovered several methods in translating them. Adaptation, amplification, establish equivalent-amplification adaptation, pure borrowings, establish equivalent, and equivalent description are some of the translation techniques used in the cultural term category house goods and household surroundings. In another study, Fliginskikh et al. (2019) compared folk ritual superstitions involving the names of household products in the English, Russian, and Mari languages. Using a continuous sampling process, all superstitions were selected. According to the results, the Russian language has the most superstitions associated with the names of household products. Quynh and Hien (2018) conducted a study to examine the Thai household vocabulary in Dien Bien province and examine the structural and semantic characteristics of the household vocabulary based on the data collected during their fieldwork. They depended on the formation and thematic senses of these words to discover the cultural values such as lifestyle and workstyle of Thai citizens in Dien Bien, an ethnic minority culture in Vietnam. Suryadi and Riris Tiani (2019) explained the typical kitchen appliances that Javanese women use in their home by analyzing its form and function, as well as doing semantic analysis. They discovered the semantic attribute of bamboo materials which is closely related to the culture of Javanese society.

The studies mentioned above put an emphasis on cultural aspects of household items. However, they have not advanced as far to prove the impacts of such knowledge on students' skills. This study is different from others in that it endeavors to find the impact of the awareness of semantic features in dictionary entries on students' speaking skill through the use of an online platform (Flipgrid). In other words, it seeks to find out the semantic features of English and the Vietnamese equivalents on household items in two dictionaries, and acquaint students with such knowledge in a hope that they can make use of them in their speech.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of Lexicography**

Lexicography has been defined in various ways. Lexicography is the art or craft of writing dictionaries (Landau, 1984). It is "the theory and practice of writing dictionaries" (Oxford Learner's Dictionary" (online version 2021). Although the definitions vary in words and expressions, almost all of them entail two aspects of lexicology. It is the science of words and phrases which focuses on the compilation and editing of dictionaries. There are two basic divisions: lexicographic practice, or dictionary - making, and lexicography theory, or dictionary research (Hartmann and James, 1988, p.85) . In other words, lexicographers are "those people writing dictionaries but equally those people writing about dictionaries" (Bergenholtz and Gouws, 2012: 76). The former deals with the compilation of dictionaries and the later refers to the study of dictionaries. However, some researchers falling into the first category may argue that there exist no such things like theoretical lexicography (Atkins & Rundell, 2008). They presented dictionaries' structures and patterns for defining words.

However, most agreed upon these two types of lexicography:

1. The development of theories about and the conceptualization of dictionaries, specifically with regard to the

function, the structure and the contents of dictionaries. This part of lexicography is known as metalexigraphy or theoretical lexicography.

2. The planning and compilation of concrete dictionaries. This part of lexicography is known as practical lexicography or the lexicographic practice.

(Bengenholtz, 2012, p. 38)

Lexicography theory or dictionary research encompasses a variety of activities, such as investigating the history of dictionary making, the typology of dictionaries, distinguishing monolingual from bilingual, general from specialized, discovering how different groups use dictionaries, and whether the dictionaries match users' expectations, etc. (Howard, 2013).

Some may claim that lexicography is an independent discipline (Bergenholtz, 1995) as lexicographers do not necessarily have lexicology specialized knowledge. Lexicography, however, does utilize the results from by lexicology research. It is worth noting that Lexicography also deals with other reference works, not only dictionaries. E-lexicography is also a new trend which draws attention from a number of lexicographers.

Engeberg & Lothar (2009) categorized the subject matter of Lexicography in smaller segments which are easily comprehended: This includes the structure of dictionaries, the compilation of dictionaries (i.e. lexicography in the actual sense of the word), the use of dictionaries (including aspects of didactics of dictionary use), dictionary criticism and the history of lexicography.

In conclusion, although the subjects of lexicography may be examined from different perspectives, there do exist two umbrella ones, i.e. the theories of dictionaries and the practice of making dictionaries.

## Types of dictionary

There are different ways to categorize dictionaries depending on the content, purpose or format of the dictionaries. According to the purposes, Lam et al. (2014) identified them as general and specialized dictionaries, phonetical and ideological dictionary, thematic dictionary (which is also called WordNet ), common word dictionary, student dictionary (theme-based), explanatory dictionary and contrastive dictionary, etymological and historical dictionary (Giap, 2019, pp. 900-913).

These criteria are detailed for those who want to compile a dictionary:

1. the dictionary's language(s):
  - a. monolingual
  - b. bilingual: if so, is it . . .  
or  
(2) bidirectional  
(1) unidirectional
  - c. multilingual
2. the dictionary's coverage:
  - a. general language
  - b. encyclopedic and cultural material
  - c. terminology or sublanguages (e.g. a dictionary of legal terms,  
cricket, nursing)
  - d. specific area of language (e.g. a dictionary of collocations,  
phrasal  
verbs, or idioms)
3. the dictionary's size:
  - a. standard (or 'collegiate') edition

- b. concise edition
- c. pocket edition
- 4. the dictionary's medium:
  - a. print
  - b. electronic (e.g. DVD or handheld)
  - c. web-based.

(Atkins & Rundell, 2008, p.24)

This study utilized the materials from Oxford Learners' Dictionary as it is considered the powerful dictionary for learners of English and researchers of languages (Chung, 2020). The features in accordance with the above-mentioned criteria are as follows:

- 1a (monolingual)
- 2ab (general language, with some encyclopedic and cultural material)
- 3a (standard edition)
- 4a (print)
- 5a (word-to-meaning).

(Atkins & Rundell, 2008, p. 24)

Although the research in Vietnam on dictionaries dates back to the 1990s, a variety of dictionaries are currently available on the market. This research uses "Từ Điển Tiếng Việt" (Vietnamese Dictionary) by Hoang Phe and other authors as this dictionary is the result of the combination of the theory and practice in Lexicography. In addition, it is the product of a group of authors which mean more edition and a careful examination of the senses of words. It is also awarded a prize for 2005 National Science and Technology (Giải thưởng Nhà nước về Khoa học và Công nghệ năm 2005). It is considered a breakthrough in lexicology in Vietnam.

## **The significance of lexicography**

Lexicography plays a prominent role in research and educational fields. The products of dictionaries tailored to different audience are always the sources of reference for learners of all ages. In addition, the comparison of language dictionaries can entail to a large extent the different ways people recognize and dissect the world. As suggested in Sapir-Whorf theory, people in specific cultures vary in the way their mind work to comprehend the world, which is revealed obviously in the way they define words or phrases in their dictionaries. The strong version of Sapir-Whorf theory is not widely accepted as opponents hold the belief that language cannot constraint thought. Language seems to place limits on what details must be disclosed in utterances rather than constraining thought. Comparing and contrasting entries in dictionaries, scholars claim that they reveal their cultural identity. Similar words in different language dictionaries usually contain the similar core semes (the smallest units of meaning) or the semantic features; however, the different and additional semantic features in their definition do illustrate the culture of their nations (Ton, 2008, pp. 53-55). Researchers can also base on the symbolic meanings of words compiled in dictionaries to discover their tradition, belief and culture.

## **Contrastive analysis and action research**

### ***Contrastive analysis***

In the 1940s, contrastive linguistics emerged as a significant subfield of applied linguistics, which rapidly consolidated in the 1950s and 1960s. When it became apparent that contrastive linguistics would not be sufficient to construct a systematic theory of foreign language learning, the field began to show signs of pressure. However, it has resisted disintegration over time and has effectively repositioned itself: no longer as a specifically established subfield, but as a methodology that has continued to demonstrate its effectiveness in a wide variety of applied and

theoretical linguistic contexts, such as Second-Language Acquisition science, translation studies, and translation practice. Newmark and Reibel (1968) are among the first who switched their research on first and second language comparison. Among many aspects of language to be compared, the meanings of words have received vast attention.

As cited by Ton (2008), the steps to conduct a contrastive analysis in the realm of linguistics are as follows:

1. Defining similarities and differences between linguistic aspects;
2. Detecting and mapping out characteristics of the compared languages still hidden when studying only one language;
3. Discovering the specific patterns and tendencies that are typical of these languages; and
4. Determining the equivalent factors between languages.

The purpose of contrastive analysis is to outline the common and specific aspects in the compared languages, regardless of the origin of those languages.

### ***Action research***

Action research involves the researcher in questioning their own practice to find ways to improve that practice (McNiff, 2002). It furnishes the researcher and participants with the opportunity to scrutinize existing practices, and modify them in the search for refinement of those practices. Action research has the potential to bring benefits for all stakeholders involved in the process. It not only provides the teacher with a means to better their teaching practice but also trains learners to become more efficient in their learning. It can be argued that practitioners already reflect upon their practice, but the difference in using action research is that it is systematic, and any intervention is informed by theory (O'Brien, 1998).

## **Semantic features and household item words**

Words can fall into two categories: single-sense terms and polysemous items. This necessitates determining word senses, which is the first step toward creating a dictionary entry. In light of this, it is clear that there is a need to thoroughly understand the problems that underpin the separation of words into senses, as well as a series of techniques for completing this challenge successfully (Atkins & Rundell, 2008). However, what must be done first is to identify the specifiers or the semantic features (seme) of each word. These semantic features usually have to follow a specific structure.

According to Thang (2011), an entry contains many pieces of information that can be divided into semantic features (the core information) and non-semantic features (the peripheral information which includes phonetics, spelling, part of speech, syntax, pragmatics, style, synonym, antonym, etc.).

A semantic feature, also known as a seme, is the smallest lexical unit in a language, composed of one or more words, called an abstract unit, and applied to a group of words that are related in form or context.

This study focuses on comparing semantic features of words related to household items in English and Vietnamese monolingual dictionaries. Household items are tangible assets and belong to personal properties. They refer to widgets, items, tools equipped and used to meet the needs of use for daily activities of households, reducing the workload home, and improve the quality of life for children people (Quynh & Hien, 2018, p. 45)

### **CALL learning, Self-directed learning and Flipgrid**

The advent of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has empowered students and teachers in the teaching and learning of a foreign language. With a wide variety of materials and drills,

technology fosters metacognitive abilities and self-directness as well as individual control over their pace of learning (Boisvert & Rao, 2015; Butler & Lee, 2010). CALL has been thriving with the invention of technological devices with the advent of Web 4.0 tools. Technology-based approaches complement teaching practices and put students the center of the learning process by using an approach in which the learning process relies on the student (Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014). Web-based platforms can provide a means of self-monitoring and improvements for the richness and subtleties that they can capture. They also provide students awareness since they can monitor their performance.

Self-directed learning and learner autonomy in language acquisition have been buzzwords in the area of second language education for the last four decades. Few teachers, in particular, will deny the value of assisting language learners in being more self-directed. It is so deep that it has inspired countless books and papers (Little, 1999; Littlewood, 1999; Tudor, 1996). Studies have shown the effectiveness of self-directed learning in the realm of language acquisition.

Flipgrid is a web-based tool designed to boost students' speaking skill. It is available online and user-friendly. Flipgrid is chosen in the research as it provides a powerful tool for students to upload their quality videos and watch the video posted by other students as well as give peer feedback.

### **Research Question**

The study addressed the major research question:

*Does the knowledge of contrastive analysis of household items in English and Vietnamese dictionaries and Flipgrid usage improve students' speaking skill?*

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## Participants

The participants were 24 freshmen (22 females and 2 males) majoring in different subjects other than English at Thuongmai University. These non English-majored students had to study four English subjects from English 1 to English 4. At the time of the research, they were studying English 1 which aimed at pre-intermediate level. These students had just graduated from high school and had no experience with university learning methods. Furthermore, most of them had not practiced much English speaking prior to enrolling in university, and their command of the English language was extremely restricted. They often struggled with English speaking skill, and hardly know how to speak at length in English. The main explanation for this is that students concentrated on the university entrance test, which emphasized on reading ability and grammar.

## Materials

The materials used were one English dictionary and one Vietnamese one, namely Oxford Learners' Dictionary and Vietnamese Dictionary ("Từ điển tiếng Việt" by Hoang Phe). These two dictionaries were chosen for their wide use in study and research among Vietnamese students. Besides, they are equivalent in that they both focus on the general public.

## Procedures

In this study, the first move was to perform a contrastive study of semantic features of different household objects (with materials taken from English and Vietnamese dictionaries). Second, the results of the contrastive study were used to provide the students with a detailed understanding of household products, and the students were then asked to share their videos on Fripgrid, an online video conversation forum designed to inspire students. In

their videos, they showed their homes and demonstrated how to use the things in their homes to an international visitor who would be staying with them for his or her vacation. This kind of activity was deemed to boost their autonomy in study by doing more exercises and regulating their tasks by themselves. They had to manage to finish the tasks at home and submit the videos on Fripgrid. Focus group interviews with students were also conducted to ensure that their improvement in speaking is related to this experiment other than other external factors.

The procedure of the project is as follows:

**Table 1** Research procedure

	<b>Content</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
1	- Gathering materials for contrastive analysis	- To prepare materials for contrastive analysis
2	- Contrasting semantic features of English and Vietnamese household item words	- To achieve the similarity and differences of the semantic features.
3	- Designing reading materials and exercises	- To acquaint students with the knowledge of contrastive analysis
4	- Designing speaking tasks on Fripgrid	- To empower students to apply such knowledge of semantic features in their speech.
5	- Comparing the marks - Interviewing the students	- To assess the impact of such knowledge

## Analysis and results

To analyze the effect of the knowledge of the contrastive analysis, the study used scores of two tests (pre-test and post-test) for the experimental group of 24 students. The test is the data for 5 criteria (length, hesitations, repetitions, semantic features, and sense relations). Whereas hesitations, repetitions are negative reflection of improvement in speaking skill; length, semantic features and sense relations are the positive indicator of fluency. SPSS 20 was used to analyze the data by generating paired samples test. Interviews with students were conducted to find the link between such knowledge and their speaking skill.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

### Contrastive analysis

The semantic features are illustrated in Table 2 and 3 below:

**Table 2** Illustrated semantic features and sense relations of household item entries in Oxford Learners' Dictionary

	English word	English Definition	Semantic features	Sense relations
1	colander	a metal or plastic bowl with a lot of small holes in it, used for draining water from vegetables, etc. after washing or cooking	material, structure, usage	hyponymy, meronymy, role relation
2	sieve	a tool for separating solids from liquids or larger solids from smaller	usage, material, structure,	role relation, hyponymy, meronymy

<b>English word</b>	<b>English Definition</b>	<b>Semantic features</b>	<b>Sense relations</b>
	solids, made of a wire or plastic net attached to a ring. The liquid or small pieces pass through the net but the larger pieces do not.		
3 ladle	a large, deep spoon with a long handle, used especially for serving soup	size, depth, structure, usage	hyponymy, meronymy, role relation
4 air conditioner	a machine that cools and dries air	classification seme, usage	hyponymy, role relation
5 sewing machine	a machine that is used for sewing things that are made of cloth	classification seme, usage	hyponymy, role relation, attribute

The following table reflects the example of semantic features and sense relations of household item entries in Vietnamese.

**Table 3** Illustrated semantic features and sense relations of household item entries in the Vietnamese dictionary

Vietnamese equivalents	Vietnamese Definitions	Semantic Features	Sense Relations
1  chao, rổ	đồ đan thưa bằng tre hay làm bằng nhựa, tròn và sâu lòng, có nhiều lỗ nhỏ, dùng để đựng	classification seme, material, shape, structure, usage	hyponymy, attribute relation, role relation
2  rây	đồ dùng làm bằng lụa thưa hoặc kim loại, căng vào một cái khung để qua đó lấy riêng ra những hạt nhỏ nhát trong một chất đã tán vụn	classification seme, part, usage	hyponymy, meronymy, role relation
3  muôi	đồ dùng để múc thức ăn, hình dáng gần giống như thìa, nhưng to hơn và thường có cán dài.	classification seme, shape, size, part, usage	hyponymy, attribute relation, meronymy, role relation
4  máy điều hòa nhiệt độ	máy điều hòa để làm ấm, làm lạnh một phần và làm không khí trong phòng sạch bụi	classification seme, usage	hyponymy, role relation
5  máy khâu/ máy may	máy dùng để khâu may đồ bằng vải, da	classification seme, usage	hyponymy, role relation

As the number of semantic features are abundant, sense relations are also analyzed to have an overview of the ways the word is defined. There are a number of sense relations used in defining a word. The common recognized ones are hyponymy; synonymy antonymous relations, meronymy, quasisi meronymy, troponym, role relation, causative relation, deductive relation, attribute relation (size, shape, age, colour, origin...), polysemy (Atkins & Rundell, 2008, p.145).

The similarity can be revealed by the level of use of some semantic features. Both dictionaries use classification (both with approximately 99%), usage (both with almost 98%), and parts (89% for English and 90% for Vietnamese). This can be easily explained as classification is one of the popular and efficient way to define a word in a dictionary. Besides, household items are to service human beings; their functions are essentials.

In terms of sense relations, both utilize to a large extent hyponymy (99% each) and meronymy (89% for English and 90% for Vietnamese), and role relation (98% each). The difference can be found in attribute relation (63% for Vietnamese compared with English 27%). This can be inferred that the Vietnamese have a tendency to look at details than the Westerners on the topic of household items.

From the semantic features and sense relations collected from definitions of words related to household items, a template for "household item" entry for a dictionary can be suggested as follows:

**HOUSEHOLD ITEM ENTRY -> HOMONYM (CLASSIFICATION) +  
MERONYMY (PARTS) + ROLE RELATION + ATTRIBUTE  
RELATION (SIZE, SHAPE, MATERIAL, ETC.)**

Component entry can be as follows:

**Table 4** Single component entry for household items

Defining Components	Allowable Options
hyponymy	a type of
meronymy	with
attribute (size, shape, material)	big, small, high, low, made of
role relation	(used) for

**The results of the Pre-test and Post-test, and the interviews**

The results of the Pre-test and Post-test are presented in the Table 5 and Table 6. It can be seen from Table 5 that the scores for five criteria are different for the Pre-test and Post-test. Whereas the score for length, semantic features and sense relations increased, those for hesitations and repetitions decreased. The most difference can be seen in semantic feature score with 1.16 (from 5.88 to 7.04). The length of their speech came in second with 1.083 (from 4.38 to 5.46). It can be inferred that the students could speak more at length due as they used more semantic features in their speech.

**Table 5** Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 (length)	LEN1	4.38	24	1.996	.407
	LEN2	5.46	24	2.021	.413
Pair 2	HESI1	4.13	24	2.112	.431

(hesitation)	HESI2	3.38	24	1.996	.407
Pair 3	REPE1	2.83	24	.868	.177
(repetition)	REPE2	1.71	24	.550	.112
Pair 4	SEME_1	5.88	24	1.116	.228
(semantic features)	SEME_2	7.04	24	1.122	.229
Pair 5	SENSE1	4.71	24	1.083	.221
(sense relations)	SENSE2	5.38	24	1.610	.329

In order to determine whether the differences were significant, Paired t-test was done. Results from paired samples test by SPSS 2.0 showed that for the pre-test, all the level of length of the speech, number of semantic features, number of sense relations increased remarkably since the p-values ranged only from 0.000 to 0.006 which is smaller than 0.05 whereas the number of hesitations and repetitions reduced significantly. It, therefore, can be inferred that there was a significant difference of the statistics between the pre-test and post-test within the experimental group. The results imply that the knowledge of contrastive analysis of the semantic features of household item lexemes in English and Vietnamese dictionaries accompanied with Fripgrid is positively correlated with students' speaking proficiency.

**Table 6** Paired t-test results

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Devi-ation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower		Upper			
Pair 1	LEN1 - LEN2	-1.083	.830	.169	-1.434	-.733	-6.397	23	.000
Pair 2	HESI1 - HESI2	.750	.532	.109	.526	.974	6.912	23	.000
Pair 3	REPE1 - REPE2	1.125	.680	.139	.838	1.412	8.109	23	.000
Pair 4	SEME_1 -SEME_2	-1.167	.381	.078	-1.327	-1.006	-15.013	23	.000
Pair 5	SENSE1 - SENSE2	-.667	1.090	.223	-1.127	-.206	-2.996	23	.006

The results from the interviews also confirm this result. All of the students stated that the perception of the semantic features of household item lexemes assisted them in developing their speech with detailed features of the items. They also added that they could use such structure in defining household items to other items to lengthen their speech. One of them stated that “I could speak longer because I now know that whenever I speak about household items, I should use many semantic features”. Another said, “Thanks to contrastive analysis activity and Fripgrid exercise, I now know the technique to speak better. That is talking about many features and roles of the stuff”.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The findings corroborate previous studies (Boisvert & Rao, 2015; Butler & Lee, 2010; Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014; Little, 1999; Littlewood, 1999; Tudor, 1996) in that they affirm that technology and self-directed learning can be an effective method for enhancing the teaching of spoken form, and that lexicography knowledge serves applied linguistics. The results reveal the possible way of adopting the knowledge of lexicography in the field of teaching a foreign a language.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

To sum up, the students' speaking ability is strongly associated with their experience of contrastive interpretation of the semantic features of household item terms in English and Vietnamese dictionaries. Students are able to speak at length by using a number of semantic features and sense relations.

The results support previous research (Boisvert & Rao, 2015; Butler & Lee, 2010; Keengwe, Onchwari, & Oigara, 2014; Little, 1999; Littlewood, 1999; Tudor, 1996) by confirming that technology and self-directed learning can be a vital tool for improving spoken form teaching and that lexicography expertise is

useful in applied linguistics. The findings indicate a potential path to adolescence.

This method is of great help to the students, fostering their fluency by improving the length and reducing hesitations and repetitions. Teachers or instructors with similar type of students can consider to adopt these knowledge activities related to semantic features or senses and Fripgrid to enhance their students' speaking proficiency. Adaptations should be made with students in different contexts.

## **LIMITATIONS**

This study only investigated the semantic features of household item words and a case in a typical public university, to confirm the results of this study; it is mooted that a similar study can be duplicated for other different universities and at different educational levels.

## **AUTHOR**

Ms. Phuong Thi Pham is currently a lecturer of Thuongmai University. She obtained an M.A in Theory and Methodology in teaching English at University of Languages and International Studies - Vietnam National University in 2011, and a B.A in Business Administration at Thuongmai University in 2015. She has more than 10 years of experience in teaching English to non-native speakers at various levels of education. Her research interests are teaching techniques and methods for four skills, autonomy, technology in teaching English, and lexicography.

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# Using TikTok to Improve Speaking Performance at an Academy of Journalism and Communication EFL Class

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**Hoang Huu Nguyen**

Academy of Journalism and Communication, Vietnam

*huuhoang.ajc@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

Being influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic, the education systems all over the world have switched from physical classes to online ones. Schools are forced to find out the proper teaching and studying methods in which Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is one of their choices. Although there are a large number of studies on the effectiveness of social media on language learning, applying the new type of social media, TikTok, to the educational purposes is not commonly known. Therefore, the aim of this study is to fill in this gap by examining how positively TikTok influences on the speaking skills of the students in an EFL class at Academy of Journalism and Communication (AJC). 30 freshmen of Faculty of History of Vietnamese Communist Party volunteered to participate in the quantitative research. The researcher collected the data by utilizing semi-structure interview, focus group and observation in the class for one month. The findings showed that the students' speaking performance was enhanced in the lively and entertaining learning platform, TikTok.

**Keywords:** *speaking performance, MALL, TikTok*

## **INTRODUCTION**

During the period of Covid-19, teachers were made to look back their teaching methods because they faced with the ongoing tranformation in their lives' aspects. In the reality, the educators

had to stop and critically think about their teaching practice, figured out new aims, and made the attempt to adapt themselves to the new context. Before this pandemic, it was normally considered to be infeasible to make a revolutionary change in such a short period. However, the extreme difficulty has led to the creative power of the human. All the educational institutions around the world have been applying MALL to their academic activities. The teachers, since then, have taken advantages of technology generally and online platforms particularly, namely Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Google Meet and social media applications in order to assist their students to keep up with the lessons. With the development of technology, the launch of any applications can often attract the attentions from the public, specially in the social distancing time. TikTok is increasingly becoming popular in the world due to the statistics of Sensor Tower (2020) which indicated that TikTok was ranked at the second position among the most downloaded and installed applications. Therefore, this application was seen as a great chance to motivate and enhance the speaking skills of the language learners. However, according to Yang (2020), there are not many researchers who investigated the effectiveness of TikTok in second language teaching. Thus, this study aims at finding how effectively TikTok can improve the speaking skills of the students at an EFL class at Academy of Journalism and Communication (AJC), Ha Noi.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)**

With the view of Viberg et al (2012), MALL is considered as a method of utilizing mobile gadgets to support language learning. Consequently, MALL can be known as a special field of mobile learning which has some similar features with computer-assisted language learning (CALL). Due to the fact that mobile devices are commonly known to be very portable, connective and interactive, they can make MALL widespread, assessible, speedy. Hence, EFL

teachers and learners have a large number of opportunities to set up the language learning environment anytime and anywhere. In addition, they are able to approach the huge resources and materials of English language with their items, such as smart phones, ipads and so on. Furthermore, Mangah et al (2012) stated that the learners could apply MALL to their language learning process to better their vocabulary, reading, speaking, writing and listening skills.

## **TikTok**

On the website of this application, TikTok is mentioned as ‘the leading destination for short-form mobile video. Our mission is to inspire creativity and bring joy’. From the perspective of Sehl, K. (2020), TikTok has been playing an important role in social sharing since it was launched in 2016. More significantly, that the famous people posted their information on this application has made TikTok more attractive for the young people all over the world. People can use TikTok to make 15-second videos which run repeatedly until the user clicks to the next video. Also, the users can merge the different clips to make 60-second videos that can integrate with music, filters, stickers, and many other add-ons. TikTok has quickly gained the popularity in South East Asian countries, including Vietnam and other regions. The number of users was about 800 million in the world. Although TikTok has different functions and targeted audiences, this study only focuses on young students who constituted the major.

## **TikTok with ELT**

First of all, TikTok can potentially engage the students to different activities. Besides learning languages, TikTok can prove that it can assist the learners to become more creative (Klein, 2019). According to most educators, this application is a popular option rather than the others which do not attract the students in their learning. As for senior students, TikTok can make the in-class assignments easier to manage, particularly for EFL students who

are advised to get immersed to the English-speaking environment as much as possible. As a result, they use this platform to make English videos, which can help them learn the language in their own way. Undoubtedly, TikTok can cheer up the EFL classrooms in which the students are eager to interact with different contents right in the class. It is admitted that language learning becomes more comfortable and flexible with the support of technology. With more than 10 million videos related to education which can be useful for the students all over the world, this platform is becoming more commonly-implemented the the classrooms in order to improve English skills and many other disciplines.

### **Research questions**

The study was carried out with non-English major students at AJC in order to answer the research question:

*How do the non-English majors respond to the use of TikTok in mastering speaking skills at AJC?*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Settings and participants**

The study took place in Academy of Journalism and Communication in Ha Noi. Recently, English has become one of the priorities in the development policy of the academy. The facilities for teaching and learning activities are considerably invested such as language learning rooms, high quality speakers and so on.

The language proficiency levels of the students varies due to the changes in the enrolment policy. In the reality, the school accepts either the results of the university entrance examination or IELTS certificate to convert the mark of English proficiency. In this case, it can form the challenges for the lecturers to apply the proper method for each class where the levels of the students are from elementary to intermediate. In particular, the EFL students'

listening skills are quite poor because they received the traditional teaching method – Grammar/ Translation method- for a long time. Moreover, at the school, basing on the syllabus, the EFL students just have 90 periods of General English (including four skills and other disciplines) per semester. Actually, it is impossible for them to practice speaking skills constantly. Thus, self-study is important for them. However, the course book “New Cutting Edge – Pre-Intermediate” reveals some weaknesses, such as topic limitation, boring content and so on. In addition, the students share that they it is not easy for them to find the authentic materials to support their study.

Dealing with the situation of various levels of the students, the EFL teachers often update the new methodologies and the materials as well in order not to let any students behind. Besides taking part in the national and international TESOL conferences to exchange the experience in teaching English, the lecturers often conduct the researches for better understanding the studying habits to implement the appropriate methods for various groups of students.

### **Data collection**

The data was collected from an EFL class where the lecturer intergrated TikTok to the General English course. During the semester, the researcher asked the lecturer as well as the students for permission to participate in and observe the students’ reactions to the activities with TikTok. The researcher focused on and took note the attitude, behaviors, activities and emotional expressions of the students in the lessons for further analysis. When the course finished on December 15, 2020, the researcher examined the experience of the students with TikTok by using semi-structure interview and focus group. During the first week, the recruitment with the clear content of the study was sticked on the bulletin board, and the announcement was posted on Zalo group of the class to recruit the participants for the research.

When choosing enough participants: 15 for semi-structure interview and 15 for focus group, the researcher started to collect the data in the second week. To begin the conversation, the author introduced some personal information as well as the research information, such as the purpose, the use of data and so on. After that, the author asked some information about the participants, like name, habits and so on to create a rapport. Specially, the researcher asked for the permission of using tape-recorder to collect the data. Then, some questions which were prepared in advance were delivered to the interviewees. The researcher also utilized probing questions to have more data. Each semi-structure interview lasted for about 30 minutes depending on the satisfaction of the interviewer to the answers. After realizing the issues were discussed, the author asked the interviewees if he/she wanted to add anything. Finally, the interview finished.

As regards focus group which was 30 minutes long, the researcher welcomed 15 volunteers to a room with a setting of a table in the middle and chairs around to have better eye contact. After introducing some information about the researcher and the research, such as topic, aim and so on, the researcher asked the participants for permission of using the recorder to record the discussion. Then, the rules were initially highlighted: there would possibly be some different opinions, no right or wrong answers, each participant shared the own idea at a time for recording, and it was not necessary to agree with the other ideas, and the author played the role of moderator. Subsequently, the questions were given. During the discussion, the researcher took notes for the important information. When finding that the topic was discussed, the researcher asked the question “if there is one minute for you to sum up your ideas, what are you going to say?”. Afterward, the discussion finished.

When the data was collected, the recordings were transcribed to Microsoft Word and saved for the analysis in the following week.

## Data analysis

To avoid the information overload from the collecting data methods above, the author chose the key features to focus on. According to Parlett & Hamilton (1976), it is important for the researcher to choose the key data, such as sifting, sorting and reviewing after collecting it. After that, the author translated all the selected transcripts into English. To make sure that all the information was correct, the author asked the colleagues for assistance to check before it was coded to classified into different categories.

At the first step, the researcher listened to the recordings and read the transcripts for several times to get familiar with the data. After that, the author read carefully the notes from the focus group and observation in order to have an overview of the situation before the data was divided into smaller sections. At the end of the process, the author could find out the major themes.

In the second step, the researcher highlighted the key words, wrote the notes or memos in the margin to set a thematic framework and developed the categories. In the other words, the researcher tries to find the statements of description. Then, the author examined the primary codes thoroughly to see the relations and create the pattern codes. In order to find the students' reactions, the researcher based on the research question, and then grouped them into some criteria, such as positive responses if the text probably were interesting, enjoy, exciting, like, motivate... or in the observation report was happy, active... and negative responses if the text in the transcripts were boring, difficult, challenge, dislike... or in the observation report was disappointed, confused...

In terms of the third step, the researcher indexed the data by sifting the data, highlighting and sorting out the quotations and comparing each case and all the cases together. The author cut, pasted, sorted and arranged the data in the Microsoft Word. In this step, to chart the data, the researcher picked the quotes out of the transcripts

and put them into the appropriate thematic groups. To conduct the steps smoothly, the researcher based on the ideas of Krueger and Casey (2000) which suggest answering the questions after reading quotation:

1. *Did the participant answer the question that was asked? If yes, go to the question 3; if no, go to question 2; if don't know, set it aside and review it later.*
2. *Does the comment answer a different question? If yes, move it to the appropriate question; if no, go to question 3.*
3. *Does the comment say something of importance about the topic? If yes, put it under the appropriate question; if no, set it aside.*
4. *Is it something that has been said earlier? If yes, start grouping like quotes together; if no, start a separate pile.*

Finally, to interpret the data, the researcher found out the relation between the quotes as well as the connections of the data in the text. In terms of interpreting the coded data, the researcher based on the suggestions of criteria from Krueger (2000): real words and their meanings providing the key terms; the context affected by the moderator's questions and the other participants' comments; the internal consistency which the students showed the changes in their opinions and positions; the frequency and extensiveness of the participants' comments referring the personal experience; the comments' intensity referring the participants' feelings when answering the questions; and big ideas referring the typical concepts appearing during the interview or discussion. Then, the researcher developed the new categories and found out the major themes which answered the research question.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Learning source**

For the first question of semi-structure interview, 13 out of 15 respondents answered that it was easy for them to find TikTok to

practice listening. One said that “... Normally, at the class, we just listen to the teacher and speak basing on the ideas and vocabulary provided on the board. With TikTok, I can have one more choice of source to study at home and I can speak freely whatever I want...”. Besides, when 9 participants were discussing about the second question of focus group, they stated “... I can download the videos I made to my laptop, listen again and correct if there is any mistakes ...”, or “... it is a new material to practice listening instead of out-of-date course book...”.

Especially, 15 interviewers highlighted the helpfulness of this program. Answering the first question of semi-structure interview, one participant said that “... There are many different topics for me to practice and I think it can make my speaking skill better...”, another said: “It is useful for the lesson because it has videos that help me understand more about the content...”. Sharing the same opinion, one student in the focus group said in the second question that “I initially wanted to update the trend to relax, but my speaking skill was improved significantly...”

In addition, vocabulary is the factor that has dissimilar opinions from the participants. 10 students held a strong belief that they could use the words freely in their own way that can make them comfortable in speaking. However, some others thought that they could use slangs in their videos which was popular with the young. One suggested in the fourth question of semi-structure interview that “... Actually I can still understand the main content even there are some new words...”, or “... my listening is not affected by some new words because I can base on the context...”. In contrast, discussing the first question of focus group, 4 volunteers shared their opinions that “I cannot understand because there many new words”, or “...it is time-consuming when I focus on looking up the new words instead of listening...”. Besides, when observing the speaking class, the researcher found that most of the students in the front of the class focused on and followed the speaking activities till the end, but some at the back of the class just checked the meanings and did not concentrated on speaking.

Additionally, TikTok did not play a big role in helping the students understand the reduced speech. In the semi-structure interview, 8 students answered the third question that "... I think it is easier for me to understand if they pronounce the words separately...", "it's natural but difficult for us to follow...", "... we must look at the typescript to understand...". Furthermore, in the focus group, one student discussed the first question "... I think they are saying something else, not those phrases..." When the researcher observed the class, it was clear that many students got confused when the speakers linked the words together. However, a small number of students said that "...I still understand the reduced speech in the elementary level... It is a good way to practice the natural speech like that..." or "... I think I will practice this because it helps me to get acquainted with the real speech and communicate with the local people more easily..."

### **Students' interests and motivations**

When answering or discussing about the questions, the participants showed their interests to this application. To be specific, 10 students mentioned the accents, and some liked the interesting topics. In the first question of semi-structure interview, a number of interviewees said that "... it is very interesting to hear the voices of many people from different regions in the world. It differs from the course book with the same voice which is boring..." and "... I can listen to and practice many voices of people in a lesson. I have chance to practice listening with different accents...". In the observation, the research could find that many students realized some interesting accents and tried to imitate them, then practice more to speak the language in that way. Furthermore, in the second question of focus group, several students shared that "... I think I can pronounce the words like the America, speak in their way and then, it's easier to catch the speech in listening...", or "I like the way the British speak English, I speak like them every day, and I think I can understand when listening to them..." .

In addition, the students could be motivated by the various topics. The students experienced the diversity of the topics which might make the lesson more interesting. In the semi-structure interview, answering the second question, one said that “There are many topics to choose, some are not in the book, I think it is more comfortable to listen to my favourite topics”, and another one said: “Every day I look forward to listening to and practising my favourite topics, I can update the information about my idols and practice speaking as well”. Having the same idea, in the first question of focus group, some participants discussed: “I want to become a singer so I often want to listen to topic Music at the class, when the teacher played this topic, I was so excited to listen and repeat, and then, day by day I can improve my speaking skill, specially my pronunciation”, or “I was motivated by the topic Economy, I can listen every day without getting bored with the daily news about this field”. In the observation, the researcher could find that the students were happier and excited when they listened to and practiced their favourite topics, specifically some students could retell the content in their ways with the post-speaking activity of the teacher.

### **Learning goals**

During the time of collecting data, some participants showed that they had different goals for practising speaking. Passing the examination, communicating and entertaining were the main purposes. Responding to the first question of semi-structure interview, one said that “I tried to speak as much as possible in order to get a good mark in the test”, another said: “I worry whether I can pass the examination, so I often practice speaking whatever the topic is”. In addition, in the first question of focus group, some students discussed that “the test is very difficult, so the first aim of my practice is to pass it”, or “I don’t want to fail in the speaking test”. Besides, the aim of communication is also typical in the participants’ answers. In fourth question of semi-structure interview, some students stated “... I learn not only

the vocabulary but also the way people use it in talking to each other...”, and the answer “...I can imitate the conversations and try to use them in the real life...” for the first question of semi-structure interview, or at the same section for the last question, one said “I will introduce this to my friend because he is going to study abroad and he needs to practice listening and speaking with the natural speed in the conversation”. Moreover, in the focus group, discussing the second question, some participants shared their opinions: “When I practiced speaking every day, it’s amazing that I could learn the way they speak or communicate to each other, and I think I will practice in this way”, or “once I tried to speak like the people in the videos, my teacher gave me a good comment about the intonation and I was very happy to practice in that way”. Finally, some respondents considered watching TikTok as a means of relaxation. In the second question of focus group, a small group of participants shared that “I watch the videos of my idol or my interest, so it is very relaxed, not as stressful as the course book with many tasks”, or “I think it is a good way to see my favourite actor on the video, to hear his voice, and it helps me reduce the stress after hard-working day”. In addition, in the semi-structure interview, for the second question, some students said “when I watch videos about my favourite topics, it is very relaxing, it is not like a kind of compulsion”, and “I feel comfortable to do both practicing listening and speaking, it is like an entertainment activity”. When the researcher observed at the class, the students were greatly cheered when they saw the celebrities on the screen and the learning atmosphere was less stressful.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Learning source**

There were 13 participants who mentioned about the outdated teaching facility, just course book and tape player; thus, it could possibly be concluded that excepting the given source – TikTok, the students of Academy of Journalism and Communication had a little

chance to practice with other speaking materials. Due to the fact that this was an old university, the facility has been used for a long time and, in fact, some are in bad quality. According to Tomlinson (1998), the condition of the educational institution could affect directly the choice of materials.

Besides, a large number of students paid attention to the convenience of TikTok; for example, they could listen and practice speaking online or offline. With the advance of the technology, it was easy for them to have smartphone, laptop or computer with internet. If they had the recommendation from the teacher, they could have another listening source to practice by themselves.

In terms of vocabulary of this source, some participants assessed that it was suitable to their levels, and they could understand even it was a new word because they could base on the video to guess. In contrast, some others had difficulties when they met the new words, and they had to find the meanings in the dictionary. It was obvious that the cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies of the students could affect their speaking skills significantly and entail directly the manipulation as well as the transformation of the listening source (O'Malley et al., 1985)

Finally, although this source was popular for improving speaking skills of reduced speech, the results showed that TikTok did not work well in solving the problem of students in speaking reduced speech. It is clearly that the habit of using language between Vietnamese and English is different. With Vietnamese, because of the fact that the content of the utterance belongs to every single word equally, the speakers must speak clearly each word with the same stress. In contrast, in English, the content of the utterance lies on the meaning words, not functional words. Thus, the speakers often link the words together and put the stress on the meaning words. Consequently, if the listeners are not acquainted with this language usage, it will be difficult for them to follow the speech. In this case, the students met this difficulty when they listened to and practise speaking with the videos which had natural speech.

## **Students' interests and motivations**

Being a little different from the course book, TikTok attracted more students' attention.

To begin with, the large number of topics could make the students impressed when they joined. This program offered the students a wide choice of the contents, the areas and they could select the topics they liked to practice speaking. The answers of the students proved that they could get involved in the context and be motivated by their favorite topics. As Richards (2005) mentioned, motivation is important to encourage the students to study.

In addition, the students at Academy of Journalism and Communication had few chances to communicate with the native speakers; thus, with TikTok, it was a possible way for them to get familiar with different accents of the native speakers. Furthermore, along with this, the students could discover the culture, lifestyle, etc. of the local people. They could broaden the knowledge about the other countries in the world. In the other words, it helped the students improve their metacognitive knowledge that was useful not only in listening skill but also in their actual communication.

## **Learning goals**

According to Dunkel (1991), goals play important role in deciding the learning methods as well as choosing the learning materials. In fact, Academy of Journalism and Communication in particular and other schools in general applied the summative assessment for the students. It meant that their study was assessed basing on the result of the final test. This created the students' learning habit "learning for the test" not "learning for communication". In this case, they chose TikTok to practice speaking but still wondered whether it could help them for the final test or not. In contrast, for others who would go to study abroad or work for foreign companies, they practiced speaking with TikTok more seriously. It was clear that they had the specific goals for the future and they

knew what they needed for their future plans. Finally, for the rest of people who were interested in the updated information, they often paid attention to some favorite topics and watched some videos to relax. In summary, whatever the students' goals were, TikTok met their needs in some certain extent.

## **CONCLUSION**

By this research, I wanted to find out the effectiveness of TikTok on the EFL students at Academy of Journalism and Communication by answering the research question: How do the non-English majors respond to the use of TikTok in mastering speaking skills at AJC? After the research, the author found that TikTok had some positive influence on students at AJC in changing their view on the learning materials and encouraging them to practice speaking more.

Although TikTok showed some limitations for the students at this school, it had some positive influence on them in changing their view on the learning materials and encouraging them to practice speaking more. Besides, it was also a source for the teacher to refer to compile for the lesson as well as the supplementary.

## **AUTHOR**

Hoang Huu Nguyen works at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Academy of Journalism and Communication, Vietnam.

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# **ASSESSMENT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE**

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# **A Comparison Between Teachers' Perceptions on Using Microsoft Teams for Formative Assessment at Two Universities in Vietnam and Thailand**

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**Van Thanh Lai**

International School, VNU, Vietnam  
*thanhvan2812@gmail.com*

## **Abstract**

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic all over the world, the traditional face-to-face classroom has been replaced by face-to-screen one, with no exception in Vietnam and Thailand universities. It is undeniable that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process; therefore, online assessment obviously has also been adapted quickly to meet the global demand of teachers and students. Formative assessment and feedback help to provide a great opportunity to assist and boost student learning. The paper would share how Vietnamese and Thai lecturer experienced using Microsoft Teams for formative assessment by using semi-structured interviews with 10 lecturers from both universities. The qualitative collected data provided an insight into a variety of benefits that Teams can support the efficiency and convenience of online formative assessment, while there were several challenges that still occurred. It concluded with a summary and recommendations to be taken up in subsequent efforts.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic all over the world, the traditional face-to-face classroom has been replaced by face-to-screen one in colleges and universities all over Vietnam and Thailand. Online teaching during the epidemic prevention and

control period is stated to ensure the normal study process and follow the policy “stop class, but not stop teaching nor stop learning”. According to Yang Xiao (2020), online teaching is a modern teaching mode that uses new technology like the Internet and specialized teaching platforms to allow online, simultaneous, real-time, immersive teaching and learning. Through overcoming time and space constraints, not only will online teaching aid in the promotion of teaching success during the special era, but also allow the supply and allocation of high-quality resources.

It is undeniable that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning process; therefore, online assessment obviously has also been adapted quickly to meet the global demand of teachers and students. As mentioned in Nagandla K. (2018), online formative tests (OFAs) are becoming more widely recognized as tools that encourage self-directed learning. Formative tests are used in the classroom to encourage students to study on their own; likewise, for tests, it has been discovered that they take less time as well as feedback is generated automatically. Yulia (2019) argued that the use of technology in the classroom has had an effect on how tests are administered. Internet quizzes are now favored over standard paper-and-pencil exams. As opposed to written submissions, online evaluations are favored (Baleni,2015; Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2017; Johnston, 2004) but not as much focus has been highlighted on the impact of formative assessment specifically used by Microsoft Teams in both countries Vietnam and Thailand. This study, therefore, aims to focus on the lecturers’ experience together with their perception in applying Microsoft Teams to deliver formative assessment for students at both universities.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Formative assessment**

As in Yulia (2019), since evaluation has such a powerful effect on learning, formative assessment is getting more important. In the

classroom, formative tests provide ongoing guidance with the intention of improving teaching and learning. Another aim of formative testing is to assist in learning as it arises the educational program. Formative evaluation exercises are inserted within guidelines with the intention of tracking learning and evaluating learners' comprehension of the subject. This evaluation will aid in the modification of instructions if appropriate. Furthermore, the outcomes of formative tests will be used to guide future learning feedback in a timely and consistent manner before the optimal degree of expertise is attained. Formative evaluation, according to Black and Wiliam since 1998, is a method that provides both teachers and students with constant input on teaching and studying with the goal of improving students' learning and achievement of goals of instruction. Furthermore, formative testing is widely regarded as an important tool to help students do well in the classroom (Bell & Cowie, 2001).

Harsch (2014b) suggested the following goals for formative evaluation based on the aforementioned characteristics (cited in Ho B.N., 2019) including “Feedback and information about the learners’ level and learning progress; diagnosis of strengths and weaknesses; exploring learners' potential; feedback on teaching effectiveness, for planning and modifying next steps; reflection by all participants; motivation and improvement/development; autonomy and learner participation.”

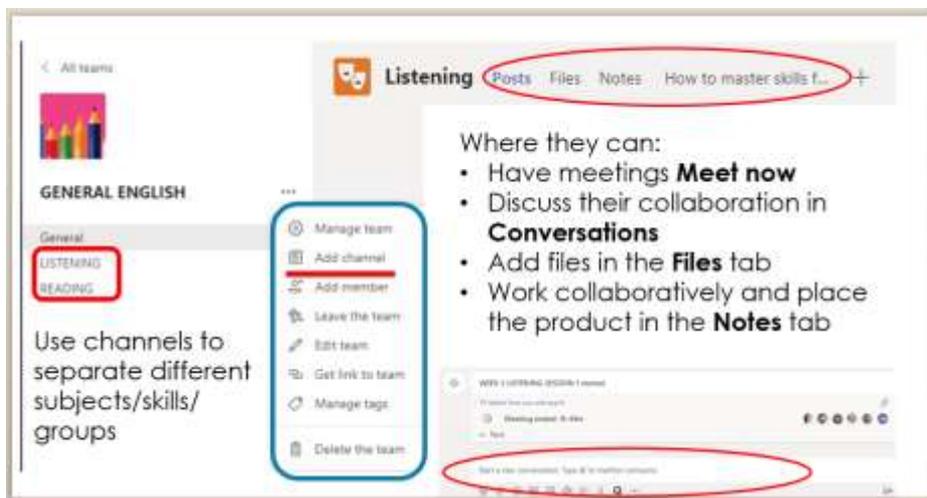
In their early writings on formative testing, P. Black and D. Wiliam identify five main categories of exercises based on proof of future effectiveness: to familiarize students with performance criteria; to challenge during lessons; to do assessment only with comments; to introduce self- and peer-assessment; and summative use of formative assessments (cited in Koka, et al 2017).

## **Microsoft Teams**

According to Martin, et al (2019), Microsoft Teams is a cloud-based digital platform for conversations, events, files, and apps (Microsoft,

2018). The word "app" refers to a software program and is short for application. While an app may refer to an application for any hardware platform, it is mostly often used to refer to software for mobile devices like smartphones and tablets (Techterms.com, 2019). Real-time chat apps that run through various operating systems and platforms, according to Tsai (2018), are now commonplace. He believes that some interactive messaging applications, such as Teams, have functionality that email cannot, such as chat rooms, video conferencing, and social media-like features. Microsoft Teams, according to Tsai (2018) were expected to be used by 41% of companies worldwide by the end of 2020.

**Figure 1** Screenshot of the Microsoft Teams app

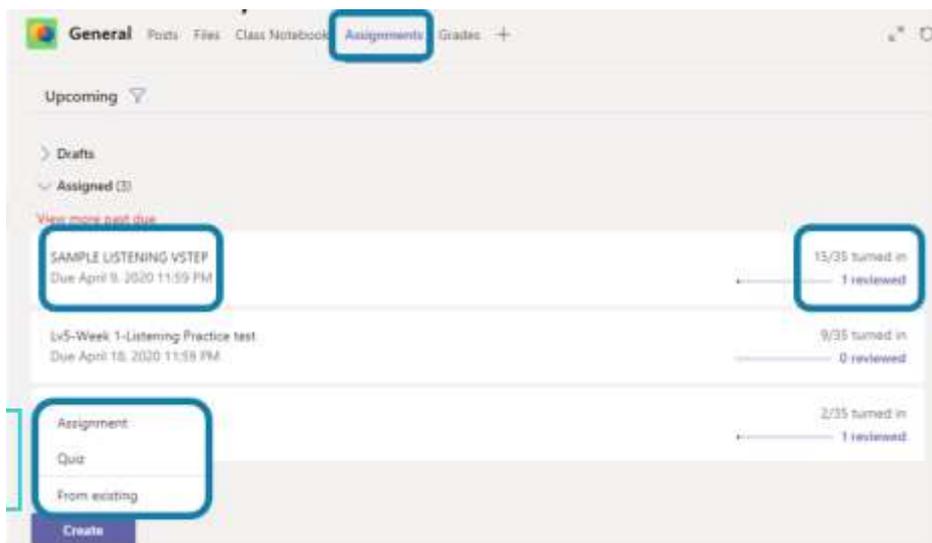


A screen shot of the author's Team apps is seen in Figure 1. The app creates a virtual learning experience and is designed to allow for fast and easy transitions from interactions to content development (Microsoft, 2018). A General channel is immediately applied to a new team when a professor creates it, and teachers may then create channels inside it. Each channel can be used for different subjects, skills or groups of students. The channels are regarded as collaboration spaces within a Team where both lecturers and students could organize meetings, discuss, access materials, add

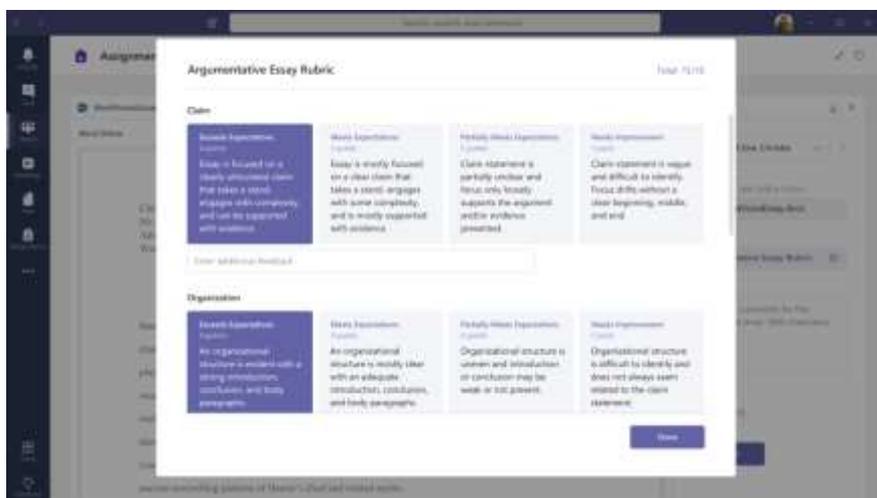
and store files as well as work collaboratively and place their products.

Lecturers may use the assignment feature in Teams to send assignments to members, small classes, or the whole class, according to Pretorius (2018). Pretorius (2018) clarified that in his own practice, he was able to adapt tasks to the various learning preferences and academic abilities in his classroom. He assessed the task submission procedure, which involves the student uploading a document to the Assignment page, which then goes into the Working files folder. The learner will also open it and make adjustments in the Teams Assignment page. When a student clicks the Turn In button, the file is copied to the Submitted files folder and is no longer editable (Figure 2). When the student is ready, he or she submits the paper. The teacher can still make notes on the text after it has been submitted, and the pupil can still open it and read the comments, so they can no longer make changes (cited in Martin, et al, 2019).

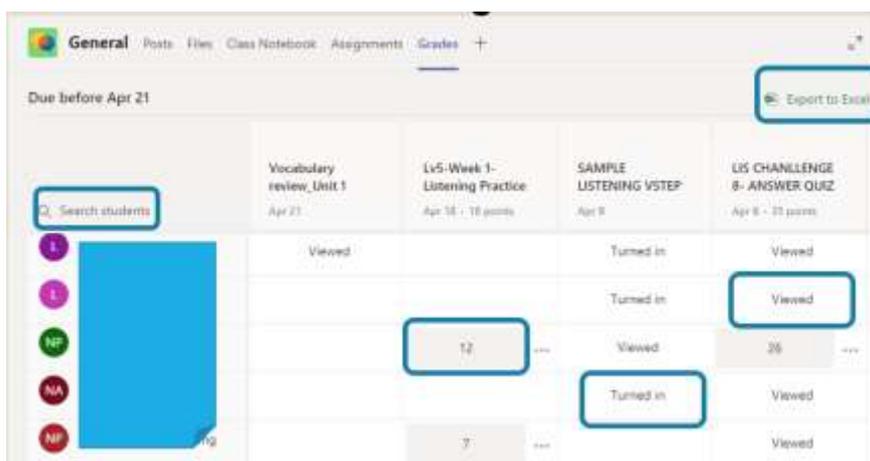
**Figure 2** Screenshot of Assignment Tab in Microsoft Teams



**Figure 3** Screenshot of Rubric uploaded in the Assessment Tab

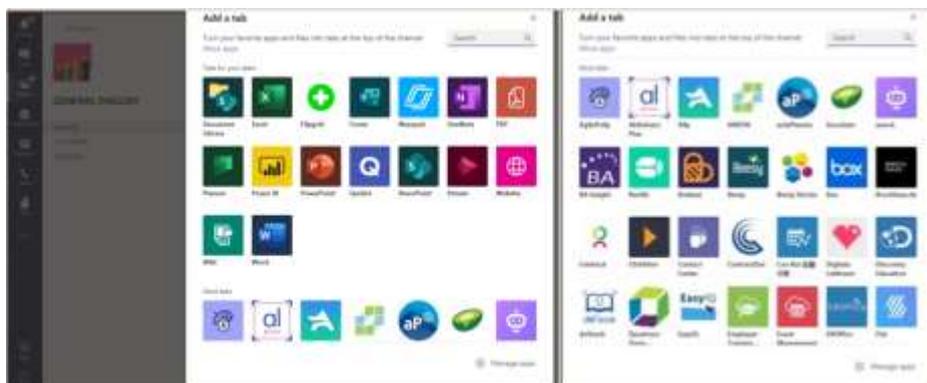


**Figure 4** Screenshot of Grades Tab in the Microsoft Teams



Figures 2, 3, 4 are screenshots of author’s Teams app, which indicates how assessments can be assigned within this application, how rubric can be included to support writing skill evaluation and how grades can be stored and accessed for both lecturers and students. It could be concluded that teachers are able to conduct formative evaluation through Microsoft Teams with the use of uploading document file as Assignment or sharing Google form as Quiz or even combine with third-party applications (Figure 5).

**Figure 5** A screenshot of *Third-party application in Teams app*



## Review of previous studies

In the recent times, several studies have been drawing attention on researching the application and efficiency of using online formative assessment in general and Microsoft Teams specifically.

Martin et al. (2019) paper integrated a functional study of Teams as a computer-assisted collaborative learning (CSCL) framework with an explanation of what Teams can provide higher education educators (HEIs). Furthermore, the paper stated that the app's teaching and learning are based on the social constructivism model of educational philosophy. The authors' use of a Team to teach the Language of Law, a module on an LLB(Hons) course, was examined in this article. The writers explained how to use the task tab in community sessions to help with PowerPoint presentations, delegate appropriate reading, and rate formative assignments. The work on Teams was still in its early stages, but the authors planned to use it in a variety of modules and levels of study. The initial reviews and outcomes from students had been highly positive. There were few research studies on this app, but as Microsoft expands and partners with LMSs, more important studies to assess the feasibility of these teaching processes would arise. It's important to analyze the use of apps and bots in the sense of educational philosophy, and a social constructivist approach to engage learning should be used in this situation.

In Thai context, Somboon (2012) stated that the aim of the research was to see how students reacted to e-formative evaluation in an English for specific purposes (ESP) course at a Thai university, which was combined with face-to-face instruction. With an increasing number of students enrolling in a required course, English for Sciences and Technology, there were concerns with both teaching the English language to students from different backgrounds and giving input to those large-size classes with approximately 100 students using paper-based ongoing evaluation. It was difficult to provide adequate English language practice and administer successful formative testing to students. Students did not have enough time in class to practice their language skills, and they tended to be less inspired as a result. Furthermore, high marking loads based on conventional paper-based formative testing proved to be a time-consuming process for teachers. As a result, an e-formative evaluation was applied to the course to deal with these problems. The e-assessment was administered by the university's online e-learning platform. Participants were 173 sophomore undergraduates who took the course during the first semester of the 2011 academic year (June to September). They came from three different fields of analysis. To evaluate the students' answers to the evaluation, a questionnaire of both closed and open-ended elements was distributed to the participants at the end of the course. The findings of this study could give English language teachers more faith in using e-formative evaluation in their classrooms. The research was also intended to lead to a solution to the problems of formative evaluation in broad ESP groups, which currently obstruct language learning, teaching, and measuring effectiveness. Future studies should concentrate on reading and speaking e-formative tests, as this analysis centered exclusively on listening and writing.

Otherwise, in Vietnam context, Ho B.N., (2019) looked at the influence of formative evaluation on students' writing performance in a writing course using the Learning Management Method Schoology, in an effort to build on previous studies undertaken

around the country and around the world. Over the course of a fifteen-week writing course, a quasi-experimental template was used for two groups of fifty undergraduate Vietnamese students, with the main activity called online discussion board as the main activity. According to the findings of the writing exam, there was a statistically important discrepancy between the care and control groups of participants. Teachers could use online formative testing in their writing classes to help EFL students in Vietnam and other countries develop their writing skills. Online formative testing had a positive impact on students' learning outcomes, according to the findings. Implementing online formative testing, especially using an online discussion board in a writing course, could increase students' self- and peer-assessment, resulting in improved writing performance. For starters, peer-assessment among students through direct comments on their peers' course writing helped students notice their errors. It also improved students' incentive to learn by encouraging them to receive prompt responses from their peers. Following that, students would rely on their own work and made corrections on their own using the corrections learned from peer-assessment. Students' results and learner control in their learning process could be activated by self-assessment.

In overall, despite the focus on Microsoft Teams, the study of Martin et al (2019) only reflect author's experience in teaching Law by this application, while the other two research in Thai and Vietnam context simply emphasize the use of online formative assessment in an ESP course and in writing skills. Since Microsoft Teams started to be commonly used, there has not been much focus on lecturer's experience of using online formative assessment delivered through the application. Therefore, this topic becomes more worthy for conducting the research. Moreover, it can be regarded as a source for further investigation into this matter and others related to this.

## **Research question**

For all the reasons listed above, the researcher has decided to conduct the study to address the following research questions:

1. What types of formative assessment have been used by lecturers at both universities through Microsoft Teams?
2. What are Vietnamese and Thai teachers' perceptions of benefits and challenges of using MS Teams for formative assessment?

## **METHODOLOGY**

With the purpose of gaining detailed information to answer the research questions, the researcher decided to apply qualitative method by using interviews. According to McNamara (1999), interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant' experiences; the interviewer can pursue in-depth information around the topic (cited in Nguyen Thi Giang, 2014).

It was acknowledged that since the outbreak of pandemic, both universities immediately applied online teaching and learning, specifically through Microsoft Teams. One more common thing between these lecturers is that they all teach General English courses as their students are required to reach B1-B2 level at the end of their first year. Their courses are also based on all four English skills: listening, reading, speaking and writing; combined with grammar and vocabulary. For those reasons, the English lecturers from these universities have been selected to be participants of the research.

In this study, the purpose of interviews was to provide insights on the investigated issue. The interviews with lecturers from both Vietnam and Thai universities aimed to add more in-depth information for types of formative assessment applied in English classes through Microsoft Teams as well as their experience in using online formative assessment. Therefore, each interview was

semi-structured with 8 open-ended questions in English. These questions have been designed based on the goals of formative assessment, which have been stated in the Literature review.

1. What activities and strategies have lecturers used before, during and after the pandemic when delivering formative assessment?
2. Which English skills have lecturers used formative assessment on Microsoft Teams? Compare the skills?
3. How do you provide feedback on students' formative assessment through Microsoft Teams?
4. How comfortable are teachers with giving constructive feedback through Microsoft Teams?
5. How do lecturers rate the effectiveness of the formative assessment through Microsoft Teams on teaching and learning procedure?
6. How easy did lecturers find MS Teams to learn and use formative assessment?
7. How frequently did lecturers use Microsoft Teams affordances for formative assessment?
8. How did lecturers rate using formative assessment through MS Teams in comparison to other paper and online tools they have used?

Referring to the data collection procedures, the researcher conducted this phase with five lecturers from each university, totally ten lecturers involved. The interviewer contacted the interviewees by email. When permission was granted, appointments were arranged on Microsoft Teams. On the interview day, the researcher began with a quick introduction of the researcher and the research, the aim of the interview and emphasized the importance of the interviewees' answers to the questions. The researcher also made sure to guarantee confidentiality of interviewees' attendance and answers. During the

interview, the interviewer followed the sequence of questions, created a comfortable and friendly atmosphere as well as encouraged responses from the interviewees. Extra questions could be added regularly in need of in-depth information. The researcher took notes carefully and used a recorder for the exact record of interviewees' responses.

The collected data from interviews was classified to answer two research questions that were mentioned above. To be more specific, the data obtained from the question 1 to 2 will answer for the first research question; whereas the rest would response the second question in particular as well as gain more in-depth information. Therefore, the data collected is analyzed using the qualitative methods. After conducting the interviews with the teachers, the researcher spent around one week to have a look back interview notes and listen to the record again to get more accurate information. Then, the information from the interviews was analyzed by being summarized, clarified and compared with the answers from the questionnaires. These results became necessary quotations to support the data analyzed from the interviews, which makes the findings and discussion more detailed and accurate.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Platforms to deliver formative assessment on Microsoft Teams**

As collected from the interviews with lecturers at both universities, it could be concluded that Google form is the main platform to deliver formative assessment. Google form can be used as quiz form as well as feedback form, which would be effective for both lecturers and students. All lecturers reported that Google form can be easily accessed through assessment on Microsoft Teams, in case of limited Internet or problems from Microsoft Teams, Google form link can also be sent to students. Therefore, using Google form is widely used on Microsoft Teams for formative assessment.

*An interviewee from Vietnam said “We use Google form so that students can fill in their answers and quickly get the number of correct answers or we can check the answers manually to give feedback.”*

Besides, Vietnamese lecturers also mainly use the assessment tab in MS Teams for uploading documents that can be accessed and completed by students, whereas Thai lecturers hardly use this function.

*An interviewee from Thailand reported “We usually send the direct Google form link to students instead of using Assessment tab as it seems to be complicated for all Thai students. Meanwhile, Vietnamese lecturers claimed “Assessment tab is really helpful to see how many students turn in their work on time or late, then it is also easy for teachers to grade, give feedback and export to excel file.”*

Instead, third-party applications like Socrative, Quizizz, Quizlet, Kahoot are more frequently used by lecturers at Thai university, which are only used to review lesson by Vietnamese lecturers. Those interviewees in Vietnam reported that the use of combined applications into MS Teams causes a variety of difficulties for both lecturers and students such as poor connection, troubles to log in as well as take part in the online activities on those websites. For that reason, these websites are often assigned as homework for Vietnamese students. Meanwhile, Socrative is used in that Thai university every lesson to check Vocabulary, which hardly face any problem running. The other three applications are also sometimes applied for Thai students to review lesson or complete at home as homework.

More specifically, all four English skills have been applied to use formative assessment through MS Teams by both lecturers of two universities. Among those skills, vocabulary and grammar is the most popular aspect to be assessed, which is also considered the easiest to be checked by all lecturers. Google form and third-party

applications are frequently used to check students' vocabulary and grammar knowledge.

*Another interviewee from Thailand said "Before, we apply many applications in English lessons for students like Socrative to check Vocabulary at the beginning of every session or Quizizz, Kahoot to review Grammar. When we switch to Microsoft Teams, all of these apps can be linked and combined, which is really useful and familiar with students."*

Next, writing skill is the second popular skill to be assessed as frequently as possible. Students can upload their writing document in the assessment tab, where lecturers can also easily see if students turn in on time or not. Besides, students can also simply submit their writing by attaching files in the chat box or using Google form. All teachers agreed that writing is the only skill that they can check if students plagiarize or imitate from their classmates, which means the validity of writing is higher compared to other skills.

*A Vietnamese lecturer claimed "I teach Writing skill, therefore, I found learning online actually beneficial for students since I can check their writings regularly and give prompt feedback by showing on screen. If any of them plagiarize, I can also find their copied source easily, compared to paper writings."*

Meanwhile, speaking skill can be efficiently checked by using meeting; however, students still possibly look at the script or search for information. Reading and listening skills are the two seems to be hard for checking through MS Teams as students can easily connect with their friends or ask for help without control from the application or lecturers.

## **Lecturers' perceptions in delivering formative assessment through Microsoft Teams**

### ***Lecturers' perceptions of constructive feedback provided through formative assessment on Microsoft Teams***

In terms of providing feedback for students on their formative assessment through MS Teams, all lecturers agreed that it is prompt and comfortable. Especially with writing skill, feedback can easily be given by track changes in Word document and rubric in assessment tab. With multiple choice quiz or exercise on Google forms or other applications, students can conveniently find feedback even right after they finish doing it. The same comfort can be applied with speaking skill when lecturer can immediately give feedback to students after online oral test.

*A Thai lecturer emphasized "Feedback is the most important factor of delivering formative assessment. With Microsoft Teams, we can give prompt feedback on their work, which can be stored in the group for students to look back. This is definitely a better function than using Zoom. I teach Writing and Speaking so I can directly provide comments to my students."*

### ***Lecturers' perceptions of benefits and challenges using Microsoft Teams for formative assessment***

Referring to how effective of using formative assessment through MS Teams, all lecturers support the productivity. However, some claimed that the Internet connection and application error may cause several troubles when conducting assessment with students. For instance, a Vietnamese lecturer reported that she had to try logging in again and again after being logged out of MS Teams during the time of assigning formative assessment for her students, finally, she had to call them by Zoom. Also, the assessment tab in MS Teams is also not available to be used by all students; therefore, instead of submitting work through that, students need to send

directly to their teachers by private chat box. In overall, formative assessment through MS Teams is effective, but not always so lecturers and students should be flexible and patient when having problems.

*A Vietnamese lecturer said “Oh, when I started using Microsoft Teams, sometimes I got disconnected, even my students got kicked out of the meeting in the middle of the class. A few times that I couldn’t get back, we have to use Zoom instead, however, after a day, it is back to normal. There was also one time delivering listening test, many students could not hear the audio due to unstable Internet connection. I have no other option than sending them directly and assign the specific amount of time for them to finish.”*

Most interviewees also stated that it is convenient to deliver formative assessment through MS Teams, some of them continue using it after back to normal classes, especially for writing skills. Although they all got training on using MS Teams, assessment is claimed to be the time-consuming part among all of its functions. That could be the reason lecturers was able to deliver quizzes every lesson especially on vocabulary and grammar. Mini tests on all four skills were also assigned every two weeks for Vietnamese students, while every three weeks for Thai students. This is due to the difference in terms of semester time at each university, as it is two-month course for Vietnamese, whereas it is three-month semester for Thai. In general, all of the interviewees highly supported the efficiency, convenience and frequency in teaching and learning procedure for their students both during and after the lockdown.

### **Lecturers’ perceptions of similarities and differences between paper-based and other online tools for assessment.**

In comparison with traditional paper tool, all lecturers agreed that using formative assessment on MS Teams is faster and more convenient in spite of more time in preparation. However, the

validity and reliability of online testing still remain an issue, which requires more control over students' online work. All Vietnamese lecturers prefer paper tools since they can manage the students better. Meanwhile, as being regularly used in this Thai university even before the pandemic, all of these online formative assessments are still considered as convenient for checking students constantly.

*A lecturer from Vietnam said "It is more reliable to test students in paper and offline class as we can easily manage them. Online ones are necessary at this time but for me, it is not valid that much. I still prefer paper tools." In contrast, a lecturer from Thailand argued "We have a large number of Thai students here, since we are all familiar with online formative assessment even before the pandemic, to us, this is still faster and more convenient. We can check them regularly and save time marking, and also save paper use."*

In comparison with other online tools, it is interesting to note that several lecturers at both universities stated that they prefer using Zoom as they can see all students on one screen, the connection is also better and students can access more easily. However, a number of interviewees put more emphasis on the all-in-one function of MS Teams, since all the necessary things for a class can be found here, despite its heavy storage and unstable connection.

## **DISCUSSION**

This research is in line with Ho (2019) that online assessment in general helps to promote Vietnamese students' learning outcome especially in writing skills. Implementing online formative testing, especially using an online discussion board in a writing course, could increase students' self- and peer-assessment, resulting in improved writing performance. For starters, peer-assessment among students through direct comments on their peers' course writing helped students notice their errors. It also increases students' incentive to

learn by allowing them to get prompt responses from their peers. Following that, students will rely on their own work and make corrections on their own using the corrections learned from peer-assessment. Students' outcomes and learner control in their learning process can be triggered by self-assessment on the discussion page. The findings were consistent with Ghadi's (2016) research, in which Iranian EFL students in the experimental community outperformed in both writing and the autonomy scale at the end of the study. The participants have expressed their support for the use of automated peer review and web-based resources. Similarly, the findings of Zainnuri and Cahyaningrum (2017)'s experimental English classes, which used online peer review via debate through Schoology to improve EFL college students' argumentative writing, seem to corroborate this result. The interviewees accepted that online peer analysis through a discussion board would help them improve their argumentative writing skills. Moreover, this study also supports the findings of Somboon in Thai context that the majority of participants agreed that it is necessary to do online formative assessment, they also preferred e-contact provided and had no serious problem with computers when using e-formative assessment.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The current research revealed the platforms that lecturers used to deliver formative assessment through MS Teams and their experience when using. The findings also indicated several implications for the implementation of formative assessment in teaching English for students as a foreign language.

First, peer-reflection and self-reflection guides distributed to students at the end of each online quiz may have explained how students should define the mini-test requirement, the essay rubric, and how to self-assess their postings. As a result, students could be more engaged in evaluation. Increased student interest in learning is likely to contribute to better academic performance.

Second, lectures and students can save time by approaching quiz and assignment via the application as mobile app or website. They used the message board when they could not meet face-to-face to brainstorm and exchange thoughts, which was convenient given their hectic schedule. Grades are also can be stored, published and accessed easily.

However, in order to allow all students to participate in the online discussion board, the instructor should make it a must (Weisskirch & Milburn, 2003). This information contains the number of postings, comments, and the date for each assignment. Furthermore, the teacher's guidance and intervention during the course are extremely important. Students can recognize the importance of their contribution if the instructor responds quickly and encourages them. Students who engage actively in the online message board have a higher final score (Ho, 2019). Besides, lecturers and students should be flexible in using the application for formative assessment due to the diverse connection problems or device issues which may happen at any time.

To sum up, through Microsoft Teams, formative assessment can help lecturers manage better as well as give more prompt feedback and students be more involved in their learning process.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research is expected to offer valuable insights from lecturers for the advancement of the e-formative evaluation program. Furthermore, the findings of this study can give English language teachers more confidence in implementing e-formative assessment. The research is also intended to lead to a solution to the problems of formative evaluation in both context in Vietnam and Thai, which currently promote language learning, teaching, and measuring effectiveness. Future studies should concentrate on students' experience when doing formative assessment, as this analysis centered solely on lecturers' perceptions.

## AUTHOR

Van Thanh Lai is currently Lecturer of English at International School, VNU. She received a bachelor's degree in English Language Teaching from University of Language and International Studies (2015), then a master's degree in TESOL from Victoria University (2017). She has worked at British Council, Victoria University, Walailak University and various English centers around Hanoi, which has molded her beliefs in equity, celebrating diversity, and developing positive English language teaching for students of all ages.

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# **Translators' Intercultural Communicative Competence in Translation Quality Assessment: A Perspective from Functionalism**

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**Tri Minh Nguyen**

Edith Cowan University, Australia

*tringuyen.eling@gmail.com*

**Trang Xuan Phuong Dao**

Ho Chi Minh University of Education, Vietnam

## **Abstract**

In contrast to the previous assumption on the mastery of the source language and the target language in terms of linguistic competence, the current context of internationalization of various fields has increasingly been demanding for higher degree of ability to synthesize and modify the translation process with cultural appropriateness (Munday, 2016). Translation quality assessment plays a crucial role as a post-translation process to evaluate the acceptability of translated versions in the target language (House, 2015). The perspective of functionalism in House's (2015) revisited model focuses on not only what it means in language but also what a language can do in reality. The idea of functionalism contributes to ensure the quality of translation in the reality of translaboration in translation procedure with the responsibility of self-assessment and peer assessment in the target culture (Bittner, 2020; House, 2016; Maitland, 2019). Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the significance of translators' intercultural communicative competence in the process of translation and in translation quality assessment from the perspective of functionalism. This paper will provide more insights for the target audience to re-think of the new characteristics for a competent translator in the context of globalization to successfully convey the meaning from the source text to the target language text with cultural awareness and

acceptability. This paper also proposes some strategies for the translators to enhance their intercultural communicative competence in translation quality assessment to maximize the translation professionalism across cultures.

**Keywords:** *translation quality assessment, culture, equivalence*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Translation can be regarded as an act of communication because it enables a text produced for readers in one particular context to be rendered for readers in another. Therefore, the components of communicative competence, which are linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, should be applied to translation competence (Hymes, 1972). In other words, not only does a translator need to master both the source and the target language, but he or she is also required to be able to take on the role of an intercultural mediator. Without insightful understanding of cultural aspects and the ability to mediate culture-specificity and cultural divergences, the translator might encounter unsatisfactory explanation and failure in translation. As a post-stage of the translation process, translation quality assessment is an integral component to evaluate the appropriateness and suitability of the texts converted from the source language to the target language. As can be observed, pre-service translators or even the graduate translators are still frequently dependent on the source-text-oriented translations with the adoption of literal or word-by-word translation to approve the closest expressions in the target cultures. However, it is inevitable that translation has to confront with non-equivalence between two languages that cause the constraints in linguistic expressions to prevent translators from sensibly choosing the most suitable versions. Translators have certain difficulties in understanding and re-contextualising the target texts in an appropriate manner in the real-world context. This paper aims to address the significance of translators' intercultural communicative competence in translation quality assessment from the insights of functionalism.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This review article attempts to adopt the critical review in the form of thematization of the similar content patterns. The content is presented in a systematic manner in which triangulation is used to compare the characteristics of the research scope (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The author aims to analyse the chronological and thematic studies and summarise the earlier research to signify the significance of intercultural communicative competence on translation quality assessment with the focus on functionalism.

### **Intercultural communicative competence in translation**

Throughout history, translation competence has received interest from scholars who have been attempting to define and conceptualize the term in a vast array of models and methods (Harris, 1977; Marconi, 1997; Neubert, 2000; Angelelli, 2009; ISO 17100, 2015). Despite variation, theoretical assumptions and approaches still place significant emphasis on the translator's knowledge and skills to perform translation. When it comes to conceptualizations of translation competence, functional approach appears more justifiable and reasonable than linguistic approach. Because the text is supposed to perform a specific function in the source language and culture, it is the translator's duty to mediate and transpose it into an appropriate form in the target language and culture without distorting the intended function. Moreover, the ways people produce and receive texts follow conventions vary from culture to culture, the practice of translation is more than just language transfer and should be described as a cross-cultural event (Snell-Hornby, 1988). Accordingly, the translator is regarded as an intercultural mediator who not only possesses proficiency in the source language and the target language but also have a profound knowledge of both cultures. As a result, intercultural competence (ICC) emerges in virtually all current definitions as an important and indispensable sub-competence of translation competence (Eyckmans et al., 2009).

## ***The significance of intercultural communicative competence in translation***

For a long time, the focus of translation practice has been on translation equivalence and the translatability/untranslatability of language, as proposed by Nida (1964) and Newmark (1981) as notable theorists in the Translation Studies. Ethnocentrism existed in the field, so the knowledge of the target language and culture was thought to guarantee the quality of translation until the emergence of a poly-system theory initiated by Even-Zohar's (1979) ground-breaking work on the interplay between diachronic (historical) and synchronic (contemporary) dimensions. Since then, elements of socio-cultural systems such as gender, youth, power, cultural identity and ideology have been recognized by translation scholars and cross-cultural aspects has become one of the most significant emphasis in translation practice (Snell-Hornby, 1988; Bassnett, 1991).

In fact, the text production has embedded in itself the idiosyncratic collection of social, socio-cultural, political and ideological characteristics. After translated, the text is received by readers who possess different standards of socio-cultural norms, beliefs, and values. Therefore, without the proficiency of language and culture mediation, the translator might fail to convey the full layers of meanings and functions intended in the source text. As a result, student translators need to obtain the understanding of cultural differences to improve intercultural competence combined with the knowledge of translation strategies in order to handle translation problems effectively.

### ***Challenges of cultural translation***

Translating a text in source language into target language is not simply finding a synonyms or equivalents in both languages. The first challenge when transposing a text from one language to another is to make a decision whether to apply "free" or "literal" translation (Katan, 2015, p.76). If following "literal" strategy, the

translator will translate the text word by word. In translation studies, literal translation is often associated with scientific, technical, technological or legal texts. For example, a contract or a manual should be literally transferred from one language to another. However, for non-technical texts, literal translation usually fails to convey the meaning, making it unintelligible (Munday, 2016). If a piece of writing like a poem or a novel is translated word by word, the result would be misleading and confusing. Therefore, in order to convey the meaning satisfactorily, the translator needs to encode the message in the source culture and decode it for the target culture (Huertas-Barros et al., 2019). For example, Vietnamese people might say “vui như Tết” which can be literally translated as “as fun as Tết”. This can cause difficulties for people from a different culture who has little or no understanding about Tet, the biggest festival in Vietnam.

### ***Equivalentents across cultures in translation***

In fact, word for word translation is powerless in situations where equivalentents are not available across languages (Maitland, 2017). The translation process has to encounter the non-equivalence between two languages, which puts the translators in the dilemma of the suitable choices to keep the forms or the meanings. However, the linguistic components of a language differ from those of others; therefore, translators should consider the functions of the expressions on the target language to mitigate the problems including linguistic problems, cultural transference problems, cultural-specific words, and idioms and proverbs.

### ***Linguistic problems***

It is noticeable that each language has a distinct grammatical system including syntax and morphology. People usually refer grammar to rules. However, these rules are not fixed as languages evolved over time (Baker, 2020). As a case in point, English has tenses which are not grammatically expressed in Vietnamese. The sentence “I had my breakfast at 8:00 am” and “I have already had

my breakfast” can be translated similarly in Vietnamese. Moreover, the progressive tense in the sentences “I am going to school by bike today.” and “I am going to the zoo tomorrow.” cannot just be translated using “đang” in Vietnamese.

### *Cultural transference problems*

Cultural transference can cause challenges to translator as many words have different meanings in different languages and cultures (Colina, 2015). The word “uncle” in English must be very carefully considered in context to decide whether the equivalent should be “chú”, “cậu”, “dượng”, hay “bác”. Similarly, “chú Năm hàng xóm” in Vietnamese does not refer to any uncle but should be understood as “Mr. Nam, the neighbor”. These examples are among countless cases related to the use of appropriate pronominalization in which a simple equivalent cannot satisfactorily solve the translation problem. The choices of words are supposed to take the roles and the sense of familiarity of the target cultures into consideration.

### *Culture-specific words*

Culture-specific items are concepts that exist in a certain culture. Normally, a word can have various connotations (Maitland, 2017). For example, the word “đậu” in Vietnamese can be translated into English as “bean”, “pass the exam”, or “perch” depending on the context. However, this word can have a specific connotation related to culture. If someone says “ngốc như vợ thằng Đậu”, the translation “as silly as Mr. Bean’s wife” can cause misunderstanding and confusion. This is because the reader may not have any background knowledge about the story of Mr. Đậu or Mr. Bean’s family in Vietnam, which presents the two characters, Mr. Đậu and his wife, as very silly and innocent farmers. “Vợ thằng Đậu” in this case is a culture-specific word. Likewise, when Japanese people say “Miai,” they mean to talk about a formal occasion when the prospective bride and her family meet the prospective bridegroom and his family for the first time. Vietnamese translation is “Lễ dạm ngõ”, but there is no clear equivalent in English as they do not have this specific event in their culture.

## *Idioms and proverbs*

Idioms and proverbs are challenging to translators due to the fact that culture always contributes to the language users' cognition towards them (Mooriken et al., 2019). For example, when Vietnamese people say “Cố công mài sắt có ngày nên kim” (literally translated as “if you sharpen an iron bar hard and long enough, it will become a needle some day), an English equivalent which is immediately used for translation is “when there’s a will, there’s a way”. However, the English equivalent cannot express the story underlying this idiom. With this story also lies the history of Vietnam being invaded by China, which leads to the deep impact of Chinese values on Vietnamese culture. Obviously, a simple equivalent in English cannot delivered all aspects of such an idiom.

Another example is the proverb “birds of a feather flock together” which is translated as “ngưu tầm ngưu, mã tầm mã” in Vietnamese. Although both the source language and the translation version had similar meaning, the metaphors in different languages use different symbolic animals to refer to the implicit meaning. In this case, while birds appear in the English proverb, the buffalo and horse are used in Vietnamese version.

Apart from such categories, culture also plays a significant role in terms related to colloquial expressions, slangs, onomatopoeic, humorous expressions, and cultural lexical associated to culinary, fashion, music, and more. The translator, without intercultural competence, the translator is likely to expose themselves to numerous challenges when dealing with cross-cultural translation.

## **Functionalism in translation quality assessment**

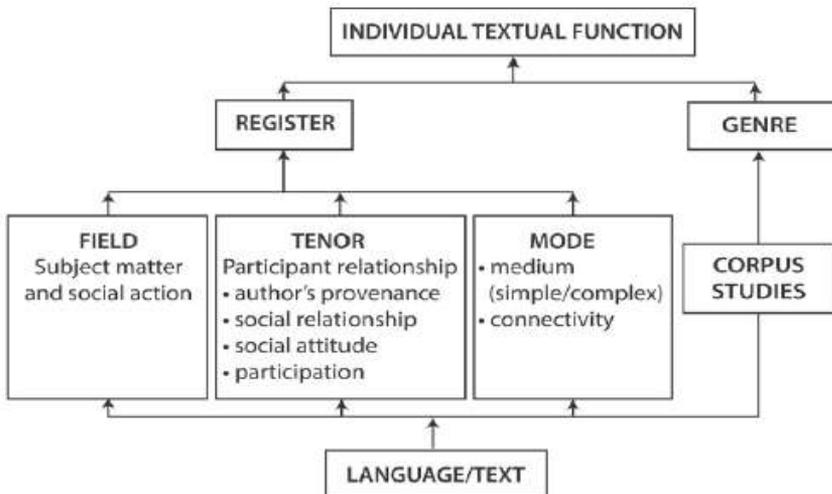
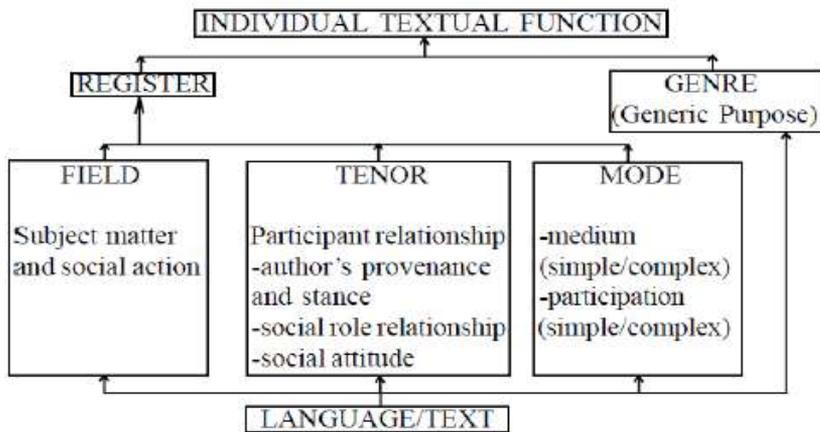
With a recognition of the importance of intercultural competence as an indispensable part of translation competence, recent scholars have developed models and framework to assess translation quality with an emphasis on the cultural aspects. The development of the translation assessment frameworks have changed from form-based into meaning-based models. The concept of meanings

in translation assessment is also a controversial issue that spurred a notable interest among scholars. The studies on the translation assessment in the recent decades have put more emphasis on the significance of the language use rather than the language form. The idea of Austin (1960) on the speech act theory guides the succeeding studies on the function of the language use, which is not just about stating the truth or falseness. It is claimed that language is used to perform the function via the communicative force or illocutionary force. The concentration is shifted to be on the purpose of uttering the expressions. The approaches of functionalism in language studies and translation studies have been followed by several research studies (Newmark, 1988; House, 2015; Munday, 2016; Katan, 2015; Baker, 2020) to re-define the nature of translation and orient the process of translation quality assessment.

In 2014, Koby, Fields, Hague, Lommel, and Melby suggested applying Garvin's (1984) framework into translation quality assessment. Garvin's framework is a well-known one including five complementary approaches to defining quality which can be seen in different fields of philosophy, economics, marketing, operations management, and finance. Five approaches are known as the transcendent approach, the product-based approach, the user-based approach, the manufacturing-based approach or the production-based approach, and the value-based approach. When reviewing the relevance of the five approaches to translation, the authors emphasized that the quality of translation practice is not simply accuracy and fluent. In other words, that a translated text is exceedingly accurate and beautifully fluent does not mean it automatically fulfills its function. To perform such a function, a translator needs to consider the audience's reading ability, perception, and cognition, and sociocultural impacts.

Lommel and Melby (2015) proposed the Multidimensional Quality Metrics (MQM) framework which provides a flexible way to develop metrics appropriate for different types of translations and tie them to requester and user expectations. The framework looks

into such dimensions as fluency, accuracy, verity, design, and internationalization. Cultural aspects are embedded in the dimensions mentioned. For example, accuracy refers to the consistency of meaning between source and target content, and verity is the appropriateness of text for the environment in which it will be used.



**FIGURE 1** House's 1997 and 2015 schemes for analyzing and comparing original and translation texts compared

In this model, the Source Text and the Target Text are compared on three levels of Language/Text, Register including three components of field, tenor and mode, and Genre. House (1977) asserted that the essence of translation lied with the transferring meaning across the two languages and preserving the meaning in three basic aspects: Semantic, Pragmatic and Textual aspect. Based on this, she developed a scheme for translation quality assessment which was originally developed in 1997 and later revised in 2015. House's framework is of functionalism to put emphasis on the real-world purpose of an act rather than the forms of expressions. The former model concentrates on the textual levels to work out the equivalence in terms of grammatical structures and lexical resources with little regards to the purposeful expressions. The notion of "cultural filter" has been introduced to translation evaluation to signify the importance of cultural awareness and intercultural competence of translators in possession of cultural sensitivity to identify the gap between source language texts and target language texts (House, 2015, p.67). This idea has strengthened the needs for translators' intercultural communicative competence to ensure the probability of acceptance of the translated versions. The success of translation is not limited to the expressions in the target language; it depends on the possibility of conveying the intended messages of the authors with the closest emotional and ideological performance. Both illocutionary and perlocutionary speech acts are taken into considerations to transfer the primary purpose and the same effects on the readers of the target language (Bittner, 2020; Paltridge, 2012). Therefore, the intercultural communicative competence is indispensable for translators in translation quality assessment to fully observe the appropriateness of expressions and the transference of the original feelings that the authors aims to convey to the readers such as in criticism, appraisal, or compliments. The lack of this competence can lead to translators' subjectivity in examining the translation based on personal assumptions and previous exposure rather than standing the audiences' shoes.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

The field of translations has spread rapidly according to the development of the digital era and the context of globalization. This trend has required translators to obtain more qualities to assure the effectiveness of their professional performance in translation assessments. First, it is recommended that translators should improve their linguistic competence in both source text and target texts to identify the appropriate expressions in equivalence between two languages. It is essential to guarantee the ability to fully express an utterance in other languages. Second, culturally specific items such as idioms, proverbs, or figures of speech requires the intercultural awareness to mitigate the dependence on the source language to pay more attention to the target language adaptability. Third, the intercultural communicative competence is mandatory for translators in translation quality assessment to critically opt for the appropriate transference from the source texts. This compulsory component puts responsibility on translators to develop personal cultural sensitivity and exposure to fully understand the target language's identities. Hence, it may be beneficial to reduce misunderstanding and cultural miscommunication among translators in translations and assessment.

## **CONCLUSION**

The study of the intercultural communicative competence is not a new topic in language studies but still significant in the field of translation and especially translation quality assessment. The mastery of functional transference between the source language and the target language contributes to ensuring the higher degree of effectiveness in translation rather than the concentration on linguistic transference with the low level of naturalness. Translation quality assessment adopts the intercultural communicative competence as a torch to determine the appropriateness of a translated text in the target language.

## AUTHOR

Tri Minh Nguyen is a Master Candidate in TESOL at Edith Cowan University. He is also an Academic Director at The V Language. His research interests cover discourse analysis, intercultural communication, and translation and interpretation.

Dr. Trang Xuan Phuong Dao is currently a lecturer at English Department, Ho Chi Minh University of Education. She is also a General Director of ESTAR Center. Her research interests cover teaching methodology, assessment and CALL.

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# CHINESE LINGUISTICS AND EDUCATION

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# The Translation and Instruction of Separable Words

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**Han Ly Uy Nguyen**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam

*han.nlu@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

The article explores the grammatical features of Verb-Object Separable Word (encoded into AB, when A is the verb and B is the object). Adding 了, 着, 过, 的 to create A + 了 + B, A + 着 + B, A + 过 + B, A + 的 + B and the translation of these forms into Vietnamese. The form A + 了 + B, 了 is translated to "đã" before AB or translated to "rồi", "xong" after AB. In the form A + 过 + B, 过 is translated to "đã từng" before AB or translated to "xong" after AB. For A + 着 + B, 着 is translated to "đang" before AB. As for A + 的 + B, there is no corresponding translation in Vietnamese. Furthermore, the paper aims to investigate errors when using the 4 forms above of 80 elementary level students and compares their errors with 30 Vietnamese students in China to find out the similarities and differences that cause mistakes when using the Verb-Object Separable Word of these two groups of subjects. Thus, the research would give some recommendations in teaching Separable Words for Chinese-majored students.

**Key words:** *auxiliary, Separable word, verb - Object word*

# TỪ LI HỢP CHEN TRỢ TỪ 了, 着, 过, 的 VÀ CÁCH DỊCH SANG TIẾNG VIỆT

TS. Nguyễn Lý Uy Hân  
Trường Đại Học Mở Tp.Hồ Chí Minh

## Tóm tắt

Bài viết tìm hiểu đặc điểm ngữ pháp của Từ Li Hợp (TLH) kết cấu động tân (mã hóa thành AB, với A là động từ và B là tân ngữ) chen 了, 着, 过, 的 vào giữa, tạo nên A+了+B, A+着+B, A+过+B, A+的+B và cách dịch tương ứng của các hình thức này sang tiếng Việt. Với hình thức A+了+B thì 了 được dịch thành “đã” đặt trước AB hoặc được dịch thành “rồi”, “xong” đặt sau AB. Với hình thức A+过+B thì 过 được dịch thành “đã/đã từng/từng” đặt trước AB hoặc được dịch thành “xong” đặt sau AB. Với A+着+B thì 着 được dịch thành “đang” đặt trước AB. Riêng với A+的+B thì tiếng Việt không có cách dịch tương ứng. Tiếp theo bài viết khảo sát lỗi sai khi sử dụng bốn hình thức trên của 80 sinh viên (SV) trình độ sơ cấp ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc (NNTQ) và tiến hành đối sánh lỗi sai của nhóm SV này với 30 du học sinh Việt Nam tại Trung Quốc, với mục đích tìm hiểu những nhân tố giống nhau và khác nhau gây nên lỗi sai khi sử dụng TLH của hai nhóm khách thể này. Từ đó thử đưa ra một vài kiến nghị về việc giảng dạy TLH cho SV ngành NNTQ.

***Từ khóa:** Trợ từ, Từ Li Hợp, Từ Li Hợp kết cấu động tân*

## 1. Một số đặc điểm của Từ li hợp liên quan bài nghiên cứu

TLH là hiện tượng ngôn ngữ đặc biệt của tiếng Trung hiện đại bởi hai lẽ, một là về hình thức có thể “li” hay một số TLH giản lược đi ngữ tố phía sau, đảo vị trí của ngữ tố phía sau ra phía trước nhưng vẫn được gọi là từ. Hai là về mặt ý nghĩa, dù được sử dụng ở dạng “li” thì ý nghĩa vẫn không thay đổi. Vì giữa từ và ngữ của tiếng Trung không có ranh giới xác định cụ thể, nên với đặc điểm trên TLH vừa có đặc điểm của từ vừa có đặc điểm của ngữ, tức liên quan

cả về từ pháp và cú pháp. Trong lĩnh vực giảng dạy tiếng Trung cho người nước ngoài, Li Qinghua gọi là Từ đặc biệt có thể mở rộng (特殊的词”、“能扩展的词).

TLH ở trạng thái “hợp” có ba đặc điểm chính là, đa phần không mang tân ngữ như: 睡觉, 洗澡; một số ít chỉ trạng thái/hoạt động tâm lý như 担心, 操心, chỉ nơi chốn hay mục tiêu đề cập đến như 移民, 留学 hay chỉ đối tượng của hành vi động tác như 劳驾, 命名… thì có thể mang tân ngữ; một số kiêm chức năng của tính từ, phó từ, danh từ như 很吃惊, 当面说清楚, 这个发言.

TLH ở trạng thái “li” thường được xếp từ ba đến sáu loại tùy theo góc độ tiếp cận của các nhà nghiên cứu hay ngữ liệu mà họ có được. Qua nghiên cứu từ góc độ giảng dạy tiếng Trung cho người nước ngoài, chúng tôi tạm xếp thành năm nhóm: chen trợ từ, chen định ngữ, chen bổ ngữ, lặp lại và đảo ngữ<sup>1</sup>.

Thứ tự	Hình thức “li” của TLH		Một số ví dụ
1	trợ từ	A+了/着/过/的+B	洗了澡、帮着忙、吃过亏、打的仗
2	lặp lại	A 重叠+B	帮一帮忙、跑跑步
3	bổ ngữ	A+补语+B	洗完澡、睡好觉、着急起来、上不了当、吃尽了苦
	định ngữ	A+个+B	洗个澡、帮个忙
		A+数词+B	见两面、睡一觉
		A+数量短语+B	洗五分钟澡、吹几次牛、拐了两个弯、干了第二杯

<sup>1 1</sup> Xem thêm: 阮李威新. 对越汉语教学中的离合词研究. 华中师范大学博士学位论文, 2019.

4		A+名词/代词 (的) +B	保什么密、担什么心、洗热水澡、聊你们的天儿、帮过他的忙、帮着办公室的忙
		A+形容词 (+的) +B	帮大忙、聊闲天儿
		A+动词性成分 (+的) +B	吃管闲事的亏、请探亲的假
5	đảo ngữ	B+A	连澡也不洗、当也上了、假也不请、把音录下来

Trong thực tế, số lượng từ ngữ được sử dụng như là TLH ngày càng nhiều, vì vậy việc xác định số lượng TLH vẫn chưa đạt được sự thống nhất trong giới nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc. Lý do, bởi TLH là từ diễn tả hoạt động cá nhân diễn ra hằng ngày, nên nó được sử dụng nhiều trong khẩu ngữ, vì vậy cách sử dụng của TLH rất đa dạng, phong phú. Theo 《现代汉语词典》(第七版) thì sử dụng “//” để xác định là TLH, vì vậy có khi cùng là một từ/ngữ nhưng với ý nghĩa này là TLH nhưng với ý nghĩa khác không phải là TLH. Ví dụ: 吃饭, 拐弯.

Qua rà soát các giáo trình tiếng Trung phổ biến tại Việt Nam như 《博雅汉语》、《对外汉语本科系列教程》、《发展汉语》... hay bảng từ vựng của 《新大纲》, các tài liệu ôn tập HSK bao gồm các đề thi HSK sơ cấp, HSK trung cấp, HSK cao cấp, chúng tôi phát hiện chỉ tồn tại một dạng TLH kết cấu động tân hay TLH được sử dụng như một kết cấu động tân.<sup>2</sup> Ví dụ: 他向我问了一声好; 他都不着急, 你着什么急? ; 倒大霉.

## 2. Hình thức chen trợ từ và cách dịch tương ứng

Bài viết lần lượt trình bày bốn hình thức chen trợ từ A+了+B, A+着+B, A+过+B, A+的+B và so sánh cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt.

<sup>2</sup> Xem thêm: 阮李威新. 对越汉语教学中的离合词研究. 华中师范大学博士学位论文, 2019.

## 2.1. Hình thức A+ 了+B và cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt

Trong tiếng Trung hiện đại, trợ từ động thái 了 đặt phía sau động từ để diễn tả động tác hoặc sự thay đổi đã xảy ra hoặc đã hoàn thành. Nếu động từ mang tân ngữ thì 了 đặt trước tân ngữ, tức với TLH thì 了 đặt trước B. 了 có thể diễn tả động tác hay sự thay đổi ở quá khứ, hiện tại hay tương lai, nói cách khác 了 không bị chi phối về mặt thời gian. Ví dụ:

① 2010年大学毕业后我们便结了婚。

② 这次又是我的室友给我帮了忙。

Hình thức A+了+B có hai cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt: một là, khi muốn diễn tả trạng thái của sự việc hay động tác đã xảy ra hoặc đã thành hiện thực mà dẫn đến trạng thái hoặc động tác trước mắt có thay đổi, tức liên hệ đến thời gian ở quá khứ, hiện tại thì hoặc 了 được dịch thành phó từ “đã” đặt trước AB hoặc 了 được dịch thành hư từ “rồi” đặt sau AB. Đôi lúc để nhấn mạnh về mặt ý nghĩa thì 了 được dịch thành phó từ “đã” đặt trước AB và hư từ “rồi” đặt sau AB. Hai là, khi muốn diễn tả sự việc đã hoàn thành hoặc đã thực hiện và diễn tả trạng thái hay động tác giả thiết, tức động tác trước hoàn thành sẽ xuất hiện sự việc khác hay động tác trước là tiền đề của động tác sau, thì 了 được dịch thành “xong” đặt sau AB.

Chen trợ từ	Tiếng Trung	Tiếng Việt
了	A + 了 + B	đã + AB (+ rồi) AB + rồi AB + xong

Ví dụ:

③ 这个平安电话使我放了心。

Cuộc điện thoại bình an khiến tôi (đã) yên tâm (rồi).

④ 他理了发，就出门去了。

Anh ấy cắt tóc xong thì đi ra ngoài rồi.

## 2.2. Hình thức A+着+B và cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt

Trong tiếng Trung hiện đại, trợ từ 着 đặt liền kề sau động từ và thường mang bốn ý nghĩa sau: 1. Động tác đang tiến hành; 2. Sự duy trì của trạng thái; 3. Tạo thành thể liên động; 4. Dùng trong câu tồn hiện. Với TLH thì 着 được sử dụng nhiều ở ba ý nghĩa đầu.

Ví dụ:

- ① 这事爸爸一直为你**保着密**呢。
- ② 我走进房间的时候，大姐正**生着气**，饭放在一边，动也没动一下。
- ③ 我们**排着队**进博物馆参观。

Hình thức A+着+B có cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt là sử dụng phó từ “đang” đặt trước kết cấu AB. Tuy vậy, đôi khi A+着+B không trực tiếp diễn tả động tác đang tiến hành hay sự duy trì của trạng thái, nói cách khác, việc diễn tả động tác đang tiến hành hay sự duy trì của trạng thái do thành phần khác trong câu đảm nhận, chẳng hạn 正/正在/在……呢、还在……呢、现在、的……时候… thì cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt có thể lược bỏ phó từ “đang”.

Chen trợ từ	Tiếng Trung	Tiếng Việt
着	A + 着 + B	đang + AB AB + thành phần khác thành phần khác + AB

Ví dụ:

- ④ 他默默地**发着愁**。

Ông ấy **đang** âm thầm **buồn rầu**.

- ⑤ 这座山很高，村长提醒我们爬山**的时候留着神**。

Ngọn núi này rất cao, trưởng thôn nhắc nhở chúng tôi cẩn thận **khi** leo núi.

### 2.3. Hình thức A+过+B và cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt

Trong tiếng Trung hiện đại, trợ từ 过 đặt liền kề sau động từ, thường mang hai ý nghĩa sau: 1. Trước đây từng trải qua sự việc nào đó, trong câu có thể sử dụng thêm phó từ 曾, 曾经 đặt trước động từ; 2. Động tác hoàn tất, khi đó trong câu có thể sử dụng thêm phó từ 已经, 刚 và trợ từ ngữ khí 了... Hình thức phủ định của A+过+B là A+没[有]+动词+过+B. TLH khi chen 过 cũng sử dụng tương tự.

Ví dụ:

- ① 小刘吃过亏, 现在聪明多了。
- ② 你看, 我方已经让过步了, 不能再让了。

Hình thức A+过+B có hai cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt: một là, khi muốn nhấn mạnh trước đây từng trải qua sự việc nào đó thì sử dụng phó từ “đã/đã từng/từng” đặt trước AB, tức đã/đã từng/từng +AB; hai là, sử dụng hư từ “xong” đặt phía sau AB diễn tả động tác hoàn tất. Hình thức phủ định tương ứng sẽ là A+chưa/chưa từng+B.

Chen trợ từ	Tiếng Trung	Tiếng Việt
过	A + 过 B	đã (từng)/từng + AB AB + xong

Ví dụ:

- ③ 我曾在那个 小村干过活。  
Tôi **từng làm việc** ở thôn nhỏ đó。
- ④ 也许是他刚理过发的缘故吧, 我觉得他这会儿特别帅。

Có lẽ là do anh ấy vừa **cắt tóc xong**, tôi lúc này cảm thấy anh ấy rất đẹp trai.

## 2.4 Hình thức A+的+B và cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt

Trong tiếng Trung hiện đại, trợ từ 的 thường mang hai ý nghĩa sau: 1. Động tác đã hoàn thành, không duy trì tiếp; 2. Nhấn mạnh thời gian, địa điểm, phương thức, mục đích, chủ thể tác động, vật thể chịu tác động... đã xảy ra hoặc hoàn thành. Hình thức diễn tả này khi ở thể khẳng định đôi lúc có thể lược bỏ 是, nhưng khi ở thể phủ định thì không thể lược bỏ 是. Với TLH thì đặt tân ngữ phía sau 的, tức A+的+B, diễn tả người nói muốn nhấn mạnh đối với sự việc, nói cách khác, diễn đạt ý chủ quan của người nói.

Ví dụ:

- ① 刚来越南时，我们听不懂本地人说的话。
- ② 小李，你是什么时候失的业？

Hình thức A+的+B không có cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt. Vì vậy khi dịch vẫn giữ nguyên hình thức AB, tức sử dụng các từ ngữ khác trong câu để diễn tả ý nghĩa nhấn mạnh.

Chen trợ từ	Tiếng Trung	Tiếng Việt
的	A+的+B	AB

Ví dụ:

- ③ 你们和我当年在国外吃的苦没法比。

Năm đó ở nước ngoài các bạn và tôi chịu vô số khổ.

- ④ 你说说，小丽是怎么上的当？

Anh nói xem, Tiểu Lệ tại sao bị lừa?

- ⑤ 你向谁请的假？

Anh xin phép ai?

## 3. Những lỗi sai thường gặp khi dịch sang tiếng Việt

Chúng tôi sử dụng dữ liệu 80 SV ngành NNTQ của trường Đại

học Mở Tp.HCM, trường Đại học Khoa học Xã hội và Nhân văn Tp.HCM làm chủ thể khảo sát chính và sử dụng dữ liệu 30 lưu học sinh Việt Nam tại trường Đại học Sư phạm Hoa Trung, trường Đại học Vũ Hán, trường Đại học Khoa học kỹ thuật Hoa Trung để so sánh. Với nhóm SV ngành NNTQ, chúng tôi căn cứ vào lượng TLH trong các giáo trình SV đã và đang học cũng như số lượng TLH trong 《新大纲》 quyết định chọn SV năm thứ hai làm chủ thể nghiên cứu và xem trình độ tiếng Trung của nhóm khách thể này tương đồng với các lưu học sinh đã học một năm tiếng Trung và/hoặc có chứng chỉ HSK cấp độ 4. Mục đích nghiên cứu của chúng tôi muốn tìm nguyên nhân lỗi sai của SV ngành NNTQ khi sử dụng TLH chen vào bốn hình thức trợ từ: A+了+B, A+着+B, A+过+B, A+的+B, sau đó kiểm chứng với kết quả thu được từ nhóm lưu học sinh để tìm ra những lỗi sai tương đồng và dị biệt giữa hai nhóm, từ đó thử đề xuất kiến nghị về giảng dạy TLH cho SV ngành NNTQ.

Bài viết chọn các TLH có tần suất sử dụng sử dụng tương đối cao như 见面, 聊天, 生气, 起床, 报名, 担心, 游泳, 帮忙 tiến hành khảo sát, và để phù hợp với trình độ của SV, từng câu hỏi chỉ chen vào một hình thức “li”. Kết quả phân tích chỉ ra rằng, lỗi sai chủ yếu của 80 SV trình độ sơ cấp là chưa phân biệt được TLH và động từ song âm tiết mang tân ngữ, nên chưa biết cách sử dụng chen thành phần khác vào giữa AB. Với các TLH mà tần suất xuất hiện nhiều trong các giáo trình hay các sách HSK như 见面, 聊天 thì tỷ lệ trả lời đúng lần lượt là 75%, 55%, còn các TLH có hình thức chen vào sử dụng tương đối ít gặp thì tỷ lệ trả lời đúng chưa đến 50%, cá biệt 生气 có tỷ lệ trả lời đúng chỉ 35%.

**Bảng 3.1 Tỷ lệ trả lời đúng của SV ngành NNTQ**

Hình thức chen vào	câu	Câu khảo sát	% trả lời đúng
A+了+B	1	我们终于在北京见了面。	75%
	2	听说要去桂林, 我第一个报了名。	45%
A+着+B	3	我看到小玉正跟小红开心地聊着天儿。	55%
	4	你先别去问他, 他正生着气呢。	35%
A+过+B	5	回到家后, 她一直睡到现在, 就没起过床。	46%
	6	他很听话, 一放学就回家, 从来没让父母担过心。	42%
A+的+B	7	你们俩为了一些小事情而生的气, 值得吗?	46%
	8	你们什么时候去游的泳? 怎么不叫上我啊?	42%

Bảng 3.2 bên dưới chỉ ra với bốn hình thức chen vào này, tỷ lệ trả lời đúng của lưu học sinh so với SV ngành NNTQ có những khác biệt. Ngoại trừ câu 5 回到家后, 她一直睡到现在, 就没起过床 có tỷ lệ trả lời đúng bằng nhau là 46%, thì ba hình thức A+了+B, A+着+B, A+过+B tỷ lệ trả lời đúng của lưu học sinh cao hơn SV ngành NNTQ. Điều này có thể lý giải, các TLH và hình thức chen vào có tần suất xuất hiện nhiều trong cuộc sống hằng ngày, nên lưu học sinh tận dụng tốt môi trường ngôn ngữ vào việc học tập, việc diễn đạt bằng ngôn ngữ nói tốt hơn. Nhưng bảng 3.2 cũng chỉ ra rằng với hình thức A+的+B tương đối ít gặp, cần vận dụng yếu tố ngữ pháp và không có hình thức dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt, thì tỷ lệ trả lời đúng của lưu học sinh thấp hơn SV ngành NNTQ, 生的气, 游的泳 lần lượt là 40% < 46% và 40% < 42%. Điều này có thể lý giải là SV ngành NNTQ có kiến thức ngữ pháp tương đối tốt hơn lưu học sinh dù tỷ lệ trả lời đúng vẫn chưa cao.

**Bảng 3.2 So sánh tỷ lệ trả lời đúng giữa SV ngành NNTQ và lưu học sinh**

Câu	Hình thức chen vào	SV ngành NNTQ	Lưu học sinh
1	见了面	75%	85%
2	报了名	45%	50%
3	聊着天	55%	60%
4	生着气	35%	45%
5	没起过床	46%	46%
6	没让父母担过心	42%	48%
7	生的气	46%	40%
8	游的泳	42%	40%

#### **4. Nguyên nhân dẫn đến lỗi sai và đề xuất hướng tiếp cận giảng dạy TLH**

##### **4.1. Nguyên nhân dẫn đến lỗi sai**

Qua nghiên cứu chúng tôi nhận thấy có ba nguyên nhân sau:

Nguyên nhân thứ nhất là ảnh hưởng ngôn ngữ thứ nhất (母语负迁移), tức tiếng Việt. Các SV năm hai với trình độ tiếng Trung chưa cao nên chưa hiểu rõ cấu tạo từ dẫn đến chưa vận dụng tốt trong quá trình học, quá trình giao tiếp, vì vậy mắc các lỗi sai. Cụ thể, TLH có hình thức “li” chen thành phần khác vào nhưng tiếng Việt không có hình thức chia tách này. Với bốn hình thức của TLH chen vào các trợ từ nêu trên, tiếng Việt có hình thức dịch khác nhau dẫn đến SV lúng túng khi diễn đạt.

Nguyên nhân thứ hai đến từ môi trường thực hành ngôn ngữ (语言环境). TLH khi “li” chủ yếu diễn tả hoạt động cá nhân diễn ra hằng ngày, nên thiên về xu hướng khẩu ngữ, vì vậy cách sử dụng

của nó đa dạng, phong phú. SV ngành NNTQ thiếu hẳn môi trường ngôn ngữ thực tế để tiến hành giao lưu, tiếp thu, thấm thấu cách diễn đạt khẩu ngữ một cách tự nhiên nếu so với lưu học sinh.

Nguyên nhân thứ ba đến từ cách trình bày chưa thống nhất của các giáo trình tiếng Trung và của 《新大纲》. Ví dụ 《博雅汉语》 và 《对外汉语本科系列教程》 giải thích về TLH còn sơ lược. 《博雅汉语》 giới thiệu đơn giản “Trong tiếng Trung có một số động từ khi sử dụng có thể chen vào “了”, “过”, ngữ số lượng... những từ như vậy gọi là TLH. TLH nhìn chung không thể mang tân ngữ.” 《对外汉语本科系列教程》 giải thích TLH “TLH là chỉ một số động từ song âm tiết có kết cấu động tân, nó có đặc điểm của từ cũng có một số hình thức “li”...”. Cả hai bộ giáo trình trên chỉ giải thích một lần TLH trong tất cả các tập chứ không xem TLH là nội dung cần giảng giải từ căn bản đến nâng cao. Bên cạnh đó, trong bảng từ vựng của 《新大纲》 không có chú thích, ký hiệu sự khác nhau giữa TLH và động từ song âm tiết khác. Điều này gây khó khăn nhất định cho người mới học tiếng Trung.

#### **4.2. Hướng tiếp cận giảng dạy Từ li hợp**

Với hai nguyên nhân đầu, chúng tôi thử đề xuất phương pháp tiếp cận giảng dạy như sau: SV ở giai đoạn đầu do trình độ tiếng Trung còn hạn chế, chịu ảnh hưởng cách diễn đạt của tiếng mẹ đẻ, chưa phân biệt được cách sử dụng của động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ và TLH, vì vậy trong giờ học giảng viên cần giảng giải, củng cố ngữ pháp của động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ và cách dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt trước, rồi từng bước giảng giải ngữ pháp của TLH xuất hiện trong bài và hình thức dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt. Lấy ví dụ trường hợp động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ và 了, trước hết giảng viên nên so sánh động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ của tiếng Trung khi sử dụng với 了 rồi đối chiếu với đặc điểm ngữ pháp của tiếng Việt. Chẳng hạn trong tiếng Trung khi diễn tả động tác hoặc sự thay đổi đã xảy ra hoặc đã hoàn thành thì đặt 了 sau động từ, nhưng trong tiếng Việt thì sử dụng phó từ chỉ thời

gian “**đã**” đặt trước động từ, hư từ “**rồi**” đặt sau tân ngữ, tiếp theo giảng viên mới so sánh với đặc điểm hình thức “**li**” của TLH khi chen 了 vào và so sánh khi dịch sang tiếng Việt. Chúng tôi nghĩ, cách giảng dạy này vừa giúp SV củng cố lại kiến thức đã học của động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ vừa từng bước tiếp nhận kiến thức mới của TLH, từ đó hiểu và vận dụng được đặc điểm và quy luật của TLH, tránh những lỗi sai không đáng có khi sử dụng chúng. Tình huống giảng dạy so sánh này áp dụng tương tự cho động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ khi sử dụng với 着/过/的 và TLH khi sử dụng với 着/过/的. Ví dụ với 帮助了 dịch sang tiếng Việt là thêm phó từ “**đã**” vào trước động từ 帮助, với 帮了我很多忙 dịch sang tiếng Việt là thêm phó từ “**đã**” đứng trước hình thức “**li**” của 帮了我很多忙, như vậy SV từng bước nhận dạng, hiểu và vận dụng được TLH.

**Bảng 4.1 Động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ - cách dịch so sánh với TLH - cách dịch**

Động từ thông thường và hình thức dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt	TLH và hình thức dịch tương ứng sang tiếng Việt
我对中国历史产生了兴趣。 Tôi <b>đã</b> trở nên hứng thú với lịch sử Trung Quốc.	我才跑了步，不想再跑了。 Tôi vừa chạy bộ <b>rồi</b> , không muốn chạy nữa.
我不是帮助了你吗？ Tôi chẳng phải <b>đã</b> giúp đỡ anh sao？	老师帮了我很多忙。 Thầy <b>đã</b> giúp tôi rất nhiều.
去年我参观过万里长城。 Năm ngoái tôi <b>từng</b> tham quan Vạn Lý Trường Thành.	最近几个月我没游过泳。 Mấy tháng gần đây tôi chưa <b>từng</b> bơi.
这个汉语节目前几天他表演过两次。 Tiết mục tiếng Trung này mấy hôm	小时候我曾在这张床上睡过觉。 Lúc nhỏ tôi <b>đã từng</b> ngủ trên

trước anh ta từng biểu diễn qua hai lần.	chiếc giường này.
作者（正）介绍着他的作品。 Tác giả <b>đang</b> giới thiệu tác phẩm của ông ấy.	奶奶生着病，别打扰她。 Bà nội <b>đang</b> bệnh, đừng làm phiền bà.
他们俩谈论着书上的内容。 Hai người họ <b>đang</b> thảo luận về nội dung trong sách.	他们一边喝着茶，一边聊着天。 Họ vừa đang uống trà vừa <b>đang</b> trò chuyện.
墙上贴着一张画。 Trên tường <b>treo</b> một bức tranh.	你们俩什么时候握的手，我怎么没看见？ Hai bạn <b>bắt tay</b> nhau khi nào vậy, tôi tại sao không nhìn thấy?

Với nguyên nhân thứ ba, giảng viên nên sử dụng ký hiệu “//” để hướng dẫn SV ghi chú vào giữa TLH. SV ở giai đoạn đầu học tiếng Trung ít có khả năng nhận biết đâu là động từ song âm thông thường và đâu là TLH, cách sử dụng ký hiệu này, một mặt giúp SV có ấn tượng với TLH, dần dà tạo “ngữ cảm” (语感) với TLH, một mặt hình thành thói quen của SV ghi ký hiệu “//” khi gặp TLH để tăng mức độ chú ý học tập, thực hành.

## 5. Kết luận

Bài viết thông qua tìm hiểu dạng “li” của TLH khi chen trợ từ 了/着/过/的 vào giữa AB cùng cách dịch sang tiếng Việt, chỉ ra ba nguyên nhân dẫn đến lỗi sai của SV khi sử dụng chúng, là ảnh hưởng ngôn ngữ thứ nhất, thiếu môi trường thực hành ngôn ngữ, trình bày chưa thống nhất về TLH của các giáo trình tiếng Trung. Thông qua kết quả nghiên cứu, chúng tôi đưa ra gợi ý giảng dạy TLH, giảng viên nên giảng giải, củng cố đặc điểm của động từ thông thường mang tân ngữ và hình thức tương ứng của nó khi dịch sang

tiếng Việt, rồi từng bước giải thích TLH AB có các hình thức chen vào và hình thức tương ứng của nó khi dịch sang tiếng Việt. Cách giảng dạy này, theo chúng tôi sẽ giúp SV củng cố kiến thức ngữ pháp đã học và từng bước tiếp cận với TLH, khắc phục đáng kể lỗi sai thường gặp. Cách tiếp cận này chúng tôi nghĩ không chỉ giúp SV trình độ sơ cấp dễ học, dễ ghi nhớ, vận dụng mà ngay cả SV trình độ trung cấp khi tiếp cận những dạng “li” phức tạp của TLH cũng sẽ dễ tiếp nhận, ghi nhớ và vận dụng.

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# Implementing Task-based Language Teaching and Writing Process in the Development of Writing Instruction Quality

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**Quyen Vy Truong**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*quyen.tv@ou.edu.vn*

## **Asbtract**

Theories and teaching methods can only result in positive effects when they are applied in specific educational environments and target learners purposefully. Through this article, we would like to explore task-based language teaching and writing process which are applied in teaching Chinese writing skills at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam. In so doing, we will examine a selection of textbooks to help learners to improve writing skills in addition to developing other language skills. We aim to bring excitement and stimulate learner creativity, thereby promoting learner agency and helping them to overcome difficulties in constructing written expressions.

**Keywords:** Task-based teaching; process-based writing; writing skill

# ỨNG DỤNG PHƯƠNG PHÁP DẠY HỌC THEO NHIỆM VỤ VÀ PHƯƠNG PHÁP DẠY VIẾT THEO QUÁ TRÌNH NHẪM NÂNG CAO CHẤT LƯỢNG GIẢNG DẠY KỸ NĂNG VIẾT

TS Trương Vỹ Quyên

Trường Đại Học Mở Tp. Hồ Chí Minh

## Tóm tắt

Các lý luận và phương pháp dạy học chỉ có thể mang lại hiệu quả khi nó được áp dụng trong môi trường dạy học nhất định và nhằm đến đối tượng người học một cách có chủ đích. Thông qua bài viết này, chúng tôi muốn tìm hiểu phương pháp dạy học theo nhiệm vụ và phương pháp dạy viết theo quá trình được ứng dụng nhiều trong giảng dạy môn kỹ năng viết ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc tại khoa Ngoại ngữ, qua đó tìm hiểu việc lựa chọn giáo trình nhằm giúp người học có thể phát triển kỹ năng viết bên cạnh việc phát triển các kỹ năng ngôn ngữ khác, đem đến sự hứng thú và kích thích sự sáng tạo của người học, để từ đó phát huy được tính tích cực chủ động của người học, cũng như khắc phục được các khó khăn trong quá trình diễn đạt ngôn ngữ bằng chữ viết.

*Từ khóa:* Dạy học theo nhiệm vụ; Viết theo quá trình; kỹ năng viết

## 1. Đặc điểm về giáo trình kỹ năng viết

Trong những năm gần đây, một số giáo trình môn kỹ năng viết đã được biên soạn theo hướng dạy học theo nhiệm vụ (The Task-based Approach) và dạy học (viết) theo quá trình (Process Writing), đây là những phương pháp tương đối tiên tiến áp dụng trong giảng dạy kỹ năng viết tại các trường đại học có môn kỹ năng viết như một phân môn độc lập. Trong các giáo trình được biên soạn bởi các học giả Trung Quốc, chúng tôi chú ý đến hai bộ giáo trình đó là: Giáo trình kỹ năng viết nằm trong bộ sách “Trải nghiệm tiếng Trung” (Experiencing Chinese) do nhà xuất bản Giáo dục đại

học ấn hành từ năm 2006, mỗi cấp độ chia thành 2 tập, gồm sơ cấp – trung cấp – cao cấp, mỗi tập gồm 15 bài; mỗi một bài bao gồm các phần: Phần khởi động (warm-up), bao gồm việc chọn từ cho các hình ảnh, dùng các từ mô tả hình ảnh, 2 người dùng lời thoại nói về nội dung hình ảnh. Tiếp theo là phần hình thức ngôn ngữ với kiến thức về các cấu trúc câu. Tiếp theo nữa là phần “Nhiệm vụ viết” (Writing Task) với việc dựa vào các câu hỏi viết câu trả lời. Sau đó là phần thảo luận và sửa lỗi câu (Discussion and Revision), bao gồm sửa chữ sai và lỗi sai của câu trả lời. Sau cùng là phần bài tập viết (Assignment) thực hiện ở nhà. Có thể nói, bộ sách viết – trải nghiệm tiếng Trung đúng như tên gọi của nó, hoàn toàn chú trọng đến quá trình từ lúc hình thành ý tưởng cho đến sắp xếp ý tưởng thành ngữ đoạn, hoàn toàn thoát ly khỏi sự chi phối của bài văn mẫu thường thấy trong một số giáo trình truyền thống. Điều này hoàn toàn điều động được sự tích cực của sinh viên, yêu cầu sinh viên phải động não, không được dựa vào những cái “có sẵn” như bài văn mẫu để vận dụng ngôn ngữ nhằm tạo ra các ý tưởng mới trong bài viết.

Giáo trình “Viết tiếng Trung theo quá trình dành cho người nước ngoài” (外国人汉语过程写作) của tác giả Yang Li của nhà xuất bản ĐH Bắc Kinh ấn hành từ năm 2006, cung cấp cho người học khá nhiều dữ liệu thông tin thông qua hàng loạt bài văn mẫu, tuy là phần đầu mỗi bài học trong giáo trình đều có đề cập đến kiến thức kỹ năng viết, nhưng theo sự quan sát của chúng tôi, người học vẫn không thực sự mặn mà với các hướng dẫn trong đó, vì theo nhận định của Zhou Hong và Bao Xu Yuan trong “Phân tích và khảo sát giáo trình viết tiếng Trung”, họ cho rằng quan điểm của tác giả biên soạn là xuất phát từ chủ nghĩa hình thức trong ngôn ngữ học và chủ nghĩa hành vi trong tâm lý học; tác giả nhấn mạnh sự mô phỏng, xem trọng kinh nghiệm, họ chủ trương thông qua việc đọc hiểu và phân tích ngữ nghĩa văn mẫu để luyện viết. Đọc giả cuối cùng là giáo viên, do giáo viên chỉ chú trọng đến thành phẩm là bài viết hoàn chỉnh nên sẽ tương đối xao nhãng các khâu trong quá

trình hình thành bài viết.<sup>3</sup> Nhiệm vụ dạy học trong giáo trình là hoàn thành câu, bài tập thay thế và mô phỏng, diễn đạt mẫu câu, sắp xếp đoạn và đọc hiểu văn bản, các dạng bài tập này nhằm mục đích nâng cao tính chuẩn xác diễn đạt của người học, nhưng ở một khía cạnh nào đó lại hạn chế rất nhiều đến tự do tư duy diễn đạt của người học.

## 2. Phương pháp dạy học theo nhiệm vụ

Phương pháp dạy học theo nhiệm vụ được phát triển trên nền tảng dạy học theo hướng giao tiếp, phương pháp căn cứ vào “các hình thức được chú ý” nảy sinh trong quá trình tương tác, tức là nhiệm vụ giao tiếp của ngôn ngữ có thể thúc đẩy quá trình thụ đắc ngôn ngữ, thông qua sự tương tác giữa người dạy và người học, quá trình hoàn thành nhiệm vụ của người học cũng là quá trình thụ đắc ngôn ngữ của người học. Lý thuyết này đầu tiên bắt nguồn từ “giả thuyết đầu vào” của Krashen<sup>4</sup>, ông cho rằng chỉ khi người học tiếp xúc được đầu vào ngôn ngữ có thể hiểu biết được, tức cao hơn trình độ hiện có đầu vào ngôn ngữ của người học, thì mới thúc đẩy được quá trình thụ đắc. Các nhà ngôn ngữ học đều cho rằng con đường quan trọng nhất để giúp cho người học có thể nắm bắt, hiểu biết được ngôn ngữ đầu vào đó là không ngừng điều chỉnh, bổ sung thông tin trong quá trình đàm thoại, khi người học hoàn thành nhiệm vụ quá trình giao tiếp cũng là đã thúc đẩy được quá trình thụ đắc ngôn ngữ. Phương pháp giảng dạy giao tiếp cho rằng mục đích của việc học ngôn ngữ là sử dụng ngôn ngữ, cho nên việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ cần phải bồi dưỡng khả năng giao tiếp của người học, nâng cao tính lưu loát khi sử dụng ngôn ngữ. Nhưng phương pháp này vì quá chú trọng yếu tố giao tiếp nên sẽ khiến cho người học quá ý lại vào chiến lược giao tiếp mà lơ là cấu trúc ngôn ngữ, từ đó sẽ khiến cho người học không thể phát triển toàn diện về hệ thống ngôn ngữ, nhất là ngôn ngữ trong kỹ năng viết lại đòi hỏi sự chặt

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<sup>3</sup> Zhou Hong, Bao Xu Yuan, “Phân tích và khảo sát giáo trình viết tiếng Trung”, Tạp chí khoa học ĐHSPT Vân Nam, số 1 năm 2012

<sup>4</sup> Dẫn lại theo Li Xiaohu, Nghiên cứu về giảng dạy kỹ năng Đọc hiểu và kỹ năng viết tiếng Trung, 239, NXB Thương vụ, 2009

chẽ, rõ ràng hơn bao giờ hết. Nhận thấy được sự bất cấp đó, các nhà ngôn ngữ học như Skehan và Willis đã đưa ra mô hình và nguyên tắc dạy học:

<b>5 nguyên tắc dạy học theo Skehan<sup>5</sup></b>	<b>5 nguyên tắc dạy học theo Willis<sup>6</sup></b>
1. Lựa chọn một số cấu trúc làm mục tiêu học tập	1. Cung cấp các tài liệu ngôn ngữ thực tế và có giá trị
2. Nhiệm vụ được chọn phải phù hợp nguyên tắc thực hành	2. Vận dụng ngôn ngữ
3. Lựa chọn một số nhiệm vụ để mục đích học ngôn ngữ đạt tới sự phát triển cân bằng	3. Các nhiệm vụ được chọn có thể kích thích được khả năng vận dụng ngôn ngữ của người học
4. Thông qua sắp xếp sự chú ý, tâm dụng tối đa sự chú ý này	4. Chú ý một số hình thức ngôn ngữ
5. Sử dụng việc đánh giá tuần hoàn	5. Đôi khi chú trọng có chủ đích vào một số hình thức ngôn ngữ

Dựa trên mô hình dạy học của Skehan và Willis, chúng ta nhận thấy rằng quá trình dạy học môn kỹ năng viết theo hướng nhiệm vụ được chia thành ba giai đoạn, đó là:

**- Giai đoạn trước nhiệm vụ:**

Trước tiên cần phải giới thiệu mục đích và ý nghĩa của nhiệm vụ viết trong bài học, kích thích sự tò mò của người học tham gia với tất cả sự nhiệt tình; tiếp theo là cung cấp các kiến thức ngôn ngữ có liên quan trong bài học; cuối cùng là thông qua việc phân tích và giải thích các bài văn mẫu, hướng sự chú ý của người học vào các cấu trúc ngôn ngữ.

**- Giai đoạn thực thi nhiệm vụ:**

Trong thời gian thực thi nhiệm vụ, giáo viên có thể yêu cầu người học nắm bắt và chú ý các cấu trúc ngôn ngữ (từ vựng, ngữ

<sup>5</sup> Skehan, P.A Cognitive Approach to Language Learning, Cambridge: CUP, 1998

<sup>6</sup> Willis, D.A Framework for Tasked-based Learning, London: Longman, 1996

pháp...) có liên quan trong bài học; khi đến khâu thảo luận và sửa lỗi sai ngôn ngữ, người học có thể căn cứ vào các yêu cầu của bài học mà học tập tương tác với nhau, để từ đó sửa lỗi câu từ cho nhau trước khi báo cáo cho giáo viên. Ở giai đoạn này, giáo viên chỉ đóng vai trò là người hướng dẫn, nhắc nhở một số hiện tượng ngôn ngữ mà người học cần chú ý, để đạt đến mục đích là sử dụng ngôn ngữ chính xác để báo cáo.

#### **- Giai đoạn củng cố và tổng kết:**

Giáo viên có thể dựa vào các lỗi sai điển đạt bằng từ vựng, mẫu câu của người học mà tiến hành góp ý sửa lỗi, thậm chí có thể đem những lỗi sai này thiết kế thành những chuyên đề dạy học để giúp người học củng cố kiến thức ngôn ngữ.

### **3. Phương pháp dạy viết theo quá trình**

Ngoài ra, trong những năm gần đây, một số giáo trình môn kỹ năng viết ở trình độ nâng cao cũng được biên soạn theo hướng viết theo quá trình (Process Writing), tôn chỉ của phương pháp này cho rằng bất kỳ việc học viết nào cũng là một quá trình tiệm tiến, quá trình này cần phải có sự giám sát và hướng dẫn của người dạy, các bước thiết lập từ ý tưởng, dàn ý và cấu trúc ngôn ngữ cần phải có ý thức học tập của người học tham gia. Lý luận của phương pháp viết theo quá trình là do hai nhà ngôn ngữ học Grabe và Kaplan đề ra<sup>7</sup>, họ cho rằng việc viết lách chỉ có thể có sự liên hệ với kinh nghiệm cuộc sống của người học mới có thể trở thành một hoạt động học tập có mục đích có ý nghĩa. Họ cho rằng nội dung giảng dạy của trường học thường tách biệt chức năng sử dụng có ý nghĩa của ngôn ngữ, biến công cụ giao tiếp thực tế của con người là ngôn ngữ thành những kiến thức khô khan khó tiếp thu trong giờ học, từ đó những kiến thức này trở thành những bài thi gây khó trong thi cử.

Căn cứ vào quan điểm dạy học của phương pháp này, chúng ta có thể thấy được việc thực hiện một bài viết được chia thành ba giai đoạn:

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<sup>7</sup> Yang Li, Lý luận và thực tiễn của phương pháp viết theo quá trình, Tạp chí giảng dạy Hán ngữ thế giới, số 1 năm 2004

### **- Giai đoạn chuẩn bị viết:**

Đầu tiên là lựa chọn các đề tài mà người học quen thuộc. Trong mỗi bài viết, giáo viên đưa ra ít nhất là 5 đề tài có liên quan cho người học lựa chọn, để thông qua việc viết lách giúp người học trình bày một cách đầy đủ quan điểm và kiến thức của mình; Sau khi đã xác định được tên đề tài, người học có thể thông qua viết tự do với việc diễn đạt các câu không có chủ đích, tức là không chú trọng đến từ vựng, ngữ pháp mà viết liên tục không cần suy nghĩ, gần giống như hiện tượng viết theo dòng chảy ý thức, để người viết không bị quá câu nệ vào các ý tưởng mà khiến cho tư duy khó liền mạch trong quá trình triển khai các ý trong bài viết; Tiếp theo là sử dụng sơ đồ tư duy (mind mapping) để viết ra các từ ngữ có liên quan đến đề tài đang viết, càng nhiều càng tốt, càng tỉ mỉ càng tốt, có thể sử dụng các ký hiệu, hình học để giúp người học ghi nhận lại các ý tưởng trong suy nghĩ, sau khi đã có sơ đồ tư duy 1, người học có thể dựa vào sơ đồ này để sắp xếp các từ ngữ, ý tưởng vào sơ đồ thứ 2. Dựa vào sơ đồ 2 này, người học có thể từng bước lập ra dàn ý gồm các bước triển khai các ý trong bài viết. Khi đã thiết lập được dàn ý gồm những ý chính cho từng đoạn, người học còn có thể dựa vào các từ ngữ trong sơ đồ tư duy để triển khai các ý bổ sung, có thể nói công cụ sơ đồ tư duy là một trong những cách hỗ trợ tích cực, giúp người học định hướng được viết về cái gì? Muốn viết về những sự việc nào? Xảy ra ở đâu? Thời điểm nào? Quá trình diễn biến sự việc? v.v... Sau khi người học đã chuẩn bị các dữ liệu xong, có thể bắt tay vào phác thảo bản nháp nội dung bài.

### **- Giai đoạn phác thảo nội dung bài viết:**

Sau khi đã thiết lập xong dàn ý, giáo viên có thể hướng dẫn người học đọc kỹ và phân tích các bài văn mẫu, tìm ra các ý chính của bài và chú trọng phân tích một số hiện tượng cấu trúc ngôn ngữ. Đặc biệt phương pháp viết theo quá trình khá chú trọng việc đọc một lượng lớn bài văn mẫu, thường là những bài viết được đánh giá tốt ở những khóa trước, hoặc đó là những tác phẩm ưu tú của lưu học sinh các nước, mục đích là để cho người học có thể dựa vào đó mà khơi dậy sự tích cực và hứng thú của bản thân mình. Đọc các bài

tham khảo, người học còn có thể tham khảo phong cách viết các thể loại văn bản khác nhau.

- **Giai đoạn chỉnh sửa bản nháp:**

Sau khi người học đã viết xong bản nháp, giáo viên có thể cho các thành viên trao đổi bài viết với nhau để đối chiếu, so sánh thậm chí là phát hiện các lỗi sai trong quá trình viết. Tuy nhiên cách làm này chỉ phù hợp với những lớp có sĩ số ít, việc trao đổi bài viết để phát hiện, thảo luận các lỗi sai sẽ giúp cho người học củng cố kiến thức ngôn ngữ dưới sự hướng dẫn của giáo viên. Ngoài ra, người học còn có thể phản hồi, trao đổi ý kiến với giáo viên.

Còn một điểm cần phải nhấn mạnh rằng, mục đích của phương pháp viết theo quá trình không đặt nặng kết quả cao thấp, mà hoàn toàn chú trọng sự tiến bộ, chuyển biến tích cực trong quá trình viết lách. Có thể nói đây cũng là một phương pháp dạy học lấy người học làm trung tâm, quan tâm đến sự tiến bộ trong học tập của người học. Song, đây cũng là một phương pháp đòi hỏi giáo viên phải sâu sát đến từng người học, vì mỗi cá nhân đều có tình trạng học tập khác nhau, đáp án bài viết thường không thống nhất, nên chỉ phù hợp với những lớp học có sĩ số ít.

Hai phương pháp dạy học nêu trên đều có những ưu điểm vượt trội so với cách dạy học truyền thống, vì vậy trong bốn cấp lớp từ kỹ năng viết 1 đến kỹ năng viết 4, chúng tôi đã áp dụng phương pháp dạy học theo nhiệm vụ cho kỹ năng viết 1 và viết 2. Vì ở hai cấp độ này, sinh viên vừa mới tiếp xúc với kỹ năng viết, nên giáo viên dựa vào các nhiệm vụ viết được thiết kế trên bài giảng sẽ dễ dàng quan sát và triển khai bài giảng, đặc biệt ở giai đoạn này, kỹ năng ngôn ngữ của người học vẫn chưa hoàn thiện, nên việc luyện tập thường xuyên về cách sử dụng từ vựng và diễn đạt đúng theo cấu trúc ngữ pháp là điều cần thiết. Ở giai đoạn kỹ năng viết 3, và đặc biệt là kỹ năng viết 4, chúng tôi đã mạnh dạn áp dụng phương pháp viết theo quá trình để người học có thể chủ động và tích cực hơn. Để thực hiện mục tiêu này, chúng tôi đã sử dụng quyển sách “Viết tiếng Trung theo quá trình dành cho người nước ngoài” của

Yang Li, vốn là một ứng dụng thực tiễn cho lý luận viết theo quá trình. Tuy nhiên, do sĩ số lớp đông, khối lượng văn mẫu, bài tham khảo quá nhiều đôi khi cũng chiếm không ít thời gian của cả người dạy lẫn người học. Đặc biệt có một số sinh viên do bị hổng kiến thức ngôn ngữ ở những lớp trước đây, nên vẫn chưa ý thức được tầm quan trọng của phương pháp này, vẫn còn học một cách đối phó. Chúng tôi lựa chọn giáo trình này như một giải pháp tạm thời trong khi chờ đợi những quyển giáo trình thiết thực hơn và phù hợp với trình độ đa dạng của sinh viên Việt Nam, với mục đích là giúp cho người học cảm nhận được niềm vui của việc viết lách, là được tự do diễn đạt những suy nghĩ của mình đúng với quy tắc ngữ pháp tiếng Trung Quốc.

#### **4. Kết luận**

Trong quá trình giảng dạy các môn kỹ năng viết, phương pháp là tiêu chí cần được coi trọng vì đây chính là yếu tố linh hoạt và dễ dàng điều chỉnh nhất, đồng thời cũng có ảnh hưởng trực tiếp đến thái độ học tập và kết quả học tập của sinh viên. Nếu chương trình học và nội dung giáo trình là cố định, thì việc thay đổi phương pháp, áp dụng những phương pháp theo hướng tạo cảm hứng và điều động tính chủ động của người học sẽ mang lại những kết quả khả quan trong giảng dạy. Chúng ta đều biết rằng, môi trường ngôn ngữ cũng là một thành tố quan trọng giúp cho người học tiến bộ nhanh chóng, nhưng việc học tiếng Trung nói chung và môn kỹ năng viết tại Việt Nam vẫn còn tồn tại một số hạn chế nhất định, ví dụ như không có môi trường ngôn ngữ để kích thích nhu cầu diễn đạt của người học; mặt khác do ảnh hưởng tiêu cực của việc chuyển di ngôn ngữ sẽ khiến cho sinh viên gặp khá nhiều khó khăn trong diễn đạt ngôn ngữ đích và những trở ngại đó ít nhiều ảnh hưởng đến thái độ, tâm lý và cả sự nhiệt tình trong học tập của người học. Cho nên, việc áp dụng nhiều phương pháp linh hoạt trong việc giảng dạy môn kỹ năng viết vẫn là điều cần thiết nhằm nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học môn kỹ năng này.

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# Teaching Chinese Grammar: Effective Strategies for Engagement

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**Hien Thuy La**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam

*hien.ltt@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

In the Chinese language classroom, grammar is sometimes a dry subject matter. Most of the content in the course is explained according to the structure and semantics, which makes students confused and bored, resulting in ineffective classroom teaching, low engagement of students and low efficiency of teachers. All of the above are the general difficulties in many grammar class. Therefore, this paper puts forward some effective teaching methods based on the lecture's experience and practice of Chinese language teaching, with an aim to make the grammar classroom more active and students' learning more effective.

***Keywords:*** *teaching methods, Chinese grammar*

# MỘT SỐ KỸ THUẬT TRONG VIỆC GIẢNG DẠY MÔN NGỮ PHÁP NGÔN NGỮ TRUNG QUỐC

**TS. La Thúy Hiền**

Trường Đại Học Mở Tp. Hồ Chí Minh

## **Tóm tắt**

Trong quá trình giảng dạy tiếng Trung Quốc, môn học ngữ pháp là môn học khá cứng nhắc và khô khan. Giáo trình học tập về môn ngữ pháp đa phần giải thích theo các cấu trúc, mẫu câu trong ngữ pháp và ngữ nghĩa của chúng, đôi khi khiến cho người học cảm thấy khô khan, khó hiểu và chán học, tiết học không hiệu quả, sinh viên tiếp thu bài thấp, dẫn đến hiệu quả giảng dạy trên lớp học không thành công. Đây là khó khăn trong tiết giảng môn học Ngữ pháp Hán ngữ. Do đó, bài viết dựa trên hoạt động giảng dạy và kết quả học tập của sinh viên trong thực tiễn để nêu lên một số kỹ thuật giảng dạy áp dụng trong tiết giảng dành cho môn Ngữ pháp Hán ngữ.

Các bước lên lớp luôn cần được chuẩn bị kỹ và theo một trình tự nhất định, buổi học luôn cần được bắt đầu theo các bước như: bước một ôn tập, triển khai nội dung học (điểm ngữ pháp), bước hai giải thích điểm ngữ pháp, bước ba luyện tập ngữ pháp, bước bốn củng cố điểm ngữ pháp. Mỗi một bước đều cần có phương pháp, các kỹ xảo để có thể tạo cho tiết học hứng thú, lôi cuốn sinh viên. Trong bài viết này, chúng tôi chỉ nêu lên một số phương pháp giảng dạy một điểm ngữ pháp bất kỳ tạo hứng thú, có thể giảm bớt độ khó trong quá trình tiếp thu bài, hiểu và lý giải được cách sử dụng của điểm ngữ pháp, đồng thời có thể tạo cho bầu không khí lớp học bớt căng thẳng và sinh động hơn.

## **1. Đặt vấn đề**

Môn ngữ pháp tiếng Trung Quốc là một môn học khó, giờ giảng môn ngữ pháp luôn khô khan và khiến cho bầu không khí học nhàm chán, hiệu quả học của sinh viên cũng khó đạt được tối đa. Môn ngữ pháp tiếng Trung Quốc, ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc của Khoa Ngoại ngữ, trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh được thiết kế vào học kỳ 1 năm thứ 3, khi sinh viên đã nắm được lượng từ vựng khá nhiều, tuy nhiên do đặc thù môn học khá khô khan và cứng nhắc, trong bài viết này, nhằm tối ưu hóa việc giảng dạy môn ngữ pháp tiếng Trung Quốc, chúng tôi tiến hành tham khảo và gợi ý một số kỹ thuật giảng dạy, giúp cho giờ giảng sinh động hơn, hiệu quả học tập được phát huy.

## **2. Nội dung cần giảng dạy trong giờ học ngữ pháp**

Thông thường, khi giải thích một điểm ngữ pháp thì cần giải thích ba nội dung của một điểm ngữ pháp như: hình thức ngữ pháp, ý nghĩa, và chức năng ngữ pháp.

### **2.1. Giải thích về hình thức ngữ pháp**

Thông thường có thể sử dụng dạng kết cấu điểm ngữ pháp giúp người học khái quát được cách sử dụng và dễ dàng nắm bắt, ghi nhớ điểm ngữ pháp này. Sử dụng kết cấu ngữ pháp, ngoài ra có thể liệt kê thêm những kết cấu liên quan đến điểm ngữ pháp (như hình thức phủ định, hình thức nghi vấn ...) , có thể dễ dàng thêm vào những thành phần cần thiết (như các thành phần bổ ngữ, trạng ngữ), hư từ ..v.v. Song song việc nêu ra kết cấu điểm ngữ pháp mới, có thể so sánh và liên hệ với các điểm ngữ pháp cũ, giúp người học có thể nhanh chóng hiểu và nắm bắt điểm ngữ pháp mới.

### **2.2. Giải thích về ý nghĩa**

Đối với việc giải thích ý nghĩa ngữ pháp, giảng viên có thể giảng giải, thuyết minh về ngữ nghĩa của điểm ngữ pháp, chủ yếu là ý nghĩa ngữ pháp. Giải thích kết cấu ngữ pháp, thường chúng ta có thể sử dụng kết cấu, kiến thức đã học để giải thích, cũng có thể nói rằng mượn những điểm ngữ pháp cũ để liên hệ với điểm ngữ pháp mới, tạo cho sinh viên cơ hội có thể ôn tập điểm ngữ pháp cũ và học tập điểm mới.

## 2.3. Giải thích về chức năng ngữ pháp

Đối với việc giải thích về chức năng ngữ pháp, chủ yếu là giảng giải cho sinh viên điểm ngữ pháp này có chức năng ngữ pháp gì trong câu, có tác dụng như thế nào khi sử dụng, có thể có ý nghĩa như thế nào khi sử dụng trong một hoàn cảnh cụ thể, sử dụng dành cho đối tượng nào thì phù hợp, do đó ngoài việc giải thích về chức năng ngữ pháp, giảng viên cần giải thích thêm về hoàn cảnh sử dụng điểm ngữ pháp này, giúp người học nắm bắt hoàn chỉnh hơn.

## 3. Một số kỹ thuật giảng dạy điểm ngữ pháp

### 3.1. Phương pháp sử dụng công thức

Với cách sử dụng công thức liệt kê ra một điểm ngữ pháp, có thể giúp cho sinh viên dễ hiểu, cô đọng được hiện tượng ngữ pháp, cũng giúp cho giảng viên dễ dàng giải thích kết cấu ngữ pháp này theo cách giảng giải, thuyết minh. Ngoài ra, sinh viên tự so sánh với các cấu trúc ngữ pháp khác (cấu trúc ngữ pháp đã học, hình thức ngữ pháp trong tiếng Anh). Thông thường giảng viên cần trình bày các công thức đơn giản, giúp sinh viên dễ dàng nắm bắt và ghi nhớ. Giảng viên có thể dễ dàng ghi công thức ngữ pháp lên bảng và cũng dễ dàng giải thích ý nghĩa ngữ pháp cho sinh viên, đây là phương pháp trực quan sinh động. Ví dụ:

Khi giải thích về kết cấu so sánh chúng ta có thể ghi theo công thức như sau:

$$(1) A \text{ 比 } B + \text{ADJ} = A + \text{ADJ}$$

我比他高 = 我高 (他矮)

Khi giải thích về kết cấu của bổ ngữ chỉ kết quả, chúng ta có thể ghi theo công thức như sau:

$$(2) V + C$$

我吃饱了 = 我吃, 我饱了

Cách giải thích này sẽ giúp sinh viên không bị nhầm lẫn ý nghĩa của câu và chức năng ngữ pháp giữa các thành phần trong câu.

### 3.2. Phương pháp sử dụng ký hiệu

Trong quá trình giải thích, giảng viên có thể sử dụng, mượn một số ký hiệu cố định, có sẵn để đơn giản hóa các điểm ngữ pháp. Do sinh viên Việt Nam đa phần đã được học tiếng Anh ở các cấp lớp dưới, cho nên có thể sử dụng tên gọi của các thành phần câu theo tiếng Anh như:

Chủ ngữ = S (Subject), vị ngữ = P (Predicate)

Động từ = V (Verb), tân ngữ = O (Object)

Danh từ = N (Noun), tính từ = A (Adjective)

Mục đích của việc sử dụng những ký hiệu này sẽ đơn giản hóa các công thức, các kết cấu ngữ pháp rõ ràng, giúp cho sinh viên dễ dàng ghi nhớ, cũng là một dạng gợi ý cho sinh viên khi làm bài tập ngữ pháp.

### 3.3. Phương pháp sử dụng hình vẽ

Chúng ta có thể sử dụng hình vẽ đơn giản để giải thích cho sinh viên một số điểm ngữ pháp, gây sự hứng thú cũng như hình tượng hóa sẽ giúp cho sinh viên có thể nhanh chóng hiểu ngay và có thể ghi nhớ lâu về điểm ngữ pháp này. Ví dụ như khi giải thích cách dùng câu tồn hiện, bổ ngữ chỉ xu hướng, hoặc hành động đang tiếp diễn ...Ngoài ra, giảng viên có thể tự vẽ bằng hình vẽ đơn giản để diễn tả các hành động tiếp diễn, bổ ngữ xu hướng.



### 3.4. Phương pháp gợi ý thông qua câu hỏi

Giảng viên có thể sử dụng các tình huống thực tế, đặt câu hỏi dành cho sinh viên và gợi ý cho sinh viên câu trả lời để giải thích một điểm ngữ pháp nào đó. Phương pháp này có thể sử dụng cho trường hợp giảng dạy số từ, hoặc bổ ngữ kết quả. Ví dụ:

- Chúng ta viết các ô số và để trống một số ô để cho sinh viên điền vào:

千 亿	百 亿	十 亿	亿	千 万	百 万	十 万	万	千	百	个	十
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- Điền bổ ngữ chỉ kết quả

买\_\_\_\_\_到\_\_\_\_\_, 买\_\_\_\_\_好\_\_\_\_\_,  
住\_\_\_\_\_上\_\_\_\_\_,  
吃\_\_\_\_\_饱\_\_\_\_\_,  
问\_\_\_\_\_好\_\_\_\_\_.

### 3.5. Phương pháp biểu diễn

Giảng viên có thể mời sinh viên biểu diễn một hành động nào đó, hoặc là giảng viên biểu diễn một hành động, động tác để giải thích một hiện tượng ngữ pháp. Phương pháp này có thể áp dụng cho việc giải thích các hành động, động tác di chuyển hoặc bổ ngữ xu hướng, các từ phương vị ...

### 3.6. Phương pháp so sánh

Trong phương pháp này có thể so sánh giữa các hiện tượng ngữ pháp trong tiếng Trung hoặc so sánh với hiện tượng ngữ pháp trong tiếng Việt. So sánh các hiện tượng ngữ pháp tương đồng trong tiếng Trung, nêu rõ sự giống và khác nhau giữa các điểm ngữ pháp gần giống nhau, thường thì chúng ta sẽ nêu rõ sự khác biệt. Ví dụ khi giảng dạy câu tồn hiện với hai động từ “有” và từ “在”, với hai công thức “P 有 N”, “N 在 P”, đặc điểm về ngữ nghĩa của hai loại câu

này sẽ khác nhau ở chỗ công thức thứ nhất sẽ thiên về miêu tả, nêu ra một phát hiện mới, thông thường loại câu này có nghĩa là nêu ra một thông tin nào đó; còn loại câu thứ hai thì chú trọng đến “N” (người hoặc vật) ở một vị trí nào đó. So sánh điểm ngữ pháp giữa tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt cũng giúp cho sinh viên có cách phân biệt sự giống và khác nhau để có thể phiên dịch chính xác, ví dụ như giảng dạy cụm từ định trung trong tiếng Trung có thể so sánh với cụm chính phụ trong tiếng Việt, nêu ra điểm giống và điểm khác nhau, giúp sinh viên tránh phạm những lỗi sai trong hiện tượng ngữ pháp phức tạp này.

### **3.7. Phương pháp phiên dịch**

Phương pháp này có thể áp dụng đối với các điểm ngữ pháp khó hiểu, tương đối trừu tượng, khó giải thích khi vận dụng những phương pháp giải thích như đã nêu trên. Đây cũng là một phương pháp dễ sử dụng, đơn giản và dễ sử dụng nhất. Đối với các điểm ngữ pháp liên từ trong câu phức, chúng ta có thể sử dụng cách này giải thích, sinh viên có thể dễ dàng nắm bắt ngay ý nghĩa của điểm ngữ pháp này. Ví dụ như khi giảng dạy bổ ngữ chỉ khả năng, giáo viên tiến hành giải thích, phiên dịch các ví dụ cho sinh viên dễ hiểu và dễ nắm bắt.

这件衣服我买不起。

Có thể phiên dịch ra: Tôi không thể mua nổi cái áo này.

这条路太小了，汽车开不进去。—— Con đường này quá nhỏ, xe ô tô không thể chạy vào được.

## **4. Tổng kết**

Môn học Ngữ pháp Hán ngữ được thiết kế cho sinh viên học ở giai đoạn đầu năm thứ ba, là giai đoạn bổ sung kiến thức cơ sở dành cho sinh viên chuyên ngành Ngôn ngữ Trung Quốc, trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, giúp sinh viên nắm bắt kiến thức nền, hỗ trợ cho việc học các kiến thức chuyên ngành. Môn ngữ pháp là môn học củng cố lại tất cả các hiện tượng ngữ pháp trong tiếng

Trung, hỗ trợ cho sinh viên có thể nắm vững kiến thức chuyên ngành là các môn biên phiên dịch. Trên đây là một số tổng hợp về phương pháp giảng dạy ngữ pháp giúp cho giờ giảng sinh động hơn, đồng thời giúp sinh viên dễ dàng nắm bắt được hiện tượng ngữ pháp và ghi nhớ lâu hơn, có ích cho công tác phiên dịch về sau.

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# JAPANESE LINGUISTICS AND EDUCATION

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# Needs Assessment of Studying Sino-Vietnamese of Japanese-majored Students

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**Nguyen Vu Nhu Chu**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*nguyen.cvn@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

There are three types of characters in Japanese: Hiragana, Katakana, Kanji. From the beginning of the learning process, Japanese learners will be taught Hiragana, then Katakana and finally, Kanji. The most difficult step is Kanji's learning and can be a great discouragement to learners. According to the guiding principles of teaching and learning Kanji for Japanese learners at Ho Chi Minh City Open University, first of all, learners can recognize Kanji, remember in Chinese - Vietnamese, understand the meaning, write down and can spell the Kanji. If learners can follow these steps, they will learn Kanji more effectively. However, due to the shortage of hours for classroom instruction, there are not many students who can do that. Students often learn how to read and write down a specific Kanji without understanding the basic of Kanji components. One principle is "recognizing the Kanji, remembering its Sino-Vietnamese, and understanding the meaning". Nevertheless, students might not be aware of the necessity of learning Sino-Vietnamese. Therefore, a survey is conducted to find out how students perceive the necessity of learning Sino-Vietnamese and the appropriate methods and solutions for teaching and learning Kanji, as well as learning Japanese for Japanese-majored students at Ho Chi Minh City Open University.

# ĐÁNH GIÁ MỨC ĐỘ CẦN THIẾT VIỆC HỌC HÁN TỰ THÔNG QUA CHỮ HÁN VIỆT CỦA SINH VIÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ NHẬT

**Th.S. Chu Vũ Như Nguyễn**

*Khoa Ngoại Ngữ - Trường Đại học Mở Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh*

Bất kỳ ai học tiếng Nhật cũng biết rằng trong tiếng Nhật có 3 loại chữ: Hiragana, Katakana, Kanji (Hán tự). Mỗi loại chữ có vai trò khác nhau nên loại chữ nào cũng quan trọng và cần thiết.

Ngay từ đầu học tiếng Nhật, người học bắt đầu học bảng chữ cái Hiragana, kế tiếp đến bảng chữ cái Katakana và sau đó học chữ Kanji (Hán tự). Giai đoạn học chữ Hán tự là giai đoạn khó và dễ làm cho người học chán nản nhất. Vì vậy người học cần làm gì khi học tiếng Nhật trong giai đoạn này.

Theo quy tắc dạy và học Hán tự của ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, trước hết người học nhìn ra được chữ Hán, nhớ âm Hán Việt, hiểu được nghĩa chữ Hán, viết được chữ Hán, viết được chữ Hán tự, đọc được chữ Hán tự. Người học làm được như vậy thì việc học Hán tự sẽ có hiệu quả hơn. Tuy nhiên trong quá trình giảng dạy tiếng Nhật cho sinh viên, chúng tôi nhận thấy có sinh viên chỉ học cách đọc và cách viết của một chữ Hán tự cụ thể mà không nắm rõ căn bản về chữ Hán tạo nên chữ Hán tự đó. Một trong những căn bản đó là “nhìn ra được chữ Hán, nhớ âm Hán Việt, hiểu được nghĩa chữ Hán”. Có thể là vì sinh viên chưa nhận thức được sự cần thiết của âm Hán Việt khi học Hán tự hay từ vựng trong tiếng Nhật. Vì thế qua bài nghiên cứu lần này, tôi sẽ tiến hành điều tra, khảo sát ý kiến sinh viên để tìm hiểu các bạn nhận thức về sự cần thiết của việc học âm Hán Việt như thế nào khi học Hán tự hay từ vựng trong tiếng Nhật. Qua đó chúng tôi cung cấp cho sinh viên thêm kiến thức về chữ Hán, chữ Hán Việt và chữ Hán tự qua phần cơ sở lý luận. Từ đó tìm ra phương pháp và giải pháp thích hợp cho việc dạy và học Hán tự, cũng như từ vựng

tiếng Nhật tốt hơn cho sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

## I. CƠ SỞ LÝ LUẬN

### 1. Chữ Hán

Chữ Hán vốn dĩ là chữ viết của Trung Quốc, nó đã du nhập vào Việt Nam, Nhật Bản, bán đảo Triều Tiên,...và trở thành chữ viết của các quốc gia đó.

Trong tác phẩm “Tìm về cội nguồn chữ Hán”, Lý Lạc Nghị (1997) có đề cập chữ Hán được hình thành theo các phương pháp chủ yếu sau:

Chữ Tượng hình, căn cứ trên hình tượng của sự vật mà hình thành chữ viết. Đây là một cách tạo chữ đơn giản nhất. Dạng chữ này là cơ sở cho sự hình thành các loại chữ Chỉ sự, Hội ý, và Hình thanh. Những chữ chỉ động vật, hiện tượng tự nhiên và đồ vật thường là chữ Tượng hình, ví dụ: chữ HỎA (火, nhìn như ngọn lửa) nghĩa là lửa, chữ ĐIỀN (田, nhìn như thửa ruộng) nghĩa là ruộng.

Chữ Chỉ sự hay chữ Biểu ý diễn tả những sự việc, sự vật qua dạng chữ phát triển ở hình thức cao hơn bằng cách thêm nét để biểu hiện ý nghĩa. Ví dụ, Chữ BẢN (本) là sự kết hợp giữa chữ MỘC (木) và nét ngang 一. Phần MỘC (木) là cái cây. “Phần căn bản” của cái cây được xác định bởi nét ngang 一, tạo thành chữ BẢN (本) diễn đạt nghĩa “sự căn bản (gốc).”<sup>8</sup>. Ví dụ, để chỉ lưỡi dao, lấy chữ ĐAO (刀) và viết thêm một nét chỉ vào phần lưỡi thành chữ NHẪN (刃), nghĩa là “mũi nhọn”<sup>9</sup>.

Để tăng thêm chữ Hán, cho đến nay người ta có nhiều phương pháp tạo nhiều chữ mới có ý nghĩa mới. Từ đó chữ Hội ý được hình

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<sup>8</sup> Trần Việt Thanh (2002). 24 quy tắc học Kanji trong tiếng Nhật – tập 2 quy tắc 13 – 24. Nhà xuất bản trẻ - tr36

<sup>9</sup> Lý Lạc Nghị (1997). Tìm hiểu cội nguồn chữ Hán. Nhà xuất bản Thế Giới – tr24

thành. Ví dụ, hai chữ MỘC (木, nghĩa là cây) ghép lại đứng cạnh nhau hình thành chữ LÂM (林) nghĩa là rừng thưa. Ba chữ MỘC (木, nghĩa là cây) ghép lại tạo thành chữ SÂM (森) nghĩa là rừng rậm nơi có rất nhiều cây.

Chữ Hán còn có chữ Hình thanh. Loại chữ này hầu như chiếm toàn bộ chữ Hán, chiếm hơn 80% chữ Hán hiện đại.<sup>10</sup> Chữ Hình thanh được cấu tạo bởi hai thành phần là nghĩa và thanh. Nghĩa có tác dụng gợi ý, thanh có tác dụng gợi âm. Ví dụ, chữ ĐỒNG (銅, nghĩa là kim loại đồng). Chữ ĐỒNG (銅) này kết hợp bởi phần nghĩa là chữ KIM (金, nghĩa là kim loại) và phần thanh là chữ ĐỒNG (同). Vì thế chữ ĐỒNG (銅) có nghĩa là “kim loại đồng” giống phần nghĩa KIM (金), còn phần âm đọc giống chữ ĐỒNG (同).

Ngoài các chữ Hán được hình thành như trên thì còn có những chữ Hán kết hợp các chữ, các bộ với nhau nhưng có ý nghĩa hoàn toàn khác biệt với các chữ, các bộ đó. Đó là chữ Chuyển chú. Ví dụ, chữ DƯỢC (藥, nghĩa là thuốc), có nguồn gốc là từ chữ NHẠC (樂) hay còn gọi là LẠC, nghĩa là vui vẻ. Chữ DƯỢC được tạo thành bằng cách ghép bộ THẢO (nghĩa là cây cỏ) vào chữ LẠC (樂).

Hơn nữa còn có chữ Giả tá. Chữ này được hình thành theo phương pháp bằng cách mượn thanh của từ này diễn tả từ khác có ý nghĩa khác. Hình thức này không có chữ, mượn âm để gửi sự, biến thành âm và có nghĩa khác hoàn toàn. Ví dụ, chữ 令 (LỆNH) trong MỆNH LỆNH (命令, nghĩa là mệnh lệnh) được mượn làm chữ LỆNH trong HUYỆN LỆNH (県令, nghĩa là chức quan ở tỉnh, huyện).

Việt Nam và Nhật Bản du nhập chữ Hán và dùng chữ Hán để viết tiếng nói của nước mình. Chữ Hán du nhập vào Việt Nam được gọi là Hán Việt. Chữ Hán du nhập vào Nhật Bản được gọi là Hán tự.

## 2. Hán Việt

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<sup>10</sup> Lý Lạc Nghị (1997). Tìm hiểu cội nguồn chữ Hán. Nhà xuất bản Thế Giới – tr25

Việt Nam và Trung Quốc sớm có sự tiếp xúc giao lưu văn hóa do hoàn cảnh lịch sử và vị thế địa lý. Sự tiếp xúc giao lưu này diễn ra theo hai con đường tự nhiên, tự nguyện và cưỡng bức, áp đặt. Dấu ấn của việc này là xuất hiện từ Hán Việt.

Trong tác phẩm “Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt” của Nguyễn Công Lý biên soạn, có đề cập lịch sử, ngôn ngữ và văn hóa Hán xâm nhập vào Việt Nam qua hai giai đoạn.

Giai đoạn 1 là từ sau thời đại An Dương Vương – Triệu Đà (năm 111 trước công nguyên) cho đến thế kỷ thứ VI sau công nguyên.<sup>11</sup> Giai đoạn này tiếng Hán xâm nhập vào Việt Nam chủ yếu là tiếng Hán cổ. Các nhà nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ gọi đó là tiếng Hán trước đời Đường. Giai đoạn này từ gốc Hán xâm nhập vào kho từ vựng tiếng Việt bằng con đường khẩu ngữ tự nhiên.<sup>12</sup>

Giai đoạn 2 là từ thế kỷ VII cho đến 938,<sup>13</sup> năm Ngô Quyền cùng đại binh đánh tan quân Nam Hán trên sông Bạch Đằng, giành lại chủ quyền dân tộc. Giai đoạn này, ngôn ngữ và văn hóa Hán đã xâm nhập vào Việt Nam chủ yếu bằng con đường cưỡng ép, cưỡng bức, áp đặt của các quan cai trị đời Đường. Giai cấp thống trị phương Bắc đã buộc nhân dân học và sử dụng chữ Hán trong các văn bản hành chính, trong lễ nghi tế tự, trong tôn giáo, trong học hành thi cử... Giai đoạn này còn được gọi là giai đoạn tiếng Hán đời Đường trở về sau. Ở giai đoạn này từ gốc Hán xâm nhập vào kho từ vựng tiếng Việt bằng hai con đường: đường khẩu ngữ và đường sách vở.<sup>14</sup>

Tiếng Hán và tiếng Việt có một điểm chung đều là ngôn ngữ

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<sup>11</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr10

<sup>12</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr10

<sup>13</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr10

<sup>14</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr10

đơn âm nên từ gốc Hán dễ thâm nhập vào tiếng Việt bằng con đường khẩu ngữ. Do vậy, người Việt Nam tiếp thu từ ngữ gốc Hán không khó khăn lắm so với các ngôn ngữ khác. Hồi ấy, Việt Nam mượn tiếng Hán là văn tự Hán, rồi dựa vào đó mà đọc theo âm Việt (từ Hán Việt được Việt hóa). Mặt khác, trong hơn mười thế kỷ bị lệ thuộc phương Bắc và trong thời kỳ độc lập tự chủ kéo dài chín thế kỷ (X – XIX)<sup>15</sup>, Việt Nam vẫn vay mượn văn tự Hán trong việc hành chính, trong học hành thi cử, trong sáng tạo văn học nghệ thuật,..Trên cơ sở vay mượn đó, Việt Nam đã sáng tạo và chế tác ra chữ viết riêng của dân tộc, để ghi âm tiếng nói của dân tộc mình. Đó là chữ Nôm.<sup>16</sup>

Trên cơ sở nguồn gốc lịch sử trên có thể nói những từ gốc Hán xâm nhập vào kho từ vựng tiếng Việt phải chịu sự chi phối của quy luật ngữ âm tiếng Việt. Do vậy chúng có sự thay đổi về mặt ngữ âm. Đây là tiền đề tạo nên từ Hán Việt. Có thể chia quá trình hình thành từ Hán Việt thành ba loại: từ Hán cổ, từ Hán mượn đời Đường, từ Hán được Việt hóa.<sup>17</sup>

**Từ Hán cổ**<sup>18</sup> là lớp từ Hán xâm nhập vào kho từ vựng tiếng Việt trước đời Đường. Lớp từ này chủ yếu du nhập từ thời nhà Hán thống trị Việt Nam và chúng du nhập một cách không có hệ thống vào khẩu ngữ tiếng Việt, có ảnh hưởng sâu sắc trong khẩu ngữ tiếng Việt, không còn lưu lại giữ lại hình dáng của tiếng Hán nữa và không thể thiếu trong tiếng nói hàng ngày của người Việt Nam. Hiện tại trong nhận thức người Việt, ta xem đó là từ thuần Việt vì đôi khi đã quên mất từ nghĩa của chúng. Âm Hán cổ đó hiện nay đọc theo cách khác.

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<sup>15</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr11

<sup>16</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr11

<sup>17</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr12

<sup>18</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr12

Ví dụ:<sup>19</sup>

Chữ 解, âm Hán cổ là CỎI, âm tiếng Việt là “cởi”, âm Hán cổ hiện nay theo cách đọc Hán Việt là GIẢI.

Chữ 夏, âm Hán cổ là HÈ, âm tiếng Việt là “hè”, âm Hán cổ hiện nay theo cách đọc Hán Việt là HẠ.

Chữ 王, âm Hán cổ là VUA, âm tiếng Việt là “vua”, âm Hán cổ hiện nay theo cách đọc Hán Việt là VƯƠNG.

Chữ 車, âm Hán cổ là XE, âm tiếng Việt là “xe”, âm Hán cổ hiện nay theo cách đọc Hán Việt là XA.

Chữ 茶, âm Hán cổ là CHÈ, âm tiếng Việt là “chè”, âm Hán cổ hiện nay theo cách đọc Hán Việt là TRÀ.

**Từ Hán vay mượn vào đời Đường** <sup>20</sup>là lớp từ vựng tiếng Việt lúc đời Đường cai trị Việt Nam từ thế kỷ VII, VIII, IX <sup>21</sup>, xâm nhập theo con đường khẩu ngữ và sách vở. Hệ thống lớp từ này khi vào Việt Nam có thay đổi về ngữ âm, ngữ nghĩa, hiện còn lại rất nhiều từ trong nhiều lĩnh vực. Lớp từ này chiếm rất nhiều trong kho tàng tiếng Việt.

Một số từ Hán vay mượn:

Về lĩnh vực chính trị có những chữ Hán: HOÀNG THƯỢNG, HOÀNG ĐẾ, CHẾ ĐỘ, CHÍNH THỐNG, GIÁM SÁT,...

Về lĩnh vực giáo dục có những chữ Hán: TÚ TÀI, CỬ NHÂN, TIẾN SĨ,...

Về lĩnh vực văn hóa có những chữ Hán: VĂN CHƯƠNG, GIẢNG GIẢI, HIỀN TRIẾT,...

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<sup>19</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr12

<sup>20</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr15

<sup>21</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh.Tr15

Về lĩnh vực tôn giáo có những chữ Hán: HÒA THƯỢNG, THIÊN ĐƯỜNG,...

Về lĩnh vực quân sự có những chữ Hán: CHIẾN TRƯỜNG, CHỈ HUY, TẤN CÔNG, CHINH PHẠT,...

Về lĩnh vực tư pháp có những chữ Hán: BỊ CÁO, ÁM SÁT, AN XÁ,...

Về lĩnh vực kinh tế có những chữ Hán: THƯƠNG MẠI, THƯƠNG NHÂN,...

Về lĩnh vực y tế có những chữ Hán: THƯƠNG TÍCH, TIÊM NHIỄM,...

**Từ Hán đã được Việt hóa** <sup>22</sup> là lớp từ vựng mượn ở tiếng Hán nhưng Việt hóa hoàn toàn. Lớp từ này hiện tồn tại hai từ vựng mang ý nghĩa như nhau, được sử dụng như nhau tuy chúng có sắc thái biểu cảm khác nhau, chẳng hạn:

鏡, từ gốc Hán là KÍNH, từ Hán được Việt hóa là “gương”.

力, từ gốc Hán là LỰC, từ Hán được Việt hóa là “sức”.

青, từ gốc Hán là THANH, từ Hán được Việt hóa là “xanh”.

床, từ gốc Hán là SÀNG, từ Hán được Việt hóa là “giường”.

庫, từ gốc Hán là KHO, từ Hán được Việt hóa là “kho”.

Có thể nói từ Hán Việt chiếm một số lượng rất lớn trong kho từ vựng tiếng Việt và thể hiện qua ba dạng từ Hán Việt như trên nên khi sử dụng cũng như giảng dạy và học tập, cần phải hiểu ý nghĩa từ vựng, cũng như nguồn gốc của chúng. Có như vậy thì khi giao tiếp hoặc viết văn nhờ hiểu được nghĩa của từ (nghĩa cổ/ nghĩa mới, nghĩa gốc/nghĩa phát sinh) mà chúng ta sẽ sử dụng chính xác, tinh tế, đúng ngữ nghĩa để tăng sắc thái biểu cảm và diễn đạt đúng ý định trình bày hơn.

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<sup>22</sup> Nguyễn Công Lý (2003). Mở rộng vốn từ Hán Việt. Nhà xuất bản Đại học quốc gia TP.Hồ Chí Minh. Tr16

### 3. Hán Tự (Kanji)

Nhật Bản không có hệ thống chữ viết của riêng mình, họ tiếp nhận hệ thống chữ tượng hình của Trung Quốc qua việc tiếp nhận các nhà sư từ Triều Tiên và Trung Quốc đưa Phật giáo vào Nhật Bản trong khoảng thời gian từ thế kỷ IV đến thế kỷ thứ VII.<sup>23</sup> Lúc đầu loại chữ tượng hình này (Hán tự, hay còn gọi là Kanji) chỉ sử dụng hạn chế trong các bài viết cổ của Trung Quốc, nhưng sau đó được đưa vào cả trong hệ thống tiếng Nhật. Do người Nhật vốn không có văn tự bản địa nên họ phải vay mượn chữ viết tượng hình của người Trung Quốc để ghi âm. Tuy nhiên do không phù hợp với hệ thống ngữ âm tiếng Nhật, Hán tự đã gây nhiều trở ngại cả cho việc ghi âm, lẫn việc phát âm các văn bản Nhật Bản. Vì thế người Nhật tạo nên một hệ thống văn tự tượng hình khác, ghi âm theo âm tiết. Hệ thống đó gọi là Kana, hình thành từ thế kỷ thứ VIII – IX<sup>24</sup>, để đáp ứng các nhu cầu văn hóa và giáo dục của Nhật Bản. Văn tự Kana có hai biến thể, đó là Katakana và Hiragana. Katakana chủ yếu ghi các từ vay mượn, Hiragana chủ yếu ghi các từ thuần Nhật, cùng các phụ tố ngữ pháp đặc thù. Kana là văn tự kết hợp 2 hệ thống chữ viết khác nhau là vừa tượng hình, vừa ghi âm. Hiện nay người ta cho rằng tiếng Nhật được viết bằng ba loại ký tự, đó là chữ Hán tự (Kanji), chữ Hiragana và chữ Katakana.

Hệ thống chữ viết của Nhật được cho là rất phức tạp. Các chữ Hán được du nhập vào Nhật Bản qua một thời gian dài và từ nhiều vùng có thổ ngữ khác nhau ở Trung Quốc thường được phát âm theo nhiều cách ở Nhật Bản, hầu như không còn như cách phát âm của Trung Quốc nữa. Ví dụ, từ 上 (THƯỢNG) tiếng Trung phát âm là *shang* nhưng trong tiếng Nhật có nhiều cách đọc với các nghĩa khác nhau.

上 đọc là *ue*, nghĩa là ở trên

上がる đọc là *agaru*, nghĩa là tăng lên

上る đọc là *noboru*, nghĩa là leo (núi)

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<sup>23</sup> Nguyễn Trường Tân (2011). Tìm hiểu văn hóa Nhật Bản. Nhà xuất bản văn hóa thông tin. Tr32

<sup>24</sup> Đức Dương (1991). Người Nhật. Nhà xuất bản thành phố Hồ Chí Minh. Tr 17

Tuy nhiên chữ Hán đã ăn sâu vào văn hóa, là một phần không thể thiếu đối với các giá trị nghệ thuật và tâm lý người Nhật nên họ đã bỏ nhiều công sức nghiên cứu, cải tiến, bổ sung cho Hán tự trở thành văn tự của mình. Họ đã cho ra đời cách đọc ON (Onyomi – đọc theo âm Hán) và cách đọc KUN (Kunyomi – đọc theo âm Nhật). Trong cách đọc ON thường có từ 1 đến 3 cách đọc, bởi vì chữ Hán được đưa vào Nhật không cùng một thời kỳ. Vì vậy người Nhật chia cách đọc ON khác nhau theo thời nhà Tống, nhà Ngô và nhà Hán, được gọi là âm Đường, âm Ngô, âm Hán.<sup>25</sup>

Ví dụ:<sup>26</sup>

Chữ 行 (HÀNH) âm Đường đọc là “an”, âm Hán đọc là “ko”.

Chữ 人 (NHÂN) âm Ngô đọc là “nin”, âm Hán đọc là “jin”.

Tuy nhiên khối lượng chữ Hán trong tiếng Nhật đọc theo âm Hán nhiều hơn cả, nhưng số chữ Hán chỉ có 1 cách đọc ON trong Hán tự khoảng trên 600 chữ trong tổng số 1939 chữ Hán được nhà nước quy định sử dụng.<sup>27</sup>

Ví dụ:

Chữ 電 (**ĐIỆN**) chỉ có 1 cách đọc âm ON là “**den**”.

電気 (**Denki**), nghĩa là điện, điện khí

電話 (**Denwa**), nghĩa là điện thoại

電車 (**Densha**), nghĩa là xe điện

Về cách đọc KUN (thuần Nhật), một chữ Hán thường có nhiều cách đọc KUN và 1 cách đọc có một ý nghĩa riêng.

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<sup>25</sup> Trần Sơn (1994) - Tạp chí khoa học No 5- 1994. Tiếng Hán và sự hình thành Hán Nhật (có đối chiếu – so sánh với Hán – Việt). Khoa Ngữ Văn – ĐHTH Hà Nội

<sup>26</sup> Trần Sơn (1994) - Tạp chí khoa học No 5- 1994. Tiếng Hán và sự hình thành Hán Nhật (có đối chiếu – so sánh với Hán – Việt). Khoa Ngữ Văn – ĐHTH Hà Nội

<sup>27</sup> Trần Sơn (1994) - Tạp chí khoa học No 5- 1994. Tiếng Hán và sự hình thành Hán Nhật (có đối chiếu – so sánh với Hán – Việt).Khoa Ngữ Văn – ĐHTH Hà Nội

Ví dụ: chữ 生 (SINH)

生きる	(Ikiru)	: Sống
生ける	(Ikeru)	: Cắm (hoa)
生まれる	(Umareru)	: Ra đời
生える	(Haeru)	: Mọc (cây, cỏ)
生	(Nama)	: Tuổi, sống

Ngoài ra người Nhật còn tạo thêm chữ Hán mới cho ngôn ngữ của nước mình để diễn đạt một số từ theo phong cách Nhật Bản mà các chữ Hán khác không thể thay thế được. Người Nhật gọi loại chữ này là Kokuji (Quốc tự) hay Waji (Hòa tự) là chữ Hán riêng của người Nhật.

Ví dụ:

Chữ 峠 (Touge), nghĩa là đường đèo, gồm có chữ SƠN (nghĩa là núi), THƯỢNG (nghĩa là trên), HẠ (nghĩa là dưới) ghép lại.

Chữ 畑 (Hatake), nghĩa là ruộng khô, nương rẫy, gồm có chữ HỎA (nghĩa là lửa), ĐIỀN (nghĩa là ruộng đất) ghép lại.

Chữ 働く (Hataraku), nghĩa là làm việc, lao động chân tay, gồm có bộ nhân đứng 亻 và chữ ĐỘNG 動 ghép lại.

Kokuji hay Waji không có cách đọc ON và cũng không có âm Hán Việt tương ứng, duy nhất chỉ có cách đọc KUN.

Hơn nữa, người Nhật còn tạo ra chữ Hán Nhật dựa trên yếu tố Hán. Họ gọi loại chữ này là Wago (Hòa ngữ) để thể hiện phong cách riêng của tiếng Nhật.

Ví dụ:

Chữ 風呂 đọc là “furo” (PHONG LỬ), nghĩa là cái bồn tắm, phòng tắm.

Chữ お風呂に入る, đọc là “o furo ni hairu”. Trong đó có chữ

入る nghĩa là vào.

Nếu hiểu nghĩa theo chữ thì chữ trên có nghĩa là “vào bồn tắm, vào phòng tắm” thì chưa chính xác, mà phải kết hợp thêm phong cách và văn hóa Nhật Bản thì từ này có nghĩa là “tắm bồn theo kiểu người Nhật”.

Chữ 手紙 đọc là “tegami” (THỦ CHỈ). Trong đó có chữ 手 (THỦ) nghĩa là cái tay, và chữ 紙 (CHỈ) nghĩa là tờ giấy. Nếu hiểu theo sát nghĩa chữ Hán thì đó hiểu là “giấy tay”. Tuy nhiên trong tiếng Nhật nó nghĩa là “thư từ”.

Nếu người học tiếng Nhật hiểu rõ về Hán Việt trong tiếng Việt và Hán tự trong tiếng Nhật thì việc học Hán tự, hay từ vựng tiếng Nhật sẽ được cải thiện và tốt hơn

## II. HỌC TIẾNG NHẬT QUA ÂM HÁN VIỆT

Về cơ bản cách tạo từ Hán trong tiếng Nhật và tiếng Việt có những điểm giống nhau. Người Việt Nam có thể lợi dụng những điểm giống nhau này để học Hán tự hay từ vựng trong tiếng Nhật hiệu quả hơn và tốt hơn.

### 1. Cách tạo từ Hán trong tiếng Nhật và tiếng Việt theo cấu tạo từ Hán trong tiếng Hán giống nhau và có những chữ giữ nguyên ý nghĩa gốc.

- Kết hợp chữ 学 (HỌC) và chữ 生 (SINH) có từ 学生 (HỌC SINH), đọc là “gakusei”, nó vẫn mang nghĩa là “học sinh” như âm Hán Việt.

- Kết hợp chữ 大 (ĐẠI) và chữ 学 (HỌC) có từ 大学 (ĐẠI HỌC), đọc là “daigaku”, nó vẫn mang nghĩa là “đại học” như âm Hán Việt.

- Kết hợp chữ 公 (CÔNG) và chữ 園 (VIÊN) có từ 公園 (CÔNG VIÊN), đọc là “kouen”, nó vẫn mang nghĩa là “công viên” như âm Hán Việt.

- Kết hợp chữ 医 (Y) và chữ 学 (HỌC) có từ 医学 (Y HỌC), đọc là “igaku”, nó vẫn mang nghĩa là “y học” như âm Hán Việt.

- Kết hợp chữ 伝 (TRUYỀN) và chữ 統 (THỐNG) có từ 伝統 (TRUYỀN THỐNG), đọc là “dentou”, nó vẫn mang nghĩa là “truyền thống” như âm Hán Việt.

Qua 5 ví dụ trên có thể thấy, chúng ta có thể lợi dụng sự đối ứng giữa từ Hán Việt và ý nghĩa của chữ Hán tương ứng trong việc học Hán tự hay từ vựng trong tiếng Nhật. Nhờ vậy chúng ta sẽ dễ hiểu ý nghĩa và nhanh thuộc từ vựng hơn.

Hơn nữa, ví dụ, giả sử chúng ta chưa học và chưa biết từ “học vị” trong tiếng Nhật, nhưng chúng ta đã học chữ 学 (HỌC) trong từ 学生 (HỌC SINH), và đã học từ 位 trong từ 位置 (VỊ TRÍ). Chúng ta kết hợp chữ 学 (HỌC) và chữ 位 (VỊ) có từ HỌC VỊ, trong tiếng Nhật là 学位 (gakui).

Giả sử chúng ta chưa học và chưa biết từ “lý tưởng” trong tiếng Nhật, nhưng chúng ta đã học qua chữ 理 (LÝ) trong từ 理由 (LÝ DO) và đã học chữ 想 (TƯỞNG) trong từ 想像 (TƯỞNG TƯỢNG). Chúng ta kết hợp chữ 理 (LÝ) và chữ 想 (TƯỞNG) có từ LÝ TƯỞNG, trong tiếng Nhật là 理想 (risou).

Một ví dụ nữa, giả sử chúng ta chưa học và chưa biết từ “nhân quyền” trong tiếng Nhật, nhưng chúng ta đã được học chữ 人 (NHÂN) nghĩa là con người, và biết chữ 権 (QUYỀN) nghĩa là quyền lợi. Chúng ta ghép 2 chữ này lại sẽ được từ NHÂN QUYỀN, trong tiếng Nhật là 人權 (jinken).

Qua 3 ví dụ trên có thể thấy, nhờ hiểu chữ Hán Việt mà dù chưa biết đọc như thế nào từ Hán tự đó nhưng cũng hiểu được ý nghĩa của chúng và hiểu đúng nghĩa nếu từ Hán tự đó giữ nguyên nghĩa gốc.

## **2. Hán tự và Hán Việt có âm Hán đọc tương tự nhau**

Nhờ có cách đọc âm Hán trong Hán Việt và Hán tự tương tự

nhau mà người Việt Nam học tiếng Nhật nhớ cách đọc Hán tự dễ dàng hơn.

Ví dụ chữ 大 âm Hán Việt là **ĐẠI** và âm Onyomi (âm Hán Nhật) trong tiếng Nhật là “*dai*”.

大学      **ĐẠI HỌC**      đọc là “*daigaku*”

大成功      **ĐẠI THÀNH CÔNG**      đọc là “*daiseikou*”

大事      **ĐẠI SỰ**      đọc là “*daiji*”

Ví dụ chữ 意 âm Hán Việt là **Ý** và âm Onyomi (âm Hán Nhật) trong tiếng Nhật là “*i*”.

注意      **CHÚ Ý**      đọc là “*chuu*”

意見      **Ý KIẾN**      đọc là “*iken*”

意外      **Ý NGOẠI**      đọc là “*igai*”

Ví dụ chữ 婚 âm Hán Việt là **HÔN** và âm Onyomi (âm Hán Nhật) trong tiếng Nhật là “*kon*”.

婚約      **HÔN ƯỚC**      đọc là “*konyaku*”

結婚      **KẾT HÔN**      đọc là “*kekkon*”

離婚      **LY HÔN**      đọc là “*rikon*”

Ngoài ra có những chữ Hán khác nhau về cách viết và ý nghĩa nhưng có âm Hán Việt phát âm gần tương tự nhau thì âm Onyomi (âm Hán Nhật) trong tiếng Nhật hầu như đọc giống nhau.

Ví dụ chữ 官 (QUAN)、管 (QUẢN) có âm Hán Việt có phát âm gần tương tự nhau là QUAN VÀ QUẢN. Vì thế âm Onyomi (âm Hán Nhật) đọc giống nhau, có cách đọc là “*kan*”.

警官      **CẢNH QUAN**      đọc là “*keikan*”

管理      **QUẢN LÝ**      đọc là “*kanri*”



“sửa sang lại trong tòa nhà”.

企業 (kigyō), âm Hán Việt là XÍ NGHIỆP, nhưng nghĩa là “doanh nghiệp, công ty lớn”.

環境 (kankyō), âm Hán Việt là HOÀN CẢNH, nhưng nghĩa là “môi trường”.

Vì ngôn ngữ của mỗi đất nước có đặc thù riêng nên không phải lúc nào chúng ta sử dụng cách ghép âm Hán Việt cũng có được một từ đúng. Vì thế chúng ta nên tận dụng cái tốt và linh hoạt sử dụng chứ không nên lạm dụng nó vì trong tiếng Nhật có những chữ Hán tự không có nghĩa đúng với âm Hán Việt mà chúng ta hiểu. Chúng ta cần phải tra cứu xem từ đó có tồn tại trong tiếng Nhật không và nghĩa nó có tương ứng với nghĩa tiếng Việt mà mình tra cứu không, hơn nữa cách đọc mình ghép âm có đúng với cách đọc đã được quy định của người Nhật không. Nếu làm được như vậy thì việc học Hán tự hay từ vựng trong tiếng Nhật qua âm Hán Việt mới có ích và hiệu quả.

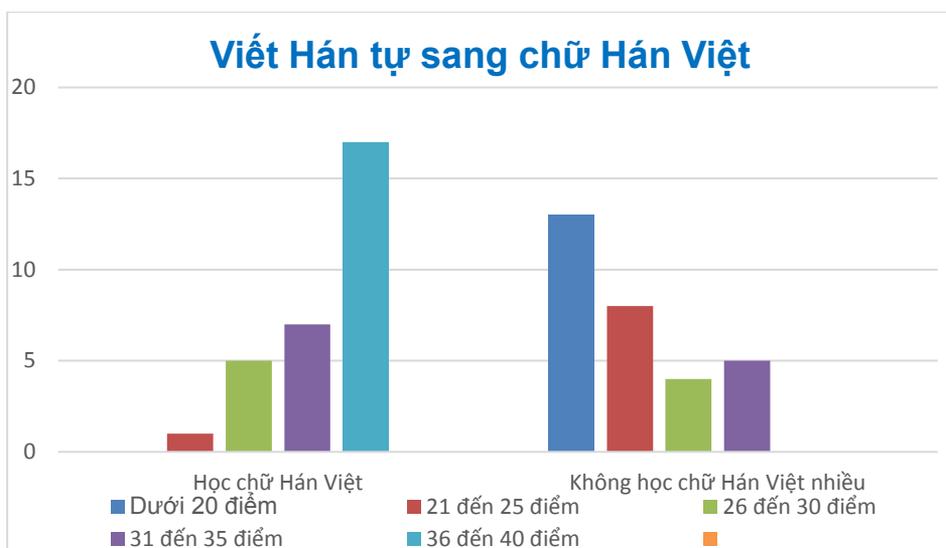
### **III. ĐÁNH GIÁ MỨC ĐỘ CẦN THIẾT VIỆC HỌC CHỮ HÁN VIỆT CỦA SINH VIÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ NHẬT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC MỞ THÀNH PHỐ HỒ CHÍ MINH**

#### **1. Khảo sát tình hình học tiếng Nhật của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh (sinh viên khóa 2019).**

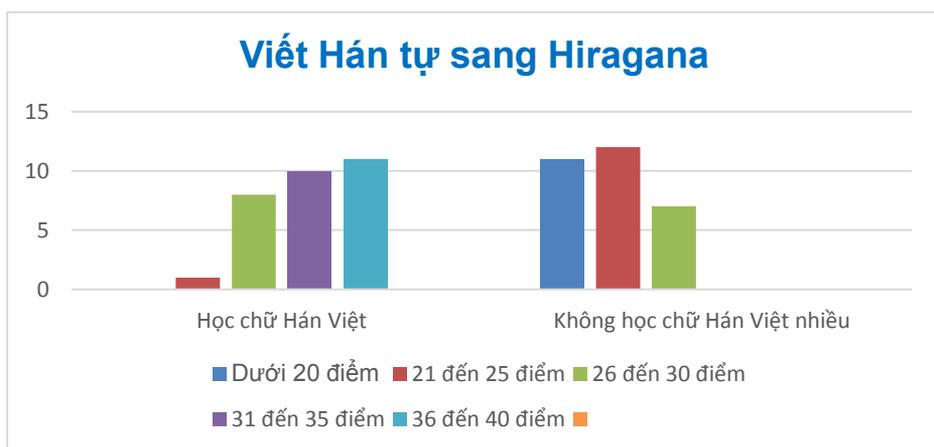
Chúng tôi tiến hành khảo sát tình hình học Hán tự của sinh viên khóa 2019 gồm 60 sinh viên năm 2, vừa mới bắt đầu học trình độ trung cấp tiếng Nhật. Trong đó có 30 sinh viên học Hán tự qua chữ Hán Việt và 30 sinh viên hầu như không học Hán tự qua chữ Hán Việt.

Bài kiểm tra gồm có 40 từ Hán tự gồm 2 phần: Viết Hán tự sang chữ Hiragana và Viết Hán tự sang chữ Hán Việt.

Kết quả như sau:



(Bảng 1)



(Bảng 2)

Rõ ràng qua kết quả của 2 bảng khảo sát trên (bảng 1 và bảng 2) thì nhóm sinh viên học Hán tự qua chữ Hán Việt có số điểm tuyệt đối và không có điểm dưới trung bình. Trong khi đó nhóm sinh viên hầu như không học Hán tự qua chữ Hán Việt thì không có điểm tuyệt đối mà gần 50% sinh viên của nhóm có số điểm dưới trung bình.

Điều này có thể khẳng định học Hán tự qua chữ Hán Việt rất cần thiết cho việc học tiếng Nhật của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ

Nhật nói chung và sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở nói riêng.

## **2. Phân tích bảng khảo sát đánh giá mức độ cần thiết việc học Hán tự thông qua chữ Hán Việt của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh**

Để tìm hiểu đánh giá mức độ cần thiết việc học chữ Hán Việt của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, chúng tôi tiến hành khảo sát sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật của trường gồm khóa 17, khóa 18, khóa 19, khóa 20. Kết quả khảo sát thu được tổng cộng của 156 sinh viên, bao gồm 29 sinh viên khóa 17, 30 sinh viên khóa 18, 57 sinh viên khóa 19 và 40 sinh viên khóa 20.

Chúng tôi đã đưa ra 7 câu hỏi trong bảng khảo sát như sau:

Câu 1: Bạn có học Hán tự bằng việc nhớ và hiểu chữ Hán Việt không?

Câu 2: Nhớ âm Hán Việt có cần thiết cho việc học tiếng Nhật không?

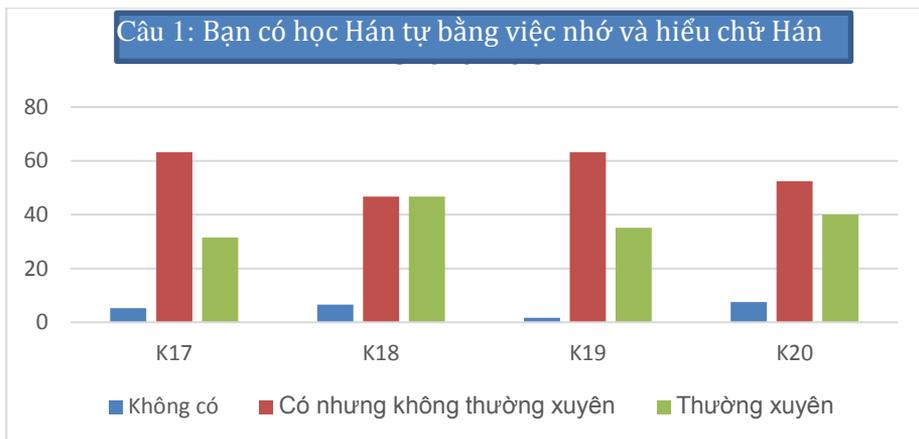
Câu 3: Hiểu nghĩa chữ Hán Việt có cần thiết cho việc học tiếng Nhật không?

Câu 4: Bạn có phân biệt được âm Nhật và âm Hán khi đọc chữ Hán tự không?

Câu 5: Bạn có nhớ âm Nhật và âm Hán của từng chữ Hán tự không?

Câu 6: Nhớ, hiểu chữ Hán Việt có ích cho kỹ năng gì? (Nghe, Nói, Đọc, Viết, Dịch)

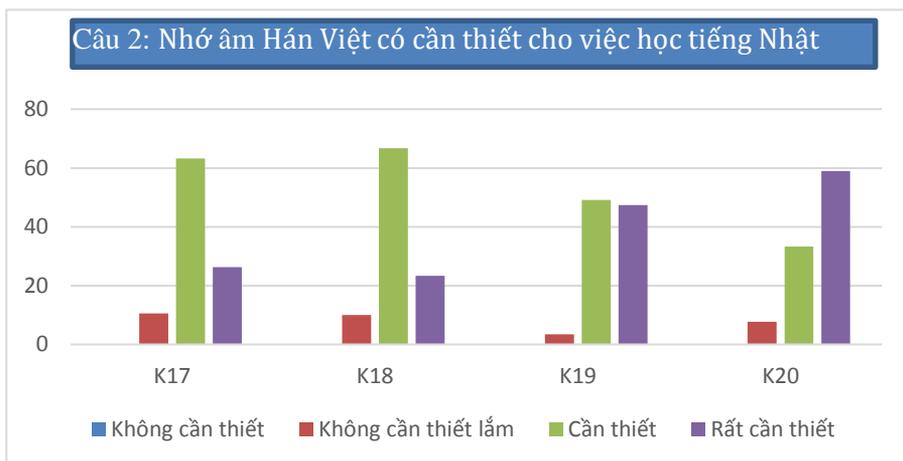
Câu 7: Ý kiến khác về việc học Hán tự.



(Bảng 3)

Qua câu 1 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 3) cho kết quả trên 50% sinh viên có học Hán tự bằng việc nhớ và hiểu chữ Hán Việt, tuy nhiên không thường xuyên. Trong đó, sinh viên khóa 18 tỉ lệ sinh viên học thường xuyên chiếm nhiều nhất trong 4 khóa và chiếm gần 50% sinh viên.

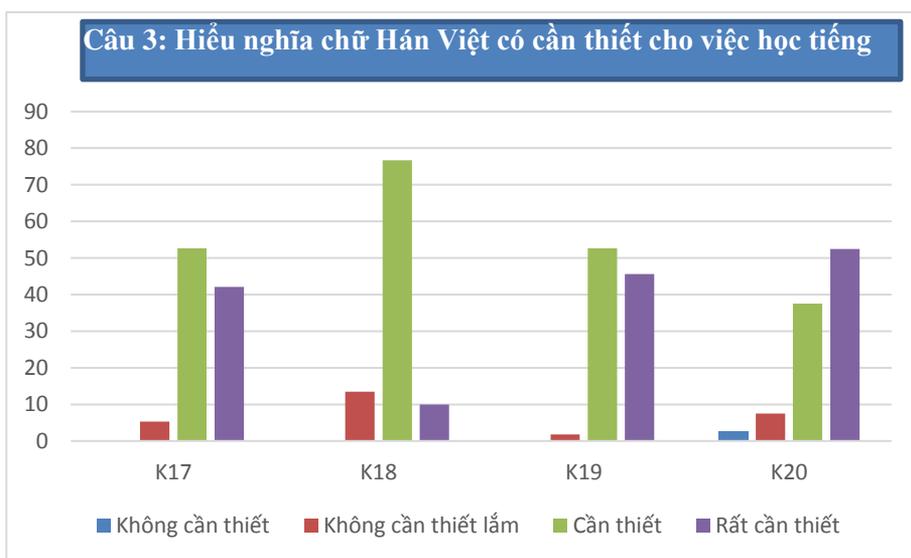
Có thể nói hầu như sinh viên có ý thức việc nhớ và hiểu chữ Hán Việt cần thiết để học tốt chữ Hán tự.



(Bảng 4)

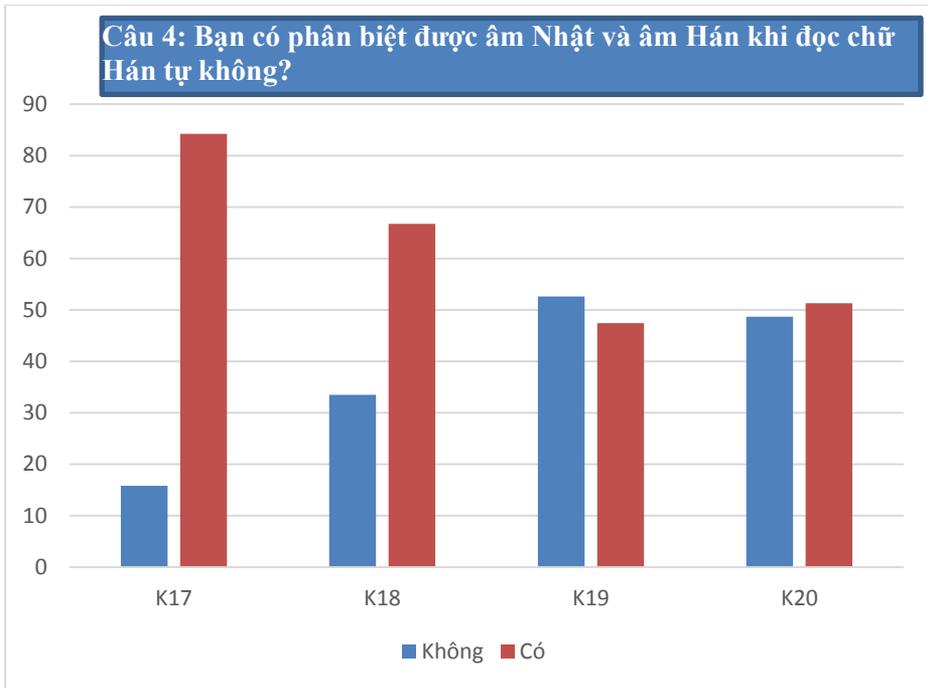
Qua câu 2 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 4) cho kết quả hoàn toàn không có sinh viên nào phủ nhận sự cần thiết của việc học âm Hán Việt khi học tiếng Nhật. Hầu như sinh viên các khóa cho là cần thiết và đặc biệt sinh viên khóa 20 gần 60% nhận định là rất cần thiết.

Điều này có thể cho thấy sinh viên khóa 20 tuy vào thời điểm này đang là sinh viên năm nhất của trường nhưng các bạn có học tiếng Nhật theo định hướng giảng dạy của nhà trường, đặc biệt của ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật.



(Bảng 5)

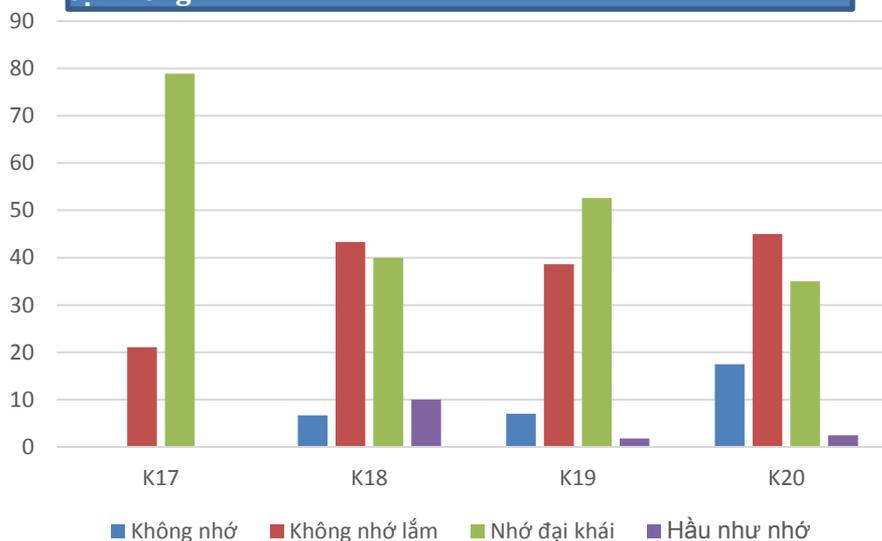
Qua câu 3 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 5) cho kết quả hầu hết sinh viên đều nhận thấy hiểu nghĩa chữ Hán Việt cần thiết cho việc học tiếng Nhật. Tuy nhiên vẫn có 2.5 % sinh viên nhận thấy không cần thiết phải hiểu nghĩa chữ Hán Việt khi học tiếng Nhật. Có thể số sinh viên này chưa nhận thấy hữu ích của chữ Hán Việt trong việc học Hán Tự. Cũng có thể số sinh viên này học Hán tự không theo chữ Hán Việt.



(Bảng 6)

Qua câu 4 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 6) cho kết quả hầu như sinh viên khóa 2017 và 2018 phân biệt được âm Hán và âm Nhật khi đọc chữ Hán tự. Tuy nhiên sinh viên khóa 2019 và khóa 2020 tỉ lệ phân biệt và không phân biệt được âm Hán và âm Nhật tương đương nhau. Điều này chứng tỏ rằng khi sinh viên có thời gian học tiếng Nhật càng lâu thì càng hiểu biết tiếng Nhật nhiều hơn, có nhiều kinh nghiệm học và có phương pháp học hơn. Hơn nữa, kết quả khảo sát trên cho thấy cần xem lại cách dạy và học Hán tự đối với sinh viên khóa 19 và sinh viên khóa 20 nói riêng, cũng như sinh viên năm nhất vừa mới bắt đầu tiếng Nhật sơ cấp và sinh viên năm hai vừa mới bắt đầu tiếng Nhật trung cấp của ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

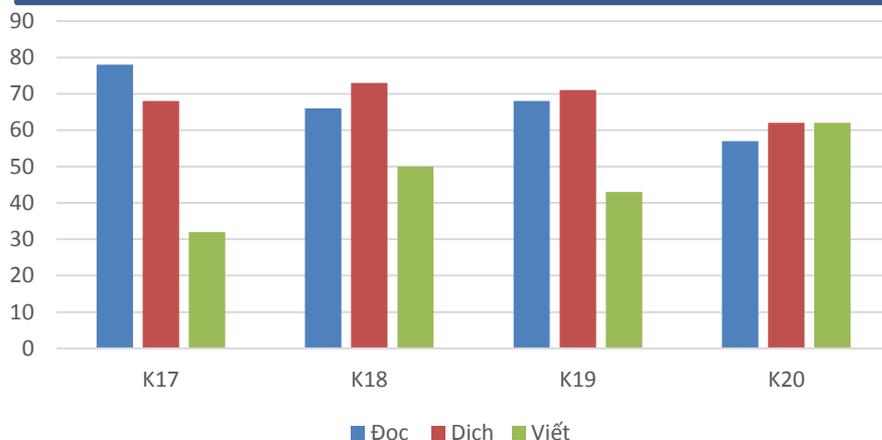
**Câu 5: Bạn có nhớ âm Nhật và âm Hán của từng chữ Hán tự không?**



(Bảng 7)

Qua câu 5 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 7) cho kết quả sinh viên khóa 17 (sinh viên năm 4) hầu như nhiều sinh viên nhớ đại khái âm Hán và âm Nhật của từng chữ Hán tự. Không có sinh viên không nhớ và không có sinh viên nhớ hết âm đọc của các chữ Hán tự. Điều này cũng có thể hiểu là các bạn có quá nhiều lượng từ Hán tự đã học nên chỉ nhớ đại khái và ít nhiều gì cũng nhớ cách đọc của từng chữ vì các bạn tiếp xúc Hán tự trong thời gian dài. Bên cạnh đó sinh viên khóa 18, 19, 20 vẫn có sinh viên không nhớ cách đọc của từng chữ Hán tự. Có thể các bạn chưa có kinh nghiệm trong việc học Hán tự. Tuy nhiên có sinh viên nhớ hầu hết cách đọc của từng chữ Hán tự có thể vì lượng từ các bạn tiếp xúc không nhiều hoặc còn ít. Nhưng cũng có khả năng có sinh viên có phương pháp học Hán tự tốt.

**Câu 6: Nhớ, hiểu chữ Hán Việt có ích cho kỹ năng gì? (Nghe, Nói, Đọc, Viết, Dịch)**



(Bảng 8)

Qua câu 6 trong bảng khảo sát (bảng 8) cho kết quả hầu như sinh viên các khóa nhận thấy nhớ, hiểu chữ Hán Việt có ích cho kỹ năng Đọc, Dịch và Viết. Trong đó sinh viên khóa 17 (sinh viên năm 4) có tỉ lệ có ích cho kỹ năng dịch gần 80% và có ích cho kỹ năng đọc gần 70%. Điều này có thể nói sinh viên năm 4 đã trải nghiệm môn đọc, môn dịch nhiều và gặp nhiều khó khăn khi không đọc được, cũng như không hiểu được nghĩa chữ Hán tự nên không dịch được.

Sau khi trả lời cho 6 câu hỏi khảo sát trên, sinh viên có một số ý kiến để cải thiện việc học tiếng Nhật và hầu như là việc học Hán tự.

Ý kiến của sinh viên như sau:

- Sinh viên nên học Hán tự mỗi ngày để nhớ, thuộc mặt chữ. (*sinh viên khóa 19, sinh viên khóa 20*)

- Sinh viên nên đọc nhiều để có nhiều từ vựng, biết nhiều từ Hán tự, có nhiều cơ hội nhìn thấy nhiều lần chữ Hán tự để ghi nhớ nhanh hơn và nhớ lâu hơn. (*sinh viên khóa 19*).

- Cần có phương pháp học Hán tự khoa học để dễ nhớ hơn. (*sinh viên khóa 17, sinh viên khóa 18, sinh viên khóa 19*)

- Nên có 1 lớp Hán tự riêng trên trường để tăng thời gian tiếp xúc với Hán tự. (*sinh viên khóa 17, sinh viên khóa 19, sinh viên khóa 20*)

- Giáo viên giúp sinh viên hiểu nghĩa chữ Hán Việt, phân biệt cách đọc âm Nhật và âm Hán. (*sinh viên khóa 18, sinh viên khóa 19*)

#### **IV. BIỆN PHÁP KHẮC PHỤC VÀ GIẢI PHÁP**

Qua khảo sát tình học của sinh viên và khảo sát đánh giá về mức độ cần thiết về việc học chữ Hán Việt của sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, cũng như qua ý kiến đại diện của sinh viên các khóa học, chúng tôi nhận thấy sinh viên có nhu cầu được tiếp xúc nhiều với Hán tự để nhớ Hán tự nhanh và lâu hơn. Ngoài ra sinh viên còn có nhu cầu có phương pháp học Hán tự khoa học hơn để dễ hiểu và dễ nhớ bài hơn. Vì thế tôi xin đề xuất một số giải pháp sau đây:

##### **1. Đề xuất cho sinh viên**

- Vì sinh viên ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở là sinh viên chuyên ngành nên khi học bất kỳ gì về tiếng Nhật cũng phải luôn luôn nắm vững căn bản và hiểu rõ căn cứ điều mình học. Vì thế khi học Hán tự trước hết sinh viên cần phải hiểu rõ Hán tự là gì, đặc điểm của Hán tự và những gì liên quan đến Hán tự như chữ Hán, chữ Hán Việt, Âm Hán, âm ON, âm KUN...theo như phần cơ sở lý luận chúng tôi đề cập trên.

- Khi hiểu rõ về Hán tự thì sinh viên tiến hành ứng dụng để nhớ từ. Trước hết nhớ cách nhận mặt chữ Hán, âm Hán Việt, âm ON và âm KUN của từng chữ Hán tự. Để nhớ được tốt thì học tập và luyện tập thường xuyên, hay nói cách khác sự lặp đi lặp lại là phương pháp tốt nhất. Thêm vào đó, sinh viên có thể dùng Flashcard học mỗi ngày. Ngoài ra đọc sách tiếng Nhật nhiều cũng là cách tiếp xúc nhiều với tiếng Nhật, cũng như với Hán tự để học và nhớ tốt hơn.

- Tuy nhiên việc học và nhớ cần phải khoa học thì mới nhớ nhanh và nhớ lâu. Sinh viên cần nhớ Hán tự bằng cách ghi nhớ âm Hán Việt để có thể đọc được và điều quan trọng là nên hiểu đúng nghĩa từ của ngôn ngữ đó, không nên phán đoán mà cần phải hiểu chính xác nghĩa của từ.

- Học viết Hán tự theo bộ thủ cũng là một phương pháp học khoa học để giúp người học hiểu rõ và nhớ lâu hơn. Ngoài ra còn tạo sự thú vị để làm động lực học tốt hơn.

- Học đúng thời điểm. Trong một khoảng thời gian ngắn sinh viên không nên học và nhớ nhiều Hán tự cũng như từ vựng tiếng Nhật. Vì bộ não chúng ta chức năng ghi nhớ cũng có giới hạn, nếu cố nhớ nhiều quá sẽ phản tác dụng. Vì vậy để ghi nhớ không phải là học nhiều, mà hãy học đúng thời điểm. Sắp xếp thời gian ôn tập hợp lý và chính xác sẽ giúp phát huy tốt khả năng ghi nhớ của mình.

- Đừng ép mình nhớ tất cả âm ONYOMI (âm Hán Nhật) và âm KUNYOMI (âm Thuần Nhật) của mỗi chữ Hán. Vì lượng từ vựng tiếng Nhật rất nhiều nên chúng ta không thể nhớ hết được. Hơn nữa có những âm ONYOMI và âm KUNYOMI không thường xuyên được sử dụng. Vì thế thay vì học riêng lẻ từng chữ Hán thì chúng ta cố gắng học chữ Hán theo từ mới. Dần dần chúng ta sẽ nắm được quy luật đọc chữ Hán tự và ghi nhớ từ vựng tốt hơn.

## **2. Đề xuất cho giáo viên**

Giảng viên cần thực hiện 3 bước theo thứ tự để dạy cho sinh viên Hán tự: Giúp cho sinh viên hiểu Hán tự – Giúp cho sinh viên nhớ Hán tự - Giúp cho sinh viên sử dụng Hán tự.

- Sau khi sinh viên học thuộc 2 bảng chữ Hiragana và Katakana là sinh viên phải học một loại chữ khó và xa lạ hơn đó là Hán tự. Lúc này sinh viên có rất nhiều thắc mắc và hoang mang về loại chữ mới này. Vì thế giảng viên là người giúp cho sinh viên giải đáp các thắc mắc đó. Giảng viên giới thiệu cho sinh viên về chữ Hán tự như nguồn gốc của Hán tự, đặc điểm Hán tự và những gì liên quan đến Hán tự như chữ Hán, chữ Hán Việt, âm Hán Việt, âm ON và âm KUN,...

- Tuy nhiên những kiến thức trên giảng cho sinh viên một lần chưa đủ mà giảng viên nên nhắc đi nhắc lại nhiều lần để sinh viên nhớ. Giảng viên có thể giúp sinh viên nhớ bằng cách cho sinh viên làm Flashcard theo nhóm và các nhóm học Hán tự cùng nhau. Trên Flashcard đó mặt trước có chữ Hán và âm Hán Việt, mặt sau nên là từ vựng cụ thể có xuất hiện âm ON và âm KUN trong đó.

- Giảng viên có thể dùng máy chiếu đưa từ vựng viết bằng Hán tự để cho sinh viên đọc mỗi ngày. Giảng viên nên cho sinh viên đọc âm Hán Việt và luyện đọc từ mới có phân biệt âm ON và âm KUN.

- Kiểm tra cũng là hình thức để giảng viên giúp sinh viên cố gắng học bài để nhớ và sử dụng Hán tự mà sinh viên đã học.

- Bài kiểm tra Hán tự có thể là viết Kanji sang Hiragana, viết Hiragana sang Kanji hoặc cho từ tiếng Việt sinh viên viết ra tiếng Nhật vừa bằng Hán tự và vừa phiên Hiragana.

### **3. Đề xuất cho nhà trường**

- Điều sinh viên các khóa mong nhà trường đáp ứng là có môn học về Hán tự riêng cho sinh viên và đây cũng là ý kiến chúng tôi muốn đề xuất. Hán tự rất quan trọng trong việc học chuyên ngành tiếng Nhật. Nếu sinh viên không đọc được Hán tự thì không đọc và không dịch được, thậm chí còn không diễn tả rõ ràng được ý của mình khi viết văn hay viết báo cáo cũng vì không viết được Hán tự, hoặc không dịch được câu từ Việt sang Nhật. Hơn nữa, Hán tự xuất hiện rất nhiều trong các bảng thông báo, các biển báo, bảng biểu nên nếu sinh viên sang Nhật du học, tham quan thì rất vất vả cho cuộc sống khi ở Nhật. Vì thế giải pháp cấp thiết cần có môn học Hán tự riêng trong chương trình đào tạo của ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

- Ngoài ra, nhà trường cần cung cấp sách tham khảo cho sinh viên những sách liên quan đến chữ Hán, Hán Việt, Hán tự để sinh viên có nguồn tham khảo tốt để có căn bản về lĩnh vực mình đang học chuyên ngành.

- Hiện nay Flashcard bán rất nhiều và rất đẹp, để sinh viên không mất thời gian và chi phí làm Flashcard thì nhà trường có thể hỗ trợ Flashcard cho sinh viên để sinh viên có cơ hội học Hán tự một cách thú vị, nhằm tạo động lực cho sinh viên học tiếng Nhật tốt hơn.

Với kinh nghiệm giảng dạy tiếng Nhật cho sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, chúng tôi có một số đề xuất như trên. Đề xuất đưa ra là đề xuất bám sát tình hình của sinh viên trường. Chúng tôi mong đem lại môi trường học tốt cho sinh viên, đồng thời đối với sinh viên có phương pháp dạy và học tốt hơn trong việc học Hán tự nói riêng và học chuyên ngành tiếng Nhật nói chung. Chúng tôi mong đón nhận sự góp ý của quý thầy cô và ý kiến của các bạn sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh cho những đề xuất này.

## **KẾT LUẬN**

Vấn đề học Hán tự luôn luôn là đề tài người học tiếng Nhật đề cập đến, và sinh viên ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh cũng không ngoại lệ. Vào những buổi họp cổ vấn học tập, cũng như trong các buổi khảo sát tình hình học tiếng Nhật, sinh viên thường đề cập đến vấn đề học Hán tự.

Là giảng viên trực tiếp giảng dạy, chúng tôi nhận thấy những năm gần đây có nhiều sinh viên học Hán tự không đúng phương pháp, sinh viên chưa nắm vững kiến thức về Hán tự và chưa nhận thức được sự cần thiết của chữ Hán Việt trong việc học Hán tự, cũng như từ vựng tiếng Nhật. Vì thế chúng tôi làm khảo sát để đánh giá tình hình nhận thức và tình trạng học tiếng Nhật của sinh viên, để từ đó cung cấp thêm những kiến thức sinh viên còn thiếu hụt, đồng thời đưa ra những giải pháp kịp thời để cải thiện việc dạy và học tiếng Nhật của ngành ngôn ngữ Nhật trường Đại học Mở thành phố Hồ Chí Minh.

Bài nghiên cứu tuy chưa đi sâu vào phân tích rõ tình hình học tập cũng như nhận thức của sinh viên về việc học Hán tự thông qua chữ Hán Việt, nhưng cũng có phần nào đáp ứng kịp thời về kiến thức và giải pháp cải thiện việc học Hán tự, cũng như từ vựng tiếng

Nhật của sinh viên. Thông qua bài nghiên cứu này tôi sẽ có cơ hội xem xét, điều chỉnh và đổi mới phương pháp giảng dạy của mình cho tốt hơn, đặc biệt là phương pháp giảng dạy Hán tự, từ vựng tiếng Nhật để giúp sinh viên có thể dễ dàng trong việc học tiếng Nhật hơn.

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# The Concept of ngoài in Vietnamese and Japanese

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**Linh Vo Phuong Le**

Ho Chi Minh City Open University, Vietnam  
*linh.lvp@ou.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

Every country has their own culturally distinctive thoughts on objects and phenomena of the surrounding environment, the nature and the society. It is normally reflected through languages. In many cases, it is impossible to accurately translate a word to the target language directly. We should convey its concept to achieve equivalent meaning in translation. In this article, we conduct spatial perceptions analysis through the concept of *ngoài* in Vietnamese and Japanese with comparisons of similarities and differences. This article reinforces the basis of spatial perception in the two languages to support teaching and learning Japanese, especially Japanese translation skills.

***Keywords:*** *spatial perception, contrastive linguistics, Japanese*

# Ý NIỆM “NGOÀI” TRONG TIẾNG VIỆT VÀ ĐỐI CHIẾU VỚI TIẾNG NHẬT

Th.S. Lê Võ Phương Linh

*Trường Đại Học Mở Tp. Hồ Chí Minh*

## Tóm tắt

Mỗi dân tộc đều có những cách nghĩ riêng về các sự vật, hiện tượng của thế giới xung quanh, của tự nhiên, xã hội,... ở đất nước đó và điều này được thể hiện rõ qua ngôn ngữ. Trong nhiều trường hợp ta không thể dịch chính xác một từ sang ngôn ngữ đích mà phải chuyển dịch ý niệm của từ đó để có được ý nghĩa tương đương. Trong phạm vi bài viết, chúng tôi tiến hành phân tích tri nhận không gian thông qua ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt và tiếng Nhật rồi đối chiếu với nhau để tìm ra điểm giống và khác nhau. Bài viết bổ sung cơ sở tri nhận không gian trong hai ngôn ngữ, hỗ trợ cho việc dạy và học tiếng Nhật, đặc biệt là kỹ năng dịch thuật tiếng Nhật.

**Từ khóa:** *Tri nhận không gian, ý niệm, “ngoài”, tiếng Nhật*

## 1. Đặt vấn đề

Ngôn ngữ học tri nhận (Cognitive Linguistics) là một phân ngành còn rất non trẻ, bộ máy khái niệm và hệ thống lý thuyết vẫn chưa được ổn định. Theo Lý Toàn Thắng (2005), “Nếu phải nói thật vắn tắt rằng ngôn ngữ học tri nhận là gì, thì có thể nói rằng: đó là một trường phái mới của ngôn ngữ học hiện đại, tiến hành nghiên cứu ngôn ngữ trên cơ sở vốn kinh nghiệm và sự cảm thụ của con người về thế giới khách quan cũng như cái cách thức mà con người tri giác và ý niệm hóa các sự vật và sự tình của thế giới khách quan đó”. Trong đó, ý niệm hóa không gian là một vấn đề đặc sắc thường được các nhà ngôn ngữ học khai thác để nghiên cứu và đối chiếu với ngôn ngữ khác. Các dân tộc nói thứ tiếng khác nhau có thể phân cắt và cấu trúc hóa thế giới bên ngoài không giống nhau và chủ yếu

là dựa trên những cứ liệu về không gian (Phạm Toàn Thắng, 2009). Điều này đã dẫn đến những sự hiểu lầm trong quá trình chuyển dịch ngôn ngữ của người học ngoại ngữ nói chung và sinh viên ngành Ngôn ngữ Nhật nói riêng. Thông qua bài nghiên cứu về ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt và đối chiếu với tiếng Nhật, chúng tôi muốn người học tiếng Nhật thấy rõ bản sắc trong lối nghĩ về không gian của người Việt và người Nhật, từ đó có những có thể phán đoán, đưa ra những phương án dịch thuật tốt hơn để phù hợp với văn phong, văn hóa của ngôn ngữ đích.

## 2. CƠ SỞ LÝ LUẬN

### 2.1. Ý niệm

#### 2.1.1. Ý niệm là gì

Ý niệm là một trong những phạm trù cơ bản của ngôn ngữ học tri nhận.

Nhà triết học thời Trung cổ Pierre Abélard cho rằng ý niệm là tập hợp các khái niệm sâu thẳm trong tâm hồn và luôn trong tình trạng sẵn sàng chuyển hóa thành lời nói.

Trong ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, các nhà nghiên cứu định nghĩa ý niệm theo những quan điểm khác nhau. Trần Văn Cơ (2011) đã dẫn ra một vài định nghĩa như sau:

Ju.X. Xtepanov (1997) định nghĩa: “*ý niệm* tựa như một khối kết đông của nền văn hoá trong ý thức của con người; dưới dạng của nó nền văn hóa đi vào thế giới ý thức (tư duy) của con người, và, mặt khác, ý niệm là cái mà nhờ đó con người bình thường, không phải là “người sáng tạo ra những giá trị văn hóa”; chính con người đó đi vào văn hóa, và trong một số trường hợp nhất định có tác động đến văn hóa” (tr. 40). M.V. Pimenova định nghĩa: “Ý niệm là đơn vị thuộc cấp độ vị (kiểu như âm vị, hình vị, từ vị v.v.) được biểu tượng nhờ cái biểu niệm (nội dung và khối lượng của khái niệm), ý nghĩa từ vựng và hình thái bên trong của từ (phương thức biểu hiện nội dung ngoài ngôn ngữ).”

#### 2.1.2. Sự khác nhau giữa “khái niệm” và “ý niệm”

“Khái niệm” và “Ý niệm” đều được dịch từ từ nguyên gốc là concept. Tuy nhiên, ở đây cần phân biệt rõ, “khái niệm” trong ngôn ngữ học truyền thống đơn vị của tư duy, được biểu hiện trong từ và là một hình thức của tư duy, phản ánh những đặc tính cơ bản của sự vật, những mối liên hệ và quan hệ giữa các sự vật và hiện tượng trong sự mâu thuẫn và phát triển của chúng. Khái niệm được hình thành nhờ những phương pháp như trừu tượng hóa, lí tưởng hóa, so sánh, phân tích, tổng hợp, v.v.

So với khái niệm, “ý niệm” trong ngôn ngữ học tri nhận có những đặc điểm riêng. Ý niệm là kết quả của quá trình tri nhận, quá trình phản ánh thế giới khách quan vào đầu óc con người. Stepanov (1997) cho rằng ý niệm thuộc về logic toán học và văn hóa học.

Ngoài ra, Khái niệm không mang tính ẩn dụ nhưng ẩn dụ lại là một thí dụ về sự ý niệm hóa trong ngôn ngữ. Xem xét ca từ trong bài hát sau:

“Ngày ngày Mặt trời đi qua trên lăng

Thấy một Mặt trời trong lăng rất đỏ”

Trong câu thứ nhất, từ “Mặt trời” là Mặt trời, là một “thiên thể nóng sáng, ở xa Trái Đất, là nguồn chiếu sáng và sưởi ấm chủ yếu cho Trái Đất” (Từ điển tiếng Việt, 2003, tr. 621). Nhưng trong câu thứ hai, từ “Mặt trời” này có tính ẩn dụ, nó không thể hiện khái niệm, mà phản ánh đặc trưng của ý niệm.

Trần Trương Mỹ Dung (2005) đã nghiên cứu và tổng hợp ý kiến của nhiều tác giả về sự khác nhau giữa “ý niệm” và “khái niệm” như sau:

a) Ý niệm là sự kiện của lời nói, đó là lời nói được phát ngôn ra. Do đó nó khác với khái niệm.

b) Ý niệm gắn chặt với người nói và luôn định hướng đến người nghe. Người nói và người nghe là hai bộ phận cấu thành của ý niệm.

c) Ý niệm mang tính chủ quan với nghĩa nó là một mảng của “bức tranh thế giới”, nó phản ánh thế giới khách quan qua lăng kính

của ý thức ngôn ngữ dân tộc. Do đó ý niệm mang tính dân tộc một cách sâu sắc.

d) Ý niệm là đơn vị của tư duy (ý thức) của con người. Hai thuộc tính không thể tách rời nhau của ý niệm là trí nhớ và tưởng tượng. Ý niệm là một hành động đa chiều: nếu là hành động của trí nhớ thì nó hướng về quá khứ, nếu là hành động của trí tưởng tượng, thì nó hướng tới tương lai, còn nếu là hành động phán đoán, thì nó hướng về hiện tại.

đ) Ý niệm, khác với “khái niệm”, không chỉ mang đặc trưng miêu tả, mà còn có cả đặc trưng tình cảm - ý chí và hình ảnh. Ý niệm không chỉ suy nghĩ, mà còn cảm xúc. Nó là kết quả của sự tác động qua lại của một loạt những nhân tố như truyền thống dân tộc, sáng tác dân gian, tôn giáo, hệ tư tưởng, kinh nghiệm sống, hình tượng nghệ thuật, cảm xúc và hệ thống giá trị. Ý niệm tạo ra một lớp văn hoá trung gian giữa con người và thế giới. Nó được cấu thành từ tri thức tín ngưỡng, nghệ thuật, đạo lí, luật pháp, phong tục tập quán và một số thói quen mà con người tiếp thu được với tư cách là thành viên của xã hội. (tr. 62)

## 2.2. Khái niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt

Theo định nghĩa trong từ điển Tiếng Việt (2003) của Viện Ngôn ngữ học do cố Giáo sư Hoàng Phê chủ biên, “ngoài” có các nghĩa như sau:

I. 1. Phía những vị trí không thuộc phạm vi được xác định nào đó; trái với trong.

Ví dụ: “*Đứng ngoài không được vào*”, “*đur luận trong và ngoài nước*”, “*ngoài tầm kiểm soát*”

2. Tập hợp những vị trí tuy thuộc phạm vi được xác định nào đó, nhưng nằm ở bề mặt hoặc ở ranh giới và hướng ra phía những vật xung quanh.

Ví dụ: “*Mặt ngoài của ngôi nhà*”, “*mắc bệnh ngoài da*”, “*nhìn dáng vẻ bên ngoài*”

3. Phía trước so với phía sau, hoặc phía những vị trí ở xa trung

tâm so với phía những vị trí ở gần trung tâm; trái với trong.

Ví dụ: “Nhà ngoài”, “đứng vòng trong vòng ngoài”, “đội bóng bị loại từ vòng ngoài”

4. Vùng địa lí ở vào phía Bắc so với địa phương được xác định làm mốc, trong phạm vi đất nước Việt Nam; trái với trong.

Ví dụ: “Đàng ngoài”, “trong Nam ngoài Bắc”, “sống ngoài Hà Nội”

5. Khoảng thời gian sau thời điểm xác định làm mốc không bao lâu.

Ví dụ: “Ngoài rằm hằng đi”, “tuổi ngoài sáu mươi”, “chuyện xảy ra ngoài một năm rồi”

6. Phạm vi những gì không nằm trong phạm vi được xác định.

Ví dụ: “Việc xảy ra ngoài dự tính”, “làm thêm ngoài giờ”, “thu nhập ngoài lương”

7. Phạm vi những gì khác, không kể những cái được xác định.

Ví dụ: “Ngoài anh ta, không ai làm được”, “mâm cơm chẳng có gì ngoài đĩa rau muống với mấy quả cà”

II. Từ biểu thị điều sắp nêu ra là nơi sự vật nói đến tồn tại hoặc sự việc, hiện tượng nói đến xảy ra, nơi đó được coi là ở phía ngoài, vùng ngoài so với vị trí lấy làm mốc.

Ví dụ: “Ngoài trời tối đen như mực”, “nhận xét ở ngoài lề”, “trong nhà chưa tỏ, ngoài ngõ đã tường” (tr. 863, 864)

### **2.3. Khái niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Nhật**

Trong tiếng Nhật, có nhiều cách để thể hiện ý nghĩa “ngoài” tương đương với “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt. Trong phạm vi bài viết, chúng tôi lựa chọn đối chiếu với từ そと (Chữ Hán: 外, cách đọc: Soto). Trong từ điển Meikyo Kokugo (2011), “soto” được định nghĩa như sau:

1. Phần không gian tách rời khỏi một phạm vi được giới hạn

cụ thể

Ví dụ: 子供はそとで遊びなさい。

(Phiên âm: Kodomo wa soto de asobinasai.)

Tạm dịch: Trẻ con nên ra ngoài vui chơi.

2. Phần nằm phía bên ngoài của đồ vật

Ví dụ: コップのそとに水滴が生じる。

(Phiên âm: Koppu no soto ni suiteki ga shoujiru.)

Tạm dịch: Những giọt nước xuất hiện ở mặt ngoài của chiếc ly.

3. Phần nằm cách xa khu vực trung tâm hoặc hướng ra xa trung tâm.

Ví dụ: 足のつま先をそとに向ける。

(Phiên âm: Ashi no tsumasaki wo soto ni mukeru.)

Tạm dịch: Hướng mũi chân ra phía ngoài.

4. Phần nằm ở bề mặt, có thể nhìn thấy được.

Ví dụ: 感情を外に表す。

(Phiên âm: Kanjou wo sotoni arawasu.)

Tạm dịch: Bày tỏ cảm xúc ra bên ngoài.

5. Những nơi không phải nhà của mình.

Ví dụ: 外で食事をすませる。

(Phiên âm: Soto de shokuji wo sumaseru.)

Tạm dịch: Dùng bữa bên ngoài.

6. Những gì không thuộc tổ chức, đoàn thể của mình.

Ví dụ: この仕事はそとに発注しよう。

(Phiên âm: Kono shigoto wa soto ni hacchuushiyou.)

Tạm dịch: Công việc này hãy giao cho bên ngoài làm.

7. Phần không gian tách rời khỏi một phạm vi nào đó được hình thành một cách trừu tượng.

Ví dụ: この問題は我々の関心の外にある。

(Phiên âm: Kono mondai wa wareware no kanshin no soto ni aru.)

Tạm dịch: Vấn đề này nằm ngoài sự quan tâm của chúng tôi.

### 3. Đối chiếu ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt với tiếng Nhật

Các ngôn ngữ trên thế giới có nhiều từ mang nghĩa biểu niệm giống nhau nhưng mỗi ngôn ngữ sẽ có ý niệm khác nhau về một từ (khác nhau về dân tộc, văn hóa, ngôn ngữ, kinh nghiệm, tập quán...)

Những yếu tố có thể chi phối việc xác định ý niệm không chỉ có yếu tố khách quan mà ngay cả yếu tố văn hóa cũng có sức ảnh hưởng nhất định đến ý niệm. Giống với nhiều nước trên thế giới, ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt không chỉ biểu hiện nghĩa theo đúng khái niệm về mặt ý nghĩa của nó mà còn mang nhiều ý niệm hơn khi được con người kết hợp với các từ có nghĩa khác.

Xét ví dụ 1:

Ví dụ 1: *“Trăm sông đổ về một biển, con sông của gia đình ta cũng chảy về biển, mà biển thì rộng lắm..., rộng bằng cả nước ta và ra cả nước ngoài”* (Những đứa con trong gia đình - Nguyễn Thi).

Trong ví dụ trên, nước ta là một phạm vi được xác định, nước ngoài chính là những nước nằm bên ngoài phạm vi nước ta. Tương tự như vậy, trong tiếng Nhật, khi muốn nói đến nước ngoài, ta có từ 「外国」 (NGOẠI QUỐC, nước ngoài). Nếu “ngoài” trong ví dụ (1) đang nhắm chỉ những vị trí không thuộc phạm vi xác định thì 「外」 trong tiếng Nhật cũng đang biểu thị một khu vực không nằm trong một phạm vi nào đó. Ở đây có sự tương đồng giữa hai ngôn ngữ.

Trong tiếng Việt, ý niệm “ngoài” còn chỉ ranh giới hoặc xác định phạm vi cho không gian. Trong tiếng Nhật cũng có cách sử dụng ý niệm 「外」 giống như vậy, đó là 「外から」 (soto kara), mang ý nghĩa “từ bên ngoài”. Trong quyển sách *“Những điều cần thiết để*

đưa nước Nhật hùng mạnh quay trở lại vị trí ban đầu” của nhóm tác giả Kusaka Kimindo có sử dụng ý niệm này như sau:

Ví dụ 2: 「政治の仕組みや意思決定のプロセスも、永田町と霞が関の関係も、不透明で外からは見えないのです。」

(「強い日本」を取り戻すためにいま必要なこと一日下公人, 田久保忠衛, ロナルド・モース)

Phiên âm: Seiji no shikumi ya ishi kettei no purosesu mo, Nagatacho to Kasumigaseki no kankei mo, futoumeide soto kara wa mienai nodesu.

Tạm dịch: Từ bên ngoài, chúng ta không thể nhìn thấy rõ được cách tổ chức của hệ thống chính trị cùng quá trình đưa ra các quyết định, đồng thời càng không thể nhìn rõ được mối liên hệ giữa chính phủ và các quan chức cấp cao.

“Bên ngoài” trong ngữ cảnh câu văn được hiểu như “đôi mắt” hay “nhận định” của nhóm người đứng tách biệt với hệ thống chính trị và những người vận hành hệ thống ấy được nhắc đến trong câu.

Một số phân tích trên cho ta thấy, về cơ bản, ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt và cả trong tiếng Nhật đều phân ra rõ hai không gian, là phần có thể nhìn thấy, lộ ra bên ngoài, đối lập với phần bên trong bị che khuất, là ranh giới ngăn cách hai khoảng không gian đó.

Thế nhưng ý niệm bao quát và toàn diện hơn các nghĩa biểu niệm của từ. Nó hiện thân trong tất cả các cách sử dụng của từ nghĩa đen hay nghĩa bóng hay nghĩa bình thường. Để dẫn chứng cho điều này, ta có thể phân tích một số cách nói có nhắc đến những bộ phận cơ thể con người thường được dùng để biểu trưng cho một số phạm trù mà có sử dụng từ “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt. Ở đây “ngoài” được kết hợp để tạo ra các nghĩa hàm ẩn rất phong phú: tay ngoài, chân ngoài, ngoài mặt, ruột để ngoài da...

Xem xét đoạn trích sau:

Ví dụ 3: “Anh ta mặc một cái áo đen màu nhùn nhục, một cái quần vẫn lại đứt tả tơi, đầu bịt trùm một cái khăn rằn, miệng ngậm trầu một búng, tay mặt cầm một khúc cây cóc, tay trái xách một xâu hai con cá lóc với ba bốn con cá rô đi thăm ruộng thấy ruộng trúng, lúa gần chín, mà lại bắt cá cạn được ít con, bởi vậy anh ta đi về, **ngoài** mặt hân hoan, trong lòng thơ thới.”

(Cha con nghĩa nặng - Hồ Biểu Chánh)

Với cách diễn đạt “**Ngoài** mặt hân hoan”, tác giả muốn mô tả hình ảnh trên gương mặt của nhân vật đang được nhắc đến “lộ” ra vẻ hân hoan có thể nhìn thấy rõ. Tương tự với cách sử dụng như trong ví dụ sau:

Ví dụ 4: “**Ngoài** mặt tử tế với nhau, nhưng thật ra trong bụng lúc nào cũng muốn cho nhau lụn bại để cưới lên đầu lên cổ.”

(Chí Phèo - Nam Cao)

Ví dụ 5: “Việc khám xét theo thủ tục hành chính được thực hiện khi có căn cứ cho rằng người vi phạm cất giấu trong người đồ vật, tài liệu, phương tiện được sử dụng để vi phạm hành chính...”

(Luật Xử lý vi phạm hành chính)

Trong ví dụ (3.3), (3.4), trường không gian được nhắc tới là trường không gian sinh học. Còn trong ví dụ (5) là trường không gian của cơ thể người, được giới hạn bởi bề mặt quần áo. Trong tiếng Việt có những cách định danh liên quan đến các vùng không gian “trong – ngoài” của cơ thể người như: áo **trong** – áo **ngoài**. Trong khi đó, trong tiếng Nhật lại là 上着 (uwagi, Hán Việt: THƯỢNG TRƯỚC (Thượng có nghĩa là phía **trên**), tạm dịch: áo ngoài, áo khoác)、下着 (shitagi, Hán Việt: HẠ TRƯỚC (Hạ có nghĩa là phía **dưới**), tạm dịch: áo trong, áo lót). Vì vậy khi muốn nói:

Ví dụ 6a: “Mặc áo sơ mi bên **ngoài** áo lót” thì tiếng Nhật sẽ là:

Ví dụ 6b: 「肌着のうえにシャツを着る。」

Phiên âm: Uwagi no ueni shatsu wo kiru.

(Mặc áo sơ mi bên **trên** áo lót)

Lại xét ví dụ sau:

Ví dụ 7: “*Có lần thua Mai nó đập bể cái bảng nứa trước mặt Mai và anh Quyết, bỏ ra **ngoài** suốt ngồi một mình suốt ngày*”

(*Rừng Xà Nu* - Nguyễn Trung Thành)

Nghĩa của “ngoài” ở đây là nghĩa ý niệm. Tức, ra suốt ngồi, ngồi bên dòng suối.

Ví dụ 8: “***Ngoài** chợ, người đã về trên mặt chợ chỉ còn rác...*”, ý niệm “ngoài” trong câu này là phía trong chợ, cảnh mua bán đã kết thúc, đã tàn và thay vào đó là cảnh xơ xác của chợ. Đây cũng là cách người Việt hay diễn đạt. Tương tự, trong câu:

Ví dụ 9: “*Bọn trẻ con đang chơi ngoài vườn*”, ý niệm “ngoài” ở đây là những đứa trẻ đang chơi ở trong vườn, nhưng người Việt ít nói như vậy. Mặt biểu hiện cho cái nhìn bên ngoài của loài người. “Ngoài” trong ví dụ 7 và ví dụ 8 biểu hiện phương hướng, vị trí phía trong hoặc phía ngoài.

Sau khi xem xét qua những ý niệm “ngoài” trong ví dụ ví dụ 7, ví dụ 8 và ví dụ 9 được nêu trên, chúng tôi nhận ra điều này hoàn toàn ngược lại với tiếng Nhật. Cụ thể, khi muốn diễn tả ý “trong vườn”, trong tiếng Nhật không gắn thêm chữ “ngoài” vào chữ vườn. Vì khi thêm từ “ngoài” vào từ “vườn”, ý nghĩa câu sẽ bị thay đổi. Cụ thể, nếu chuyển ngữ câu “Bọn trẻ con đang chơi ngoài vườn” theo hình thức chuyển ngữ từng chữ một ta có câu:

子供達	が	にわ	の	そと	で	あそんでい る。
Kodomotachi	ga	niwa	no	soto	de	asondeiru
Bọn trẻ con	trợ từ	vườn	trợ từ	bên ngoài	trợ từ	đang chơi
<i>Tạm dịch: Bọn trẻ con đang chơi bên ngoài khu vườn. (?)</i>						

Sau khi dịch ví dụ (3.9) sang tiếng Nhật theo hình thức dịch từng chữ và dịch ngược lại tiếng Việt ta thấy ý nghĩa của hai câu bị sai lệch. Có thể minh họa bằng hình bên dưới:



Có nghĩa là, trên thực tế câu trên đã bị chuyển ngữ sai. Trong câu tiếng Nhật trên, “ngòi” không mang ý niệm “ngoài” như trong tiếng Việt, “ngòi” trong câu trên đơn thuần mang ý nghĩa là phía bên ngoài một không gian nào đó. Do đó, câu tiếng Nhật miêu tả hình ảnh những đứa trẻ đang chơi đùa ở không gian nào đó bên ngoài phạm vi khu vườn. Trong khi đó trong câu tiếng Việt dù nói là “ngòi vườn” nhưng ý muốn truyền đạt lại là “trong vườn”.

Rõ ràng, ý niệm “ngòi” được người Nhật sử dụng trước hết vẫn là để phân biệt giữa không gian “bên trong” và không gian “bên ngoài” theo đúng nghĩa biểu niệm, có nghĩa là nó xuất phát từ quan hệ không gian có thực giữa hai đối tượng theo đúng “logic sự vật”. Còn trong tiếng Việt, ý niệm “ngòi” còn được sử dụng để phân biệt không gian “bên trong” và “bên ngoài” tùy thuộc vào vị trí của người nói hoặc với một người quan sát vô hình so với vật được định vị.

Trong hệ tôn ti về độ hẹp - rộng với “nhà” là điểm gốc, ta có sơ đồ về sự tăng tiến của độ mở rộng không gian theo thứ tự xa dần như sau:

***Nhà < sân < vườn < ngõ < đường < đồng < đê < bãi***

Ứng với sơ đồ trên có những cách biểu đạt không gian như:

*Trong nhà < ngoài sân < ngoài vườn < ngoài ngõ < ngoài đường < ngoài đồng < ngoài đê < ngoài bãi*

Với sơ đồ trên ta lý giải được lý do vì sao chúng ta gặp phải vấn đề khi chuyển dịch ngôn ngữ. Nếu trong tiếng Nhật, nếu chơi ở trong phạm vi khu vườn ta sẽ xác định nó là không gian bên trong, do đó khi diễn đạt sẽ nói “chơi ở vườn – 庭で遊ぶ - ni wa de asobu” hoặc “chơi ở trong vườn – 庭の中で遊ぶ - niwa no naka de asobu”. Như vậy, với câu, “Bọn trẻ con đang chơi ngoài vườn” ta có câu dịch đúng trong tiếng Nhật như sau: 子供達がにわであそんでいる。(Phiên âm: Kodomotachi ga niwa de asondeiru.)

Trong tiếng Việt thì khác, quy chiếu sơ đồ trên ta thấy, vì “nhà” là không gian bên trong nên “vườn” là không gian bên ngoài, bên ngoài so với người nói, bên ngoài so với một chủ thể vô hình nào đó được người Việt thường sử dụng để định hướng không gian.

#### **4. Đề xuất**

Giống với kiến nghị của Langacker’s (2001) về việc nên đưa những kiến thức của ngành ngôn ngữ học tri nhận vào việc dạy – học ngoại ngữ, thông qua bài viết này, người viết đề xuất cần xem xét lại tính cấp thiết của việc ứng dụng các quan điểm của ngôn ngữ học tri nhận, cụ thể hơn là ngôn ngữ học tri nhận không gian vào việc dạy – học tiếng Nhật cũng như các ngôn ngữ khác, đặc biệt là trong lĩnh vực dịch thuật để nâng cao kỹ năng dịch cho người học.

- Về phía nhà trường:

+ Cần phải tổ chức các buổi hội thảo, chuyên đề về ngôn ngữ học tri nhận để người dạy và người học ngoại ngữ chuyên ngành biên – phiên dịch có cơ hội tiếp cận với lĩnh vực này;

+ Cần xem xét đưa ngôn ngữ học tri nhận vào các môn học đại cương trong chương trình đào tạo chuyên ngành biên phiên dịch.

+ Bổ sung thêm các tài liệu về ngôn ngữ học tri nhận vào thư viện.

- Về phía người dạy:

+ Chủ động bổ sung kiến thức về ngôn ngữ học tri nhận.

+ Nghiên cứu sâu hơn về các cách tri nhận không gian của người Việt và người Nhật ở những ý niệm không gian khác như “trong”, “trên”, “dưới” ...

+ Tìm hiểu sự khác nhau trong tri nhận của người Nhật (người bản xứ) và trong tri nhận của người Việt trong các phạm trù khác.

+ Trong quá trình dạy các môn về biên - phiên dịch, nên đưa ra nhiều ví dụ đúng/ sai khi dịch liên quan đến vấn đề tri nhận, đặc biệt là tri nhận không gian và giải thích, phân tích sự khác biệt đó.

- Về phía người học:

+ Chủ động bổ sung kiến thức về ngôn ngữ học tri nhận.

+ Luyện tập dịch Việt – Nhật và ngược lại.

+ Khi dịch những nội dung liên quan đến ý niệm cần có sự phân tích, làm rõ cách tri nhận của hai quốc gia để đưa ra được Phương án dịch chính xác.

+ Chủ động ghi nhận lại những sự khác biệt trong tri nhận, đặc biệt là tri nhận không gian của người Việt và người Nhật thông qua các cách hành văn hoặc tài liệu dịch để tích lũy kiến thức cho mình và áp dụng vào dịch thuật.

## 5. Kết luận

Từ việc phân tích ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt ta thấy, ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt có phạm vi sử dụng rất rộng, tùy theo ngữ cảnh có thể tương đương với nhiều ý niệm hoạt động, lời nói, đặc trưng trong nhiều ngôn ngữ. Việc ý niệm hoá “ngoài” bằng nhiều hình thức khác nhau cho ta thấy được cách tư duy phổ biến của nhân loại qua những trải nghiệm để tri nhận chúng. Ngoài ra, còn thể hiện đặc trưng ngôn ngữ trong tiếng Việt, kết cấu của từ “ngoài” cũng rất đa dạng tạo thành những cách nói hết sức phong phú đảm bảo sự phổ biến trong các diễn đạt.

Tiếng Nhật và tiếng Việt tuy có hình thức chữ viết hoàn toàn khác nhau nhưng do ảnh hưởng từ văn hóa Trung Hoa từ hàng ngàn năm trước mà trong chữ viết vẫn còn những nét nghĩa tương

tự nhau. Ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Nhật hầu hết được diễn đạt thông qua các từ vựng chứa chữ Hán 「外」. Tuy nhiên, khi liên hệ sang tiếng Nhật ta nhận thấy có sự khác nhau trong suy nghĩ, khác nhau trong văn hóa... dẫn đến ý niệm “ngoài” trong hai ngôn ngữ này có vài điểm không giống nhau. Vì vậy, nếu hiểu được sự khác nhau của ý niệm “ngoài” trong tiếng Việt và tiếng Nhật sẽ giúp những người Việt đang học tập và nghiên cứu tiếng Nhật cũng như những người Nhật đang học tập và nghiên cứu tiếng Việt sẽ tránh được những lỗi dịch thuật do không nắm được ý niệm của từ.

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# VIETNAMESE LINGUISTICS AND EDUCATION

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# The 5C of Online Teaching of Vietnamese for Foreigners: Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities

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**Chau Thi Bao Le**

Nha Trang University, Vietnam  
*lbchau@ntu.edu.vn*

## **Abstract**

In the context of the world facing many challenges and with the rapid development of information technology, online teaching of foreign languages has become an increasingly urgent need. In particular, online teaching of Vietnamese for foreigners is also gradually becoming a global trend. Therefore, study of online teaching of Vietnamese for foreigners is necessary. This study was conducted based on a process of online-teaching of Vietnamese for a group of Taiwanese students with intermediate or higher levels using the Zoom app. The teaching method was applied according to the 5C concept, including Communication, Cultures, Comparisons, Connections, and Communities. The application of the 5C concept in the online-teaching of Vietnamese is demonstrated by developing the learning objectives for each topic and designing the teaching activities, including classroom interaction, homework, and multiple-choice tests. The results showed that Communication, Cultures, Comparisons had been remarkably effective. Meanwhile, Connections and Communities had not been effective yet. This probably happened due to the limitations of topics, teaching activities, as well as teaching time and space. Suggestions are also proposed to improve the quality of teaching of Vietnamese for foreigners.

**Keywords:** *5C concept; online teaching; Vietnamese; foreigners*

# ÁP DỤNG 5C TRONG DẠY HỌC TIẾNG VIỆT TRỰC TUYẾN CHO NGƯỜI NƯỚC NGOÀI

TS. Lê Thị Bảo Châu

Khoa Ngoại Ngữ, Đại Học Nha Trang

## Tóm tắt

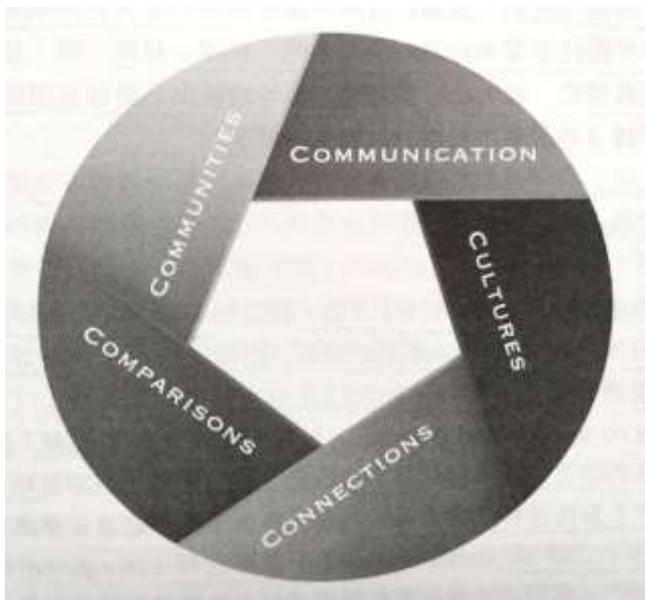
Trong bối cảnh thế giới đối mặt với nhiều thách thức, song với sự phát triển vượt bậc của công nghệ thông tin, việc dạy học ngoại ngữ trực tuyến ngày càng trở thành nhu cầu cấp thiết. Trong đó, dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài cũng dần trở thành một xu hướng mang tính toàn cầu. Vì vậy, nghiên cứu phương pháp giảng dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài là cần thiết.

Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện trong quá trình dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến bằng ứng dụng Zoom cho nhóm học viên người Đài Loan có trình độ trung cấp trở lên, với phương pháp giảng dạy áp dụng tiêu chuẩn 5C, bao gồm: Communication (Giao tiếp), Cultures (Văn hóa), Comparisons (So sánh), Connections (Kết nối), Communities (Cộng đồng). Việc áp dụng tiêu chuẩn 5C trong dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến được thể hiện qua xây dựng mục tiêu dạy học theo chủ đề và thiết kế hoạt động dạy học, bao gồm tương tác trên lớp, bài tập về nhà, kiểm tra trắc nghiệm. Kết quả cho thấy, Giao tiếp – Văn hóa – So sánh phát huy hiệu quả rõ rệt, trong khi Kết nối và Cộng đồng hiệu quả chưa cao do nội dung chủ đề, hoạt động dạy học cũng như không gian, thời gian lớp học còn hạn chế. Từ đó, đề ra những khuyến nghị nhằm nâng cao chất lượng dạy học tiếng Việt cho người nước ngoài.

**Từ khóa:** tiêu chuẩn 5C; dạy học trực tuyến; tiếng Việt; người nước ngoài

## 1. Giới thiệu về tiêu chuẩn 5C

Tiêu chuẩn 5C do Hiệp hội dạy học ngoại ngữ Hoa Kỳ (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages) đề xướng từ năm 1999, bao gồm: Communication (Giao tiếp), Cultures (Văn hóa), Comparisons (So sánh), Connections (Kết nối), Communities (Cộng đồng). Những tiêu chuẩn này có mối quan hệ mật thiết, ảnh hưởng lẫn nhau, trở thành mục tiêu chủ đạo trong giảng dạy ngoại ngữ và là xu hướng phát triển dạy và học ngoại ngữ toàn cầu thế kỷ 21 (Li, 2013; Zhang, 2016).



**Hình 1.** Mô hình 5C

*Nguồn: Zhang Jinlan (2016)*

Theo Li (2013), khung lí luận tiêu chuẩn 5C được diễn giải như sau:

**Giao tiếp (Communication):** trau dồi khả năng giao tiếp bằng các kỹ năng nghe, nói, đọc, viết của người học, nhấn mạnh sự tương tác, hợp tác, giao lưu trong hoạt động dạy - học.

**Văn hóa (Cultures):** Người học có thể hiểu được đặc điểm văn hóa ngôn ngữ mà mình học.

**So sánh (Comparisons):** Người học có thể lĩnh hội và so sánh

sự tương đồng và khác biệt giữa các ngôn ngữ và văn hóa khác nhau.

**Kết nối (Connection):** Người học có thể dựa vào kiến thức đã học để liên hệ với kinh nghiệm, trải nghiệm của bản thân hoặc mở rộng ra các lĩnh vực khác.

**Cộng đồng (Communities):** Người học có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học ở các môi trường hoặc cộng đồng bên ngoài trường học, cũng như trong thực tế cuộc sống.

Hiện nay, lí luận về tiêu chuẩn 5C được áp dụng phổ biến để dạy học tiếng Anh, tiếng Trung, tiếng Pháp, tiếng Nga vv..., đặc biệt trong việc xây dựng mục tiêu, thiết kế phương pháp, biên soạn giáo trình, đánh giá khóa học, bồi dưỡng giảng viên vv...(Zhang, 2016).

Trong bối cảnh toàn cầu đang đối mặt với nhiều thử thách lớn, song sự phát triển vượt bậc của công nghệ thông tin phần nào giúp cho việc dạy và học ngoại ngữ ở khắp nơi trên thế giới được duy trì, cụ thể là bằng hình thức trực tuyến với nhiều ứng dụng phong phú. Vậy thì 5C được áp dụng như thế nào vào việc dạy học ngoại ngữ trực tuyến là một vấn đề cần được tìm hiểu và thảo luận.

## **2. Áp dụng 5C vào giảng dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài**

Theo nghiên cứu mới đây, tiếng Việt được coi là một trong 20 ngôn ngữ lớn nhất thế giới (Dorren, 2020), có thể thấy dạy và học tiếng Việt như một ngoại ngữ ngày càng trở thành một xu thế mang tầm quốc tế. Trong đó, tại Đài Loan – nơi vốn đẩy mạnh chính sách hướng Nam về các lĩnh vực kinh tế, văn hóa, giáo dục ..., tiếng Việt được coi là một ngoại ngữ phổ biến được đưa vào giảng dạy ở các trường từ bậc tiểu học đến đại học (Ming, 2017). Do đó, việc nghiên cứu giảng dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người Đài Loan là điều mới mẻ và cần thiết.

Theo tìm hiểu, hiện chưa có nhiều công trình liên quan đến việc áp dụng 5C vào dạy học tiếng Việt cho người nước ngoài, đặc biệt là mảng dạy trực tuyến. Bài viết này mô tả khái quát việc giảng

dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho nhóm học viên người Đài Loan có trình độ trung cấp trở lên, trong đó mục tiêu và hoạt động dạy học được áp dụng theo tiêu chuẩn 5C. Từ đó đưa ra đánh giá ban đầu về hiệu quả, đồng thời đề ra khuyến nghị nhằm nâng cao chất lượng dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài.

### **2.1. Đối tượng dạy học**

Đối tượng thực hành nghiên cứu là nhóm học viên người Đài Loan học tiếng Việt nâng cao online, nội dung khóa học được chia thành 5 chủ đề lớn: Sức khỏe, Sinh hoạt, Du lịch, Thể thao, Giao thông. Cụ thể:

- Số lượng học viên: 5
- Trình độ: Trung cấp trở lên (tức B1 trở lên theo Khung năng lực Châu Âu)
- Ứng dụng học trực tuyến: Zoom Meeting
- Thời gian: 12 buổi, mỗi buổi 2 tiếng, từ tháng 12/2020 đến tháng 2/2021

### **2.2. Xây dựng mục tiêu dạy học theo tiêu chuẩn 5C**

Dựa theo tiêu chuẩn 5C, khóa học tiếng Việt nâng cao online xây dựng 5 mục tiêu chính như sau:

- Giao tiếp: Người học có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để tiến hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận, trao đổi ý kiến, biểu đạt quan điểm liên quan đến chủ đề;
- Văn hóa: Người học hiểu được phong tục, tập quán, đặc điểm văn hóa của người Việt trong các hoạt động liên quan đến chủ đề;
- So sánh: Người học biết cách so sánh, đối chiếu ngôn ngữ tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt, cũng như sự tương đồng và khác biệt giữa Đài Loan và Việt Nam liên quan đến chủ đề;
- Kết nối: Người học có thể liên hệ tới kinh nghiệm, trải nghiệm của bản thân để chia sẻ suy nghĩ, quan điểm liên quan đến

chủ đề;

- Cộng đồng: Người học có thể mở rộng phạm vi giao tiếp bằng tiếng Việt ra ngoài lớp học trong các tình huống thực tế liên quan đến chủ đề.

Mục tiêu dạy học từng chủ đề dựa theo tiêu chuẩn 5C được miêu tả trong bảng sau:

**Bảng 1. Thiết kế mục tiêu bài giảng chủ đề theo 5C**

<b>Mục tiêu</b>	<b>Sức khỏe</b>	<b>Sinh hoạt</b>	<b>Du lịch</b>	<b>Thể thao</b>	<b>Giao thông</b>
<b>Giao tiếp</b>	Học viên (HV) có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để thực hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận về vấn đề chủ đề thường nhật sức khỏe	HV có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để thực hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận về chủ đề sinh hoạt hàng ngày	HV có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để thực hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận về chủ đề du lịch	HV có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để thực hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận về chủ đề thể thao	HV có thể vận dụng từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để thực hành nghe – nói – đọc – viết, thảo luận về chủ đề giao thông
<b>Văn hóa</b>	HV hiểu được cách thức, tập tục thăm hỏi người bệnh của người Việt	HV hiểu được thói quen, tập tục của người Việt trong sinh hoạt hàng ngày	HV hiểu được đặc điểm văn hóa, địa lý, tập tục vùng miền của người Việt khi đi du lịch	HV hiểu được hoạt động, sở thích của người Việt với thể thao, đặc biệt là tình yêu bóng đá	HV hiểu được tình hình giao thông và các vấn đề về tham gia giao thông của người Việt
<b>So sánh</b>	HV có thể đối chiếu từ ngữ Trung – Việt liên quan đến chủ đề, so sánh văn hóa thăm hỏi của người Đài Loan và	HV có thể so sánh từ ngữ Trung – Việt liên quan đến chủ đề; thảo luận, thói quen, tập tục trong sinh hoạt thường	HV có thể so sánh từ ngữ Trung – Việt liên quan đến chủ đề, so sánh văn hóa giữa các vùng	HV có thể so sánh từ ngữ Trung – Việt liên quan đến chủ đề, so sánh hoạt động thể thao phổ biến của người Đài	HV có thể so sánh từ ngữ Trung – Việt liên quan đến chủ đề, so sánh tình hình giao thông của Đài

	Việt Nam	nhật của người Đài Loan và Việt Nam	miền ở Việt Nam, giữa người Đài và người Việt khi đi du lịch	và người Việt	Loan và Việt Nam
<b>Kết nối</b>	HV liên hệ và chia sẻ tình hình sức khỏe, kinh nghiệm khám chữa bệnh của bản thân trong thực tế hoặc kiến thức về y học	HV liên hệ và chia sẻ trải nghiệm kinh nghiệm thực tế của bản thân khi sống và làm việc tại Việt Nam hoặc kiến thức về may mắn, điện ảnh, ẩm thực	HV liên hệ và chia sẻ trải nghiệm thực tế của bản thân khi du lịch tại Việt Nam, hoặc kiến thức về nhà hàng, khách sạn	HV liên hệ và chia sẻ hoạt động sở thích của bản thân với các môn thể thao khác nhau hoặc kiến thức về bộ môn thể thao chuyên nghiệp	HV liên hệ và chia sẻ hiểu biết của bản thân khi tham gia giao thông hoặc kiến thức về luật giao thông
<b>Cộng đồng</b>	HV có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học khi giao tiếp với người Việt trong tình huống thực tế như khám chữa bệnh, thăm hỏi người bệnh...	HV có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học khi giao tiếp với người Việt trong tình huống thực tế như mua sắm, xem phim, đi chơi...	HV có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học khi giao tiếp với người Việt trong tình huống thực tế như đi nhà hàng, đặt khách sạn...	HV có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học khi giao tiếp với người Việt trong tình huống thực tế như xem đá bóng, chơi cờ vua...	HV có thể vận dụng kiến thức đã học khi giao tiếp với người Việt trong tình huống thực tế như hỏi đường, đặt xe...

### 2.3. Thiết kế hoạt động dạy học theo tiêu chuẩn 5C

Dựa theo tiêu chuẩn 5C, khóa học tiếng Việt nâng cao online thiết kế khung hoạt động chính như sau:

**Bảng 2. Khung hoạt động dạy học tiếng Việt online**

Hoạt động	Nội dung	Người dạy	Người học
Tương tác trên lớp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Từ vựng</li><li>- Ngữ pháp</li><li>- Bài tập</li><li>- Bài khóa</li><li>- Bài đọc</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Giảng bài</li><li>- Đặt câu hỏi</li><li>- Hướng dẫn hội thoại</li><li>- Hướng dẫn thực hành</li><li>- Nêu vấn đề thảo luận</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Nghe giảng</li><li>- Trả lời câu hỏi</li><li>- Tiến hành hội thoại</li><li>- Tham gia thực hành</li><li>- Thảo luận vấn đề</li></ul>
Bài tập về nhà	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Điền trống</li><li>- Dịch song ngữ</li><li>- Bài đọc/video</li><li>- Viết văn</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Cung cấp tài liệu</li><li>- Giao nhiệm vụ bài tập</li><li>- Thảo luận và đánh giá</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Tra cứu tài liệu</li><li>- Làm bài tập</li><li>- Thảo luận và chỉnh sửa</li></ul>
Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Chọn từ đúng điền trống</li><li>- Chọn cách lí giải đúng</li><li>- Chọn câu đúng</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Biên soạn trắc nghiệm</li><li>- Tổ chức trắc nghiệm</li><li>- Tổng kết, đánh giá</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Ôn tập kiến thức</li><li>- Làm trắc nghiệm</li><li>- Tổng kết, tự đánh giá</li></ul>

Trong 3 hoạt động chính kể trên, Tương tác trên lớp và Bài tập về nhà được thiết kế cố định, xuyên suốt theo từng chủ đề, riêng Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm được tổ chức 2 lần vào giữa và cuối khóa học, nhằm đánh giá khả năng lĩnh hội và thực hành kiến thức đã học của người học.

### 3. Kết quả dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến áp dụng 5C

Sau 3 tháng triển khai áp dụng tiêu chuẩn 5C để giảng dạy tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho nhóm học viên Đài Loan, hiệu quả theo chủ đề dạy học được trình bày ở Bảng 3.

**Bảng 3. Hiệu quả áp dụng 5C theo chủ đề dạy học**

Chủ đề	Tiêu chuẩn 5C				Cộng đồng
	Giao tiếp	Văn hóa	So sánh	Kết nối	
<b>Sức khỏe</b>	++	++	++	+	-
<b>Sinh hoạt</b>	+++	+++	+++	++	+
<b>Du lịch</b>	+++	+++	+++	++	+
<b>Thể thao</b>	+	+	+	+	-
<b>Giao thông</b>	+	+	+	+	-

*Ghi chú:*

- Không có hiệu quả: -
- Có hiệu quả: +
- Hiệu quả tương đối: ++
- Hiệu quả cao: +++

Từ kết quả ở Bảng 3 có thể thấy chủ đề Sinh hoạt và Du lịch đáp ứng được mục tiêu 5C một cách toàn diện, đặc biệt là Giao tiếp và Văn hóa và So sánh. Nguyên nhân chủ yếu là do tính chất của các chủ đề này vốn phổ biến và thu hút hơn với người học, khiến người học thuận lợi trong việc nâng cao cả 4 kỹ năng nghe – nói – đọc –

viết. Ngoài ra, bản thân các học viên đều từng có trải nghiệm du lịch, sống và làm việc ngắn hạn tại Việt Nam, nên có thể vận dụng được nhiều kiến thức với các chủ đề này để thảo luận, phân tích, so sánh, cũng như mở rộng thực hành trong và ngoài lớp học. Tuy nhiên, ở hầu hết các chủ đề, Kết nối và Cộng đồng không đạt hiệu quả cao, trong đó có Sức khỏe và Thể thao, bởi tính đặc thù của chủ đề cũng như không gian vận dụng cho người học chưa nhiều trong thực tế.

Về hoạt động dạy học, hiệu quả của việc áp dụng 5C thể hiện ở Bảng 4.

**Bảng 4. Hiệu quả áp dụng 5C theo hoạt động dạy học**

Hoạt động dạy học	Tiêu chuẩn 5C				
	Giao tiếp	Văn hóa	So sánh	Kết nối	Cộng đồng
Tương tác trên lớp	+++	++	+++	++	-
Bài tập về nhà	++	+	+	++	-
Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm giữa kỳ	+	+	+	-	-
Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm cuối kỳ	++	+	+	-	-

*Ghi chú:*

- Không có hiệu quả: -
- Có hiệu quả: +
- Hiệu quả tương đối: ++
- Hiệu quả cao: +++

Quan sát quá trình khóa học trực tuyến, có thể thấy tiêu chuẩn Giao tiếp, Văn hóa và So sánh được đạt hiệu quả rõ rệt trong hoạt động tương tác trên lớp. Tuy nhiên, so với kỹ năng Đọc – Viết thì kỹ năng Nghe – Nói được thực hành nhiều hơn bởi tính chất của việc

học trực tuyến thiên về tương tác nghe – nhìn – phát biểu. Hoạt động thảo luận trên lớp giúp cho người đọc có thể phát huy được tiêu chuẩn Kết nối, đó là liên hệ tới kinh nghiệm, trải nghiệm thực tế của bản thân để vận dụng kiến thức vừa học, chia sẻ ý kiến và quan điểm liên quan.

Trong hoạt động Bài tập về nhà, kỹ năng Đọc–Viết của học viên được phát huy khi dịch song ngữ, xem và dịch video, viết bài cảm nghĩ ..., trong khi đó các kiến thức về văn hóa cũng như khả năng so sánh biểu hiện ít hơn khi không có sự tương tác trực tiếp, nhưng đây lại là cơ hội để học viên phát huy khả năng kết nối, tức là liên hệ với kinh nghiệm, trải nghiệm của bản thân để chia sẻ ý kiến, quan điểm qua bài viết. Riêng tiêu chuẩn Cộng đồng phát huy hiệu quả thấp hơn so với các tiêu chuẩn còn lại bởi không gian lớp trực tuyến hạn chế khả năng vận dụng kiến thức của người học.

**Bảng 5. Kết quả kiểm tra trắc nghiệm của học viên**

Học viên	Trình độ tiếng Việt	Kiểm tra giữa kỳ (thang điểm 100)	Kiểm tra cuối kỳ (thang điểm 100)
HV1	C1	70	90
HV2	B1	65	85
HV3	B1	55	70
HV4	B1	55	80
HV5	B2	65	90

Về hoạt động Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm, do được thiết kế với hình thức trắc nghiệm tổng hợp nên người học có thể phát huy được kỹ năng đọc hiểu, vận dụng các kiến thức về văn hóa, khả năng so sánh từ ngữ, ngữ pháp để hoàn thành bài trắc nghiệm sau một quá trình học tập. Dựa vào kết quả Kiểm tra trắc nghiệm cuối kỳ theo Bảng 5, kỹ năng đọc hiểu của học viên có sự tiến bộ rõ rệt sau khi học, tuy nhiên những câu sai trong trắc nghiệm biểu thị kiến thức về văn hóa và khả năng so sánh của học viên vẫn chỉ là tương đối, riêng hai

tiêu chuẩn Kết nối và Cộng đồng chưa phát huy được hiệu quả trong hoạt động này.

Từ phân tích và đánh giá hiệu quả của việc áp dụng tiêu chuẩn 5C vào dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người Đài Loan trình độ trung cấp, có thể tóm tắt lại như sau:

- Áp dụng tiêu chuẩn 5C vào thiết kế và tổ chức dạy học tiếng Việt online có thể phát huy hiệu quả cao với các mục tiêu là Giao tiếp, Văn hóa, So sánh, trong khi đó Kết nối và Cộng đồng chỉ đạt hiệu quả tương đối và thấp;

- Các chủ đề như Sinh hoạt, Du lịch phát huy được hiệu quả 5C cao hơn so với các chủ đề đặc thù như Sức khỏe, Thể thao, Giao thông;

- Các hoạt động tương tác trực tiếp trên lớp phát huy được hiệu quả 5C cao hơn so với làm bài tập ở nhà và kiểm tra trắc nghiệm.

#### **4. Kết luận và khuyến nghị**

Việc áp dụng lí luận 5C vào dạy học tiếng Việt cho người nước ngoài có thể giúp người học phát huy được khả năng giao tiếp theo chủ đề, hiểu được các đặc điểm văn hóa của con người và đất nước Việt Nam, từ đó so sánh các nét tương đồng giữa tiếng Trung và tiếng Việt, liên hệ với kinh nghiệm, trải nghiệm của bản thân và thực hành luyện tập bên ngoài lớp học. Tuy nhiên, đối với hình thức dạy học trực tuyến, do thời gian không gian học hạn chế, đặc biệt là ứng dụng lớp học phụ thuộc vào chất lượng internet nên ảnh hưởng đến hiệu quả của 5C trong quá trình dạy học thực tế, vì vậy chưa thể phát huy một cách đồng đều và toàn diện.

Do đó, việc thiết kế hoạt động và phương pháp dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài có thể áp dụng theo lí luận 5C theo hình thức sau:

- Áp dụng 3 tiêu chuẩn Giao tiếp – Văn hóa – So sánh xây dựng mục tiêu dạy học chủ đạo, từ đó tiến hành thiết kế hoạt động và nội dung dạy học trên lớp học trực tuyến;

- Áp dụng 2 tiêu chuẩn Kết nối – Cộng đồng làm mục tiêu khuyến khích phát triển kỹ năng mềm cho người học, trong và ngoài lớp học;

- Phân chia và sắp xếp các bài học theo chủ đề từ dễ đến khó, từ hẹp đến rộng;

- Phong phú thêm các hoạt động trên lớp trực tuyến, như hội thoại theo tình huống, hỏi đáp nhanh, trò chơi nghe – xem – đoán, dịch lời bài hát, phim ngắn vv... để tăng tính tương tác, sinh động và hấp dẫn cho lớp học;

- Bài tập về nhà ngoài các bài dịch song ngữ, đọc hiểu, viết văn nhằm nâng cao kỹ năng đọc – viết cho người học thì có thể bổ sung ghi âm, làm vlog, quay video phỏng vấn, vv... để trau dồi khả năng nghe – nói và mở rộng phạm vi thực hành cho người học;

- Hình thức kiểm tra giữa kỳ và cuối kỳ có thể tích hợp nghe – nói – đọc – viết, nhằm phát huy các kỹ năng giao tiếp toàn diện của người học.

Tóm lại, để vận dụng hiệu quả lí luận 5C trong dạy học tiếng Việt trực tuyến cho người nước ngoài, người dạy có thể dựa vào trình độ của học viên cũng như điều kiện về thời gian, không gian lớp học để xác định mục tiêu chủ yếu một cách linh hoạt, cũng như thiết kế hoạt động và nội dung dạy học sao cho hợp lý, sinh động và phong phú, giúp việc dạy và học tiếng Việt bằng hình thức trực tuyến đạt chất lượng cao hơn.

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**PGS.TS. Nguyễn Ngọc Định**

*Biên tập*  
**Nguyễn Ngọc Định**

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Website: [www.nxb.ueh.edu.vn](http://www.nxb.ueh.edu.vn) – Email: [nxb@ueh.edu.vn](mailto:nxb@ueh.edu.vn)  
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