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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear beloved TESOLers & Educators,

Greetings and welcome to the latest edition of the International Journal of TESOL & Education, namely Volume 4, Number 2. This publication features a wide range of informative research papers and stimulating studies in the subject of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) and education. We take great pride in presenting the groundbreaking work of our writers, whose contributions have played a key role in developing our knowledge of language instruction and cultural studies.

Pham Ngoc Truong Linh's research examines the cultural aspects found in store signage in American English and Vietnamese, highlighting notable cultural disparities and their potential impact on language instruction. The study highlights the necessity for more investigation into the influence of cultural disparities on consumer behavior and marketing tactics.

Dang Thi Minh Tam and Pham Thuy Quynh examine the correlation between course learning results and evaluations in Vietnamese linguistic programs, identifying areas that require enhancement. They propose conducting more research to examine the efficacy of different evaluation approaches in diverse educational settings.

Dang Thi Minh Tam and Tong Thi Mai Huong analyze the efficacy of instructional practices in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes at a university in Vietnam, offering practical suggestions for educators. Subsequent research endeavors might investigate the enduring effects of enhanced instructional communication on student academic achievement.

Amar Bahadur Sherma, Alok Lamsal, and Devi Prasad Pokharel analyze the notion of ecological citizenship as shown in the film "Avatar," highlighting the need of environmental education. They propose more investigation on the influence of mainstream media on ecological consciousness and conduct.

Ly Cong Khanh analyzes the responsibilities of instructors in facilitating learner-centered language acquisition, providing valuable perspectives on successful instructional strategies. Further research should investigate the influence of various teacher training programs on the implementation of learner-centered methods.

Tran Thi My Linh examines how students see blended learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses and provides suggestions to improve the quality of their learning. Additional study is required to assess the scalability of blended learning models in various educational environments.

Pham Quynh Nhu and Pham Vu Phi Ho analyze the writing capabilities of third-year students and identify prevalent syntactic problems. They propose specific treatments to address these faults and enhance the students' writing abilities. Further research might examine the underlying factors contributing to these mistakes and evaluate the efficacy of different instructional strategies.

Nguyen Kim Chi An and Le Hoang Dung examine the utilization of interrogative structures to enhance the correctness of English-speaking skills in learners, offering realistic teaching methodologies. Subsequent studies might prioritize exploring the implementation of these tactics in diverse language and cultural settings.

Nguyen Thi Thanh Van and Tran Thi Thanh Mai examine the utilization of TikTok by second-year students for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) speaking practice, emphasizing the advantages and difficulties it presents. Subsequent research might investigate the enduring consequences of utilizing social media platforms on the acquisition of language skills.

A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the writers for their steadfast dedication and outstanding contributions. We would like to extend our heartfelt appreciation to our editorial board for their unwavering support and guidance. We would like to extend our appreciation to the reviewers for their thorough and insightful feedback, which has been crucial in maintaining the outstanding standard of our journal.

We have confidence that you will find this subject to be academically engaging and inspiring. We highly value your engagement and contribution as we continuously strive for excellence in our field.

We want our esteemed readers to fully engage themselves in the captivating stories presented in this edition. These narratives will foster a vibrant exchange of ideas and promote innovation within the flourishing TESOL and education communities.

Thank you for your continuous support; we expect more innovative research in future issues.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Warm regards,



Associate Professor Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho
Editor-in-chief
International Journal of TESOL & Education

A Comparative Study of Cultural Categories in American English and Vietnamese Shop Signs

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: cultural categories, prototypes, American English, Vietnamese, shop signs

There is a lack of studies on shop sign language from the perspective of Cultural Linguistics. This study contributes to the approach by investigating cultural categories in American English and Vietnamese shop signs. The corpus for analysis includes 1,748 shop signs in the US and 1,585 shop signs in Vietnam. The cultural categories are analyzed and evaluated based on their prototypes and subcategories compared from three dimensions: (1) linguistic expressions and frequency of occurrence, (2) generative capacity (in combination with other categories), and (3) pragmatic meaning (other functions related to communicative reality). The results show certain variations of the cultural categories in the three dimensions between the two speech communities, making each prototype distinctive from others in the same register and its own cross-cultural equivalents. The category variations reflect the two speech communities' typical psychology, cognition, and shared experience.

Introduction

Shop signs refer to all the written language on the façade of a business facility. They are easily observed in contexts of trading, advertising, traveling, and virtual reality maps (e.g., Zimny, 2017; Pham, 2021b; Isabel, 2012; Hong, 2020). Therefore, when it comes to intercultural communication in public spheres, shop signs are one of the most salient materials of the linguistic landscape for exploring cultural conceptualizations. Prior research mainly focused on the code-switching and code-mixing of the language used on shop signs to identify some embedded cultural contact (e.g., Thongtong, 2016; ALHyari & Hamdan, 2019). For instance, shop signs in Vietnam often utilize *shop* and *café* instead of their local equivalents (i.e., *cửa hàng* and *quán cà phê* respectively); native elements on shop signs in Jordan are frequently used to transliterate some English words, such as *stuudyoo* 'studio', *saaloon* 'salon', *tub snaak* 'top snack', *baarti* 'party' (El-Yasin & Mahadin, 1996). Those circumstances reflect the cultural schema of 'foreignness' related to the concept of 'high quality' that is quite familiar among members of these speech communities. The semiotic approach then shifted to the stage of

multimodality with visual grammar (see Kress & Leeuwen, 2001, 2021) applied in the cross-cultural analysis of shop signs (e.g., Bui, 2020; Briki & Chebli, 2022). Accordingly, the positions, sizes, and even colors of the wordings on shop signs are differently perceived in different speech communities. For example, Bui (2020) finds that English advertising signs are more likely (in comparison with Vietnamese) to take advantage of color contrast and framing lines of the wordings to emphasize the original and creative ideas over traditional and truthful information. Not stopping there, the interest in investigating cultural variations through shop signs went on with the cultural pragmatic schema of ‘advertising’ underlying the speech acts/events and pragmemes as shared knowledge of the speech communities (see Pham, 2021b). In particular, the schema of ‘advertising’ in American English shop signs is more common than in Vietnamese counterparts, with the speech act of ‘ensuring the reliability of quality standards’ conducted by mentioning ‘the start-up year of the business’ (i.e., *since/est. 1990*) as a pragmeme (a general situation where a pragmatic act can be executed). Despite the differences in philosophical worldviews, all the studies are intrinsically cultural, for the assessed conceptualizations entrenched in aspects of language (i.e., morphosyntax, semantic, pragmatic, and discourse) are derived from the cultural cognition of a speech community (Sharifian, 2017). The current study is an expansion of the trend with an insight into cultural categories in the language use on shop signs. From the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, cultural categories (together with cultural schemas and cultural metaphors) are vital tools for analyzing cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). Hopefully, this study will make a substantial contribution to the approach with more theoretical background and concrete examples.

Literature Review

The Concept of Category

The concept of category is said to have become widely concerned since the work “Philosophical Investigations” by Ludwig Wittgenstein (1953). At that time, the concept of category was interpreted as an abstract container consisting of several members that have certain mutual properties. Tran (2011) argues that the category concept at this stage acted as a theoretical background but was not sufficiently related and applied in empirical fields. Subsequently, although some outstanding studies emerged with the interpretation and application of categories in color (e.g., Berlin & Kay, 1969) and kinship (e.g., Wallace & Atkins, 1969), it was not until the time of Eleanor Rosch that the concept of category was fully developed in theory and empirical application. The kick-start is supposed to be the investigation into natural categories (Rosch, 1973) with detailed explanations of the relationship between a category and its members, between typical/natural categories and peripheral/distorted categories that are artificial or violate some mutual attributes. In addition, Rosch (1973, 1975, 1978) demonstrated that natural categories are the best representations of the category characteristics as they are often easy to remember and learn and are often preferred for practical use over peripheral ones. In short, a category is a finite set of necessary and sufficient conditions. To illustrate, a job is considered a category of ‘service’ if it directly serves certain needs of the majority, is organized and paid (necessary conditions); conversely, if a job satisfies all of the above intrinsic characteristics, it is eligible to be a member of service category (sufficient conditions).

Categorization

Categorization is a form of conceptualization and also one of the most important human cognitive activities (Polzenhagen & Xia, 2015). Rosch (1973, 1978), Lakoff (1982), Taylor (2003), and Nguyen (2015) share the same view that the process of categorizing natural phenomena consists of the following stages: (1) stimulus selection (i.e., some prominent stimuli are perceptually selected for the perception process); (2) identification and classification (i.e., comparison of stimuli with prior knowledge in memory); and finally (3) naming (pre-existing or brand-new names). Thus, this classification process takes place almost unconsciously and is related to psychophysiological factors, perceptual ability, memory, and information arrangement rather than a human product. According to Rosch (1978) and Lakoff (1986), the general principles of categorization include: (1) the basic elements are considered central to the category; (2) all elements of a category do not need to be the same in all characteristics; (3) the elements of a category are open to chaining structures; (4) these categories are regulated differently due to the divergence of experience domains, ideal models, and professional knowledge levels. In the field of linguistics, Lakoff (1987) believes that these principles are a way for categories to increase quantitatively and qualitatively across space and time, setting the stage for a series of studies on categories from synchronic, diachronic, and intercultural perspectives. For example, Walsh (1993) studied the categorization of class markers in Murrinh-Patha (an ethnic language in Australia); Habibi, Kemp, & Xu (2020) studied the development of number-related categories in Chinese over a period; or Wong (2006) studied the semantic and pragmatic localization of ‘aunty’ category in Singaporean English.

Prototype

According to Prototype Theory (see Rosch, 1973; Lakoff, 1982; Langacker, 1987; and Taylor, 2003), typical members that stand out above the others in each category are referred to as prototypes. In other words, prototypes are the best examples of a category. Tran (2011) advocates that prototypes help perceive reality by limiting the endless stimuli of itself. Specifically, when one thinks of a category, prototypes are more likely to come up first in mind rather than the entire list of members or common attributes. For instance, when talking about services, one often relates to *dining* and *traveling* instead of *photocopying*, *massage*, or *karaoke*. Thus, *dining* and *traveling* are prototypes of service, while *photocopying*, *massage*, and *karaoke* are at the edge of the category. Scholars of Prototype Theory emphasize the close connection of prototypes to Cognitive Linguistics since they tend to be perceived more quickly in the human mind through physical and associative experience. This leads to the following consequences. First, categories, as well as the lexical units reflecting them, are hierarchical in speed and degree of receptivity. For example, stereotypes are repetitive and easily perceived prototypes of a category, while some fuzzy members are less relevant in the category because they possess peripheral properties or low levels of scaled common properties. Second, prototypes of a category can be determined based on typical examples, social patterns, ideal models, and the ability to relate to other categories and subcategories. Generally, prototypes are often familiar objects that are widely shared among members of a community. Third, prototypes, as well as the elements of a category, have different relationships in actual use, so it is necessary to consider them in their cognitive contexts across space and time, which in turn

leads to such research concepts as *frames*, *scripts*, and *scenarios*. These concepts are directly influenced by cultural factors (Sharifian, 2011, 2017); therefore, it can be said that studies of categories and prototypes are inseparable from cultural contexts.

Cultural Categories and Register Variation

Cultural categorization is essentially a type of cultural conceptualization that constructs cultural concepts in the form of categories through social and linguistic interaction between members of a speech community across space and time (Palmer, 1996; Langacker, 1994, 2014; Glushko et al., 2008; Sharifian, 2011, 2017). Consequently, cultural categories reflect the cultural cognition of that speech community and thus are a tool for accessing and analyzing cultural cognition through cultural conceptualizations. Take the category of kinship as an example. Unlike in English, paternal and maternal relatives in Vietnamese are always clearly delineated. In particular, *ông nội* ‘paternal grandfather’, *ông ngoại* ‘maternal grandfather’, *bà nội* ‘paternal grandmother’, *bà ngoại* ‘maternal grandmother’ are respectively used to refer to the father and mother of the parents, while English often uses *grandfather* and *grandmother* to refer to these members. In Vietnamese, the sister of the father is called *cô*, and the sister of the mother is called *di*, while these members in English are all collectively referred to as *aunt*. Similarly, the elder brother and younger brother of the father are called *bác* and *chú*, respectively; those of the mother are called *cậu*, while the English counterparts are just *uncle*. *Chú*’s and *cậu*’s wives in Vietnamese are called *thím* and *mợ*, respectively, but in English, these are just called *aunts*. In addition, although some universal categories are similarly perceived between speech communities at the systematic level, there are always variations when such categories are assessed and compared across registers. For example, the category of animal in Vietnamese warning signs is characterized by *dog* and *cattle*, while the prototypes of this category in American English counterparts include wild animals such as *deer*, *turtle*, and *seal*; or the category of penalty in American English warning signs includes forms of *fine*, *suspension*, and *prosecution*, but when it comes to Vietnamese subjects, only *fine* and *suspension* are observed as prototypes (Pham, 2021a). Such variations of categories in number, meaning, and use have further clarified their cultural characteristics, giving rise to the formation of cultural categories in cross-culture registers.

Research Questions

From the above knowledge, I hypothesize that cultural categories encoded in shop sign language (as a register) have notable variations across cultures. These variations stem from different ways of perceiving the world between speech communities, resulting in different cultural conceptualizations (Sharifian, 2011, 2013, 2017). This study aims to analyze and compare cultural categories in American English and Vietnamese shop signs; it seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the cultural categories as well as their subcategories and prototypes in the shop sign language between the two speech communities?
2. How are the cultural categories/ subcategories/ prototypes similar and different in terms of frequencies, generative capacity, and pragmatic meaning?

Methods

The study was conducted to generalize the cultural conceptualizations associated with the cultural categories embedded in the linguistic expressions on shop signs. The target subjects were those in American English and Vietnamese from supposedly native cities and creators. The expected results of the study include a system of theoretical backgrounds of cultural categories within the two registers so that some variations can be noticed and analyzed. Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been applied to accomplish these research objectives. This means that conclusions are drawn based on observation, investigation, analysis, and synthesis not only from linguistic, cultural, and social data but also from the number of subjects collected (Creswell, 2021). The following sections will elaborate on how the qualitative and quantitative data are accessed to study the cultural categories in shop signs.

Subjects and Scope of Research

The subjects of the study are shop sign language in written form that is conspicuously presented outside a business establishment to create a brand impression and describe and introduce its products and services to attract customers, thus enhancing spending and increasing profits. These purposes, together with all other related objects and the relationships between them, are perceived, constructed, or reconstructed and translated into human experience manifested through cultural categories shared among members of a speech community. In other words, cultural categories in shop sign language are operated and received based on the cultural cognition of a speech community through cultural conceptualizations related to advertising strategies. From the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, such common background knowledge is called the pragmatic cultural schema of ‘advertising’ (Pham, 2021b), which is associated with certain speech acts/events and specific categories as follows.

- (i) Speech acts/events of ‘emphasizing the focus of the business’ are related to CUSTOMER category whose members are classified based on GENDER, AGE, JOB, and CLASS;
- (ii) Speech acts/events of ‘describing the size of the business’ are connected to SCALE category, including MEDIUM/SMALL SCALE category and LARGE SCALE category;
- (iii) Speech acts/events of ‘emphasizing the business identity’ are conducted with IDENTITY category, including BRAND, LOCATION, and SIGNATURE;
- (iv) Speech acts/events of ‘demonstrating a commitment to quality reliability’ are the basis for the use of ORIGIN category, including DOMESTIC, FOREIGN, and OFFICIAL origins;
- (v) Speech acts/events of ‘showing credibility’ are underlying RELATIONSHIP category such as KINSHIP, FRIENDSHIP, and LOVE;
- (vi) Speech acts/events of ‘presenting outstanding qualities’ are perceived through QUALITY category like ETHICS, HEALTH SAFETY, SUPERIORITY, and FAVORABLE TREATMENT.

Those categories and speech acts/events are potential and universal in advertising (see Bhatia, 2005) but can be expressed very differently due to the divergence in the system of cultural conceptualizations between different speech communities. This study focuses on clarifying some similarities and differences between these cultural categories in American English and Vietnamese shop signs based on the given speech acts/events.

Research Samples and Population

With the help of the Street View Tool on Google Maps (Figure 1), images of English and Vietnamese shop signs were observed from various US states and major cities as well as provinces of Vietnam. In addition, the shop sign language was also collected from online image resources such as Google Maps, Google Images, alamy.com, yelp.com, and from images taken by our smartphones. The subjects were recorded between 2013 and 2023. Finally, the corpus includes 1,748 American English and 1,585 Vietnamese items (including those in English-Vietnamese bilingualism). Most of the American English shop signs were found in California (232 items, 13.3%), New York (213 items, 12.2%), Washington (185 items, 10.6%), Texas (90 items, 5.1%), Florida (85 items, 4.9%), Connecticut (61 items, 3.5%), and Massachusetts (60 items, 3.4%). The majority of the Vietnamese shop signs were collected in Ho Chi Minh City (909 items, 62.5%), Ha Noi (238 items, 15.0%), and Da Nang (58 items, 3.66%).

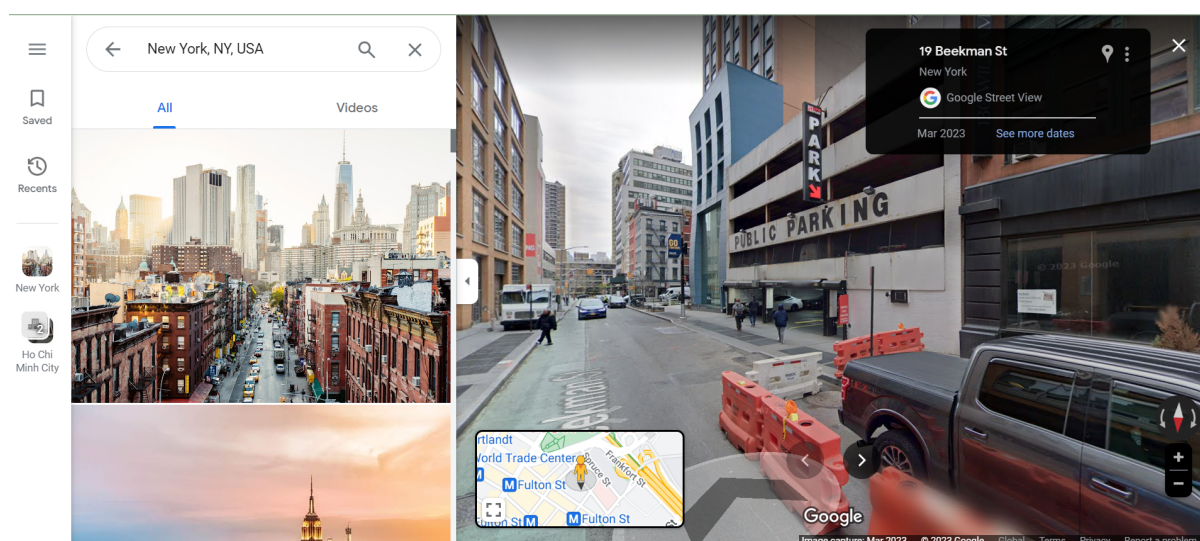


Figure 1 Use of Google Street View to observe shop sign language

Conceptual Analysis and Comparison

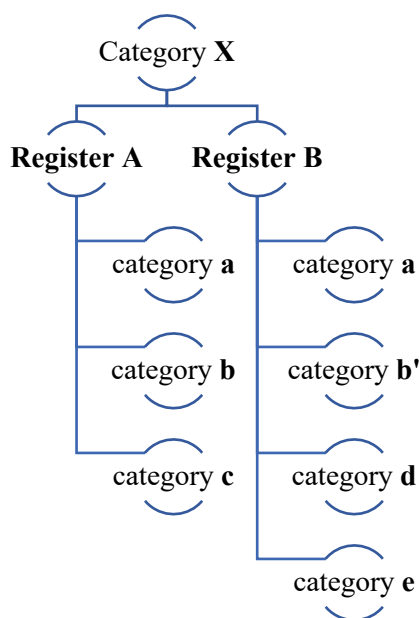
The corpus was observed to detect cultural conceptualizations encoded in the language use of shop signs. These cultural conceptualizations were then described and analyzed in the form of cultural categories in relation to linguistic expressions. Figure 2 depicts the analysis framework of this study to investigate the variation of cultural categories between American English and Vietnamese shop signs as two registers. In particular, a category X (written in small capitals) is considered in its enactive expressions (i.e., subcategories/ prototypes/ linguistic expressions). The variations may be found in the following cases.

- (1) **a-a**: in both A and B exist members of X that are almost identical in semantics, frequency, generative capacity, and pragmatic meaning.
- (2) **b-b'**: in A and B exist members of X that are semantically identical but differ in frequency, generative capacity and/or pragmatic meaning.
- (3) **c-d** and **c-e**: some members are prototypes of X in one register but a fuzzy phenomenon in the other (e.g., **c** is typical in A but fuzzy in B; **d** and **e** are typical in B but fuzzy in A).

(4) **abc-ab'de**: the number of enactive expressions of X in one register is smaller than in the other (e.g., X has three prototypes in A but four in B).

Figure 2

Framework of analysis and comparison of cultural categories between registers



The above approach is considered part of a multidimensional analysis research model commonly used in the study of languages and register variation (e.g., Biber et al., 1998; Omidian et al., 2021; Bui, 2020). Accordingly, the systematic linguistic characteristics of a language cannot reflect all the linguistic characteristics in a register of that speech community. Therefore, the study of cultural categories in shop sign language contributes to clarifying the distinct features of this register in advertising discourse and their variation between American English and Vietnamese in particular, reflecting the different cultural conceptualizations between the speech communities.

Findings

As discussed above, the English and Vietnamese shop signs reflect a number of basic categories associated with the common speech acts/events based on the pragmatic cultural schema of 'advertising'. These factors were chosen as the tertium comparationis for the analysis and comparison between (American) English and Vietnamese shop signs in this study.

Cultural Categories of CUSTOMER

In addition to the categories of PRODUCTS and SERVICES that are always the main subjects mentioned in shop sign language, the main customers are often mentioned to emphasize the business's focus. Customer categories in the two registers are perceived based on characteristics belonging to the categories of GENDER, AGE, JOB, and CLASS. However, the expression with specific forms in each category varies widely between the registers.

Table 1

Categories of GENDER

American English			Vietnamese				
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>		<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
0.5	9	+FASHION, +HEALTH, +ENTERTAINMENT/ popular and casual use with gender specificity	<i>male</i>	<i>nam</i>	+FASHION/ popular and casual use with gender specificity	27	1.7
0.5	9		<i>female</i>	<i>nữ</i>		25	1.6
0.6	11	popular and casual use with gender specificity	<i>men</i>	.	.	.	.
0.7	12		<i>women</i>	.	.	.	.
0.3	5	+FASHION, +HEALTH, +ENTERTAINMENT/ refined and stylish	<i>gentlemen</i>	.	.	.	.
1.1	19		<i>ladies</i>	.	.	.	.
0.6	11	+FASHION, +HEALTH, +ENTERTAINMENT/ young and active	<i>boy</i>	.	.	.	.
0.7	13		<i>girl</i>	.	.	.	.
0.6	10	+FASHION/ diverse, free, and flexible	<i>unisex</i>	.	.	.	.
5.7	99	Total	9	2	Total	52	3.3

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

As can be seen from Table 1, the gender category in English shop signs includes a much wider number of members and usage purposes than those in Vietnamese; the frequency of use is also higher (5.7% vs 3.3%). Prototypes in English create more flexibility, combined with categories of FASHION (e.g., *Men's Wearhouse*), HEALTH (e.g., *Female Strength Academy*), ENTERTAINMENT (e.g., *Girls Night Out*), expressing various pragmatic meanings for each highly polarized gender group in American society, with *lady* being the most frequently occurring form (1.1%). Although both *nam* 'male' and *nữ* 'female' in Vietnamese have the same high frequency (1.7% & 1.6%), they are limited to combinations with FASHION categories only (e.g., *Thời trang nam* 'male fashion', *Giày nữ* 'female shoes').

Table 2 shows that customers mentioned by age group have equally diverse expressions in both English and Vietnamese. The most prominent prototypes are those related to young children. These subjects in English are often applied to FASHION (e.g., *Kids, children's and baby boutique*), ENTERTAINMENT (e.g., *Official kids celebration*), CARE (e.g., *USA baby childcare*), EDUCATION (e.g., *Klever Kids Learning Academy*); while Vietnamese subjects are often associated with MOTHER, FASHION, ENTERTAINMENT, and FOOD (e.g., *Thời trang Mẹ và Bé* 'fashion for mother and baby', *Sữa tốt mẹ và bé* 'good milk for mother and baby', *Đồ chơi trẻ em* 'toys for children').

Table 2

Categories of AGE

		American English		Vietnamese			
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories		Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
1.0	17	+FASHION, +ENTERTAINMENT, +CARE, +EDUCATION/ popular and casual use with age specificity	<i>kid</i>	<i>bé</i>	+FASHION, +FOOD, +ENTERTAINMENT, +MOTHER/ popular and casual use with age specificity	24	1.5
0.8	14		<i>baby</i>			17	1.1
0.7	12		<i>children</i>	<i>trẻ em</i>			
0.5	9	+HEALTH/ priority, and special treatment	<i>senior</i>	.	.	.	.
0.5	8	+SEX, +ALCOHOL, +WEAPON, +VIOLENCE/ age restricted	<i>adult</i>	<i>người lớn</i>	+SEX/ no age restricted	4	0.3
0.2	3	+FASHION, +ENTERTAINMENT, +CARE/ new trend, stylish, and diverse	<i>teen</i>	<i>trẻ</i>	+FASHION/ new trend, stylish, and diverse	4	0.3
.	.	.	.	<i>trung niên</i>	+THỜI TRANG	2	0.1
3.6	63	Total	6	5	Total	51	3.2

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

On the other hand, other prototypes of the AGE category have a high divergence between English and Vietnamese. To be specific, English shop signs often mention *seniors* in health-related products or services with a variety of special treatments (e.g., *St. Paul's Senior Services*, *Discount to senior citizens*); Vietnamese shop signs rarely mention this age group but often refer to *trung niên* 'middle-aged' for fashion products (e.g., *Thời trang trung niên* 'middle-aged fashion'). Also, *adult* in English shop signs include all age-restricted customers for products or services such as weapons, alcohol, violent and sexual products or activities (labeled as *Adult only*); while *người lớn* 'adults' in Vietnamese counterparts (e.g., *Shop người lớn* 'adult shop') is only commonly understood as 'related to sexual activity'. Last, *teen* in English shop signs is often associated with fashion, entertainment, and care (e.g., *Teen room*, *Teen space*, *Teen services*), while *trẻ* 'young' in Vietnamese shop signs is usually used in FASHION categories (e.g., *Thời trang trẻ* 'fashion for the young', *Cắt tóc trẻ* 'Hair cut for the young').

As is shown by Table 3, customers mentioned through the category of JOB in English have more diverse and frequent expressions than in Vietnamese (2.5% vs 1.0%). This category in English has 6 prototypes, while Vietnamese has only 2, i.e., *sinh viên* 'student' and *văn phòng* 'office'. The English ones are also applied in many aspects of professional characteristics (e.g., *Student book store*, *Teacher's tools*, *The Mechanic Shop*), whereas Vietnamese subjects usually appear with daily products or services (e.g., *Thư quán sinh viên photocopy in vi tính* 'student library for photocopy on computer', *Com trưa văn phòng* 'office lunch').

Table 3

Categories of JOB

		American English			Vietnamese		
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>		<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
0.6	10	+HEALTH, +CARE/ targeting patients	<i>doctor</i>	.	.	.	.
0.5	9	+CAR/ targeting those with car problems	<i>mechanic</i>	.	.	.	.
0.4	7	+NURSING	<i>nurse</i>	.	.	.	.
0.4	7	+CARE, +INSURANCE/ targeting firefighters, fire victims and their relatives; with priority	<i>firefighter</i>	.	.	.	.
0.3	6	+SCHOOL SUPPLIES	<i>student</i>	<i>sinh viên</i>	+CUISINE, +SERVICES/ with affordable prices	12	0.8
0.3	5	+TEACHING AIDS	<i>teacher</i>	.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.	<i>văn phòng</i>	+CUISINE/ convenient and affordable	4	0.3
2.5	44	Total	6	2	Total	16	1.0
(N=1,748)						(N=1,585)	

Although *student* and *sinh viên* are semantically similar subjects, they are very different in terms of generative and pragmatic capacities in English and Vietnamese shop signs. Specifically, those with *student* merely aim at the characteristics and functions of a product or service suitable for this target group, while *sinh viên* in Vietnamese also implies the meaning of ‘affordable’ (e.g., *Com sinh viên* ‘student rice’ is understood as ‘affordable rice’).

Such subjects as *doctors*, *nurses*, *firefighters*, and *mechanics* are typical forms of JOB categories with high frequency in English shop signs, but they themselves are not the main subjects that businesses target. In fact, they manifest the so-called cultural metaphors for their respective customers, i.e., *doctors* and *nurses* towards patients, *firefighters* towards fire victims and their relatives, and *mechanics* aimed at those who need to (have someone) repair vehicles and machines.

Table 4

Categories of CLASS

		American English			Vietnamese		
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>		<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
.	.	.	.	<i>bình dân</i>	+CUISINE/ with affordable prices	14	0.9
0.2	3	+FASHION, +HEALTH, +ENTERTAINMENT/ high quality	<i>elite</i>	.	.	.	.
0.2	3	Total	1	1	Total	14	0.9
(N=1,748)						(N=1,585)	

It is clear from Table 4 that English shop signs usually refer to *elite* aimed at customers with high-quality requirements, while Vietnamese counterparts often mention *bình dân* ‘common

people' to target low-income customers. Whereas *elite* is often used in English along with FASHION, HEALTH, and ENTERTAINMENT categories (e.g., *Elite Jewelry, Elite Fitness, Elite Dance, and Performing Arts*), *bình dân* is mainly used in Vietnamese with the category of EATING to express the meaning of 'affordable' (e.g., *Com bình dân* 'common people rice' is understood as rice or eateries with preferential prices).

Cultural Categories of SCALE

Meanings related to scales are often utilized in shop sign language to emphasize the type of business, major, and variety of products or services. SCALE categories in English and Vietnamese shop signs are expressed in SMALL/MEDIUM SCALE and LARGE SCALE categories. Small and medium-sized enterprises often have a concentration on certain products, while large-scale ones aim for richness, diversity, and wholeness.

Table 5 indicates that SMALL/MEDIUM SCALE categories account for a high proportion in both languages, but the degree of practical use in Vietnamese is more than twice as high as that in English (25.7% vs 12.4%). Vietnamese has 7 prototypes, with *quán* 'bistro,' *cửa hàng* 'store,' and *nhà* 'house' being used the most, while English has 6 prototypes to be found, among which *shop, store, and house* have the highest frequency. In addition, the occurrence of *quán* (10.2%), *phòng* (1.6%), and *đại lý* (1.5%) in Vietnamese was significantly higher than their English equivalents, i.e., *bistro* (1.3%), *office* (1.1%), and *agency* (0.6%).

Table 5

Categories of SMALL/MEDIUM SCALE

American English		Vietnamese					
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%	
3.3	57	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>shop</i>	<i>tiệm</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	30	1.9
				<i>hiệu</i>	+gold, +tailor, +cake, +iron, +cloth, +glass, +drug, +selling	9	0.6
3.1	55	+PRODUCT	<i>store</i>	<i>cửa hàng</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	106	6.7
3.1	54	+FASHION, +CUISINE, +ENTERTAINMENT, +CARE/ exclusively	<i>house</i>	<i>nhà</i>	+book, +tailor, +drug, +vehicle	51	3.2
1.3	22	+CUISINE/ basic decoration; with affordable prices	<i>bistro</i>	<i>quán</i>	+CUISINE/ basic decoration; with affordable prices	162	10.2
1.1	19	+HEALTH, +LAW, +REAL ESTATE, +ACCOUNTING	<i>office</i>	<i>phòng</i>	+HEALTH, +LAW, +REAL ESTATE	25	1.6
0.6	10	+INSURANCE, +REAL ESTATE, +HUMAN RESOURCES/ private enterprises; branches	<i>agency</i>	<i>đại lý</i>	+LOTTERY, +TRAVEL, +PRODUCT/ branches	24	1.5
12.4	217	Total	6	7	Total	407	25.7

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

In terms of semantics, pragmatics, and generative capabilities, Table 5 shows that such prototype pairs as *bistro-quán, store-cửa hàng, and office-phòng* are quite similar, while the

others have some significant differences. First, *houses* and *shops* have a variety of combinations with various types of products and services (e.g., *Thai noodle houses*, *Barbershop*), but *nhà* and *hiệu* are usually limited to several objects, namely books, tailors, drugs, gold, cake, etc.; however, *tiệm* in Vietnamese (e.g., *Tiệm cơm* ‘rice shop’, *Tiệm tóc* ‘hair shop’) is quite semantically and pragmatically alike to *shop* and *house* in English. Second, *the agency* is usually used for private enterprises or branches, whereas *đại lý* is usually used as a representative business; also, the *agency* often goes with services of insurance, real estate, and human resources (e.g., *The Agency Real Estate Group*, *Farmers Insurance Agency*), while *đại lý* is often used with the lottery, travel, and a variety of products (e.g., *Đại lý vé số* ‘agency of lottery ticket’, *Đại lý vé máy bay* ‘agency of flight ticket’, *Đại lý gạo* ‘agency of rice’).

Table 6

Categories of LARGE SCALE

		American English		Vietnamese			
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
2.7	47	+CUISINE/ high quality	<i>restaurant</i>	<i>nhà hàng</i>	+CUISINE/ high quality	74	4.7
3.4	60	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ a main source of distribution	<i>center</i>	<i>trung tâm</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ a main source of distribution	38	2.4
0.5	8	+PRODUCT/ covering a variety of many types	<i>super-market</i>	<i>siêu thị</i>	+PRODUCT/ covering a variety of many types or one type	33	2.1
1.1	20	+PRODUCT/ diverse origins from many parts of the world	<i>world</i>	<i>thế giới</i>	+PRODUCT/ varied kinds of one certain type	33	2.1
2.5	44	+IDENTITY	<i>company (Co.)</i>	<i>công ty</i>	+IDENTITY	29	1.8
0.3	6		<i>Incorporation (Inc.)</i>	<i>tập đoàn</i>		9	0.6
1.1	19	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ varied and natural	<i>whole</i>	.	.	.	.
.	.	.	.	<i>thiên đường</i>	+PRODUCT/ varied kinds of one type	13	0.8
11.7	204	Total	7	7	Total	229	14.4

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

As Table 6 shows, English and Vietnamese shop signs both apply LARGE-SCALE categories at high frequency (11.7% and 14.7%); the most commonly used equivalent pairs include *restaurant-nhà hàng*, *center-trung tâm*, *company-công ty*, and *incorporation-tập đoàn*. Some differences were detected in the following pairs. First, *supermarket* (0.5%) and *siêu thị* (2.1%) are both used for businesses with a variety of products, but the latter has a higher enactive rate and is often utilized to emphasize a variety of one kind (e.g., *Siêu thị điện máy* ‘supermarket of electronics’, *Siêu thị mắt kính* ‘supermarket of glasses’, *Siêu thị tóc* ‘supermarket of hair’). Second, *the world* (1.1%) is generally used for businesses that focus on a variety of products or services sourced from different parts of the world (e.g., *World Market* is a chain of stores selling

imported products around the world); its Vietnamese equivalent, i.e., *thế giới* (2.1%), is often used to refer to the richness and diversity of a specialized type of product or service (e.g., *Thế giới đồ tập* ‘world of sportswear’, *Thế giới di động* ‘world of mobile phones’). Third, *whole* (1.1%) is only available in English, usually used for businesses that offer a variety of products or services of natural origin (e.g., *Whole Foods Market*, *Whole Health Pharmacy Partners*); while *thiên đường* ‘paradise’ (0.8%) can be used to replace *thế giới* in Vietnamese shop signs (e.g., *Thiên đường sữa* ‘paradise of milk’).

Cultural Categories of IDENTITY

Business recognition is one of the main goals of advertising and marketing. In order to fulfill this, shop sign language often refers to a business's identity in terms of name (TRADEMARK category), location (LANDMARK category), and infrastructure (SIGNATURE OBJECT category).

A trademark is understood as the name of a business to help customers easily identify and distinguish products or services of this business from those of the same type belonging to others. The trademark of an enterprise is manifested in English and Vietnamese shop signs with some subcategories as follows. (1) PROPER NAME includes names commonly found in everyday life, usually referring to the business owner or someone else that inspires the business (e.g., *Joe's Stone Crab*, *Quán cơm Hải* ‘rice bistro Hải’). (2) NICKNAME includes names based on a specific feature of a product, service, or business owner (e.g., *Dunkin'* is the name of an American chain of cafes featuring the act of dipping bread into milk or coffee; *Ông Mập* ‘Mr. Fat’ refers to a small restaurant named after the appearance of the owner). (3) BRAND NAME includes special names that are made up based on semantic, phonetic, grammatical, or morphological characteristics of existing words or actual objects whose meaning is associated with products, services, and businesses (e.g., *Nike* is named after the syllables in the name of the Goddess of Victory Νίκη in the ancient Greek language; *Vinamilk* is made up of ‘Vietnam’ combined with ‘milk’). (4) SYMBOLS include names of iconic images chosen for the branding of a business to convey certain meanings. For example, *Phoenix Communications Inc.* and *Mohegan Sun* use ‘phoenix’ and ‘sun’ to refer to such concepts as ‘prosperous’, ‘brilliant’, and ‘sustainable’. Vietnamese shop signs also take advantage of similar images, such as *Nhà hàng Phượng Hoàng* ‘phoenix restaurant’, *Nhựa Bình Minh* ‘sun plastic’.

Table 7

Categories of TRADEMARK

		American English		Vietnamese		
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
6.6	115	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ creating a business identity mark	PROPER NAME	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ creating a business identity mark	489	30.9
3.7	65		NICKNAME		64	4.0
4.2	74		BRAND NAME		80	5.0
2.6	45		SYMBOL		23	1.5
17.1	299	Total	4	Total	656	41.1

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

It is clear from Table 7 that TRADEMARK categories in Vietnamese shop signs are used as often as in English (41.1% vs 17.1%). Subcategories of TRADEMARK also appear more in Vietnamese

than in English, that is, proper names are expressed much more often (30.9% vs 6.6%), followed by brand names (5.0% vs 4.2%) and nicknames (4.0% vs 3.7%), except for symbols which have a higher frequency in English than Vietnamese (2.6% vs 1.5%).

Table 8

Categories of LANDMARK

		American English		Vietnamese		
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
4.0	70	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recalling a business identity	<i>CITY/ TOWN/ TOURIST</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recalling a business identity	46	2.9
0.5	8	quickly	<i>ATTRACTION</i>	quickly	38	2.4
0.6	11		<i>ADDRESS NUMBER</i>		8	0.5
5.1	89	Total	5	Total	92	5.8

(N=1,748) (N=1,585)

Nearby landmarks are also often attached in shop sign language to make it easy for customers to remember and quickly visualize the business's geographical location when mentioned (see Pham, 2021b). The category of LANDMARK in English and Vietnamese shop signs includes CITY (e.g., *Miami Beach Bicycle Center*, *Mắt kính Sài Gòn* 'Glasses Sài Gòn'), TOWN (e.g., *Chevy Chase Florist*, *Nha khoa Lữ Gia* 'dentistry Lữ Gia'), TOURIST ATTRACTION (e.g., *The Golden Gate Grill*, *Công ty Lịch Tao Đàn* 'calendar company Tao Đàn'), ADDRESS NUMBER (e.g., *1215 Wine Bar and Coffee Lab*, *Cửa hàng di động 787* 'mobile store 787'), ADDRESS STREET (e.g., *Elm Street Bakery*, *Lẩu cá kèo Bà Huyện* 'fish hot pot Bà Huyện').

As can be seen from Table 8, the category of LANDMARK is generally applied with almost the same frequency in English and Vietnamese shop signs (5.1% & 5.8%). However, in each subcategory, there was significant variation between the two languages, i.e., cities, towns, and tourist destinations were mentioned more in English (4.0% vs 2.9%), but address numbers were mentioned more often in Vietnamese (2.4% vs. 0.5%), while address street was mentioned at nearly the same level in both English and Vietnamese (0.6% vs 0.5%).

Table 9

Categories of THE SIGNATURE OBJECT

		American English		Vietnamese		
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
0.5	9	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recognized at the level of an overall landscape	<i>PLANT</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recognized in typical singularity	20	1.3
0.1	2	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recognized as an original part of the facility architecture	<i>ARCHITECTURAL COMPONENT</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ attached to the facility intentionally or randomly	14	0.9
0.5	8	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recognized as a color in the business branding	<i>COLOR</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ recognized as a color in the business branding	33	2.1
1.1	19	Total	3	Total	67	4.2

(N=1,748) (N=1,585)

In addition to trademarks and landmarks, shop signs often create a business identity by mentioning recognizable objects associated with the architecture of the business facility. The categories of SIGNATURE OBJECTS in English and Vietnamese shop signs differ in the following aspects. First, THE PLANT is often referred to in English shop signs at the overall landscape level; for example, *Cedar Creek Clothing* is the name of a clothing store in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, where there are many cedar trees. By contrast, plants in Vietnamese shop signs are often mentioned in typical singularity, as in *Điểm tâm-cây me* ‘Breakfast-tamarind tree’, the name of a restaurant with a tamarind tree in front. Second, THE ARCHITECTURAL COMPONENT of the business facility is often mentioned as an original outstanding part in English shop signs; for instance, *The Golden Nugget Casino* is the name of a Las Vegas casino featuring a large golden nugget designed right above the main door. Such objects in Vietnamese counterparts are often an architecture attached to the business building intentionally (e.g., *Com-Gạch* ‘rice-brick’, a restaurant designed with bricks) or randomly (e.g., *Cây cột điện* ‘electricity pole’, a café with an electricity pole accidentally put in the front). Third, COLOR is also employed as identity in both speech communities (e.g., *Orange Theory Fitness*, *Căn nhà màu tím* ‘the purple house’). Table 9 indicates that the SIGNATURE OBJECT category is used more often in Vietnamese than in English (4.2% vs 1.1%). The most recognizable objects in Vietnamese are colors (2.1%), followed by plants (1.3%). English subjects favor plants (0.5%) as much as colors (0.5%). The category of architectural objects is the least used in both languages, although Vietnamese has more frequent expressions than English (0.9% vs 0.1%).

Cultural Categories of ORIGIN

The origin of products or services is often promoted to increase customers’s impression of the business quality. The categories of ORIGIN in English and Vietnamese shop signs include members of DOMESTIC ORIGIN, FOREIGNNESS, and OFFICIAL SOURCE.

Table 10

Categories of DOMESTIC ORIGIN

		American English		Vietnamese			
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories		Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
1.1	19	+CUISINE/ familiar origin in the country	<i>FAMOUS ORIGIN</i>	<i>FAMOUS ORIGIN</i>	+CUISINE/ familiar origin in the country	60	3.8
0.5	8	+FASHION, +CUISINE, +FURNITURE/ American styles	<i>American</i>		+FASHION, +CUISINE, +FURNITURE/ pride in quality; Vietnamese styles	55	3.5
0.3	6	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ pride in quality; supporting American workers and businesses	<i>USA</i>	<i>Việt</i>			
.	.	.	.	<i>xuất khẩu</i>	+PRODUCT; high quality	23	1.5
1.3	22	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ locally familiar materials; clean and natural	<i>local</i>	<i>nhà làm</i>	+CUISINE/ for small businesses; distinct quality and safety	9	0.6
0.3	5		<i>homegrown</i>				
3.4	60	Total	5	4	Total	147	9.3

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

The DOMESTIC ORIGIN category is mentioned in shop sign language to attract customers' attention to products that are locally sourced or domestically produced. Table 10 shows that this category is generally used more often in Vietnamese than in English (9.3% vs 3.4%). Both communities often mention famous origins associated with typical domestic cuisines such as *Kentucky fried chicken*, *San Francisco sourdough bread*, *Yến sào Nha Trang* 'bird's nest Nha Trang', *Bánh pía Sóc Trăng* 'pía cakes Sóc Trăng' with Kentucky, San Francisco, Nha Trang, Sóc Trăng respectively as the most famous places of these products. However, this application in Vietnamese is more than three times as frequent as in English (3.8% vs 1.1%). The origin of Vietnamese identity (3.5%), such as *Lẩu Việt* 'Vietnamese hotpot,' *Cửa Việt* 'Vietnamese windows' is also mentioned more often than *American* and *USA* origins in English (0.5% & 0.3%) as in *All-American Burger*, *Made in the USA*. Another notable difference lies in the local origin to imply clean natural products, such as *local* and *homegrown* expressions in English shop signs (e.g., *The Local Butcher Shop*, *Hometown Coffee*), while Vietnamese is typical of homemade and export origins (e.g., *Trà sữa nhà làm* 'homemade milk tea', *Quần áo xuất khẩu* 'clothes for export'), which are said to be of guaranteed quality and distinct style.

Table 11

Categories of FOREIGNNESS

		American English		Vietnamese		
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
7.3	128	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ other countries of the world	FOREIGN COUNTRY	+DEVELOPED COUNTRIES/ high quality	77	4.9
1.7	30	+CAPITAL CITY, +CUISINE/ identity of the foreign community	FOREIGN LANDMARK	+CHINESE LANDMARK, +CUISINE/ favorite food origin	12	0.8
0.6	11	+COMMON WORDS/ identity of the foreign community	FOREIGN LANGUAGE	+ENGLISH/ high quality and international trend	348	22.0
.	.	.	nhập khẩu	+PRODUCT/ high quality and international trend	23	1.5
9.7	169	Total	3	4	Total	460

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

Although both communities often present foreignness in shop signs to show international trends, Table 11 gives out that Vietnamese subjects have a much higher frequency of such practice than English (29% vs 9.7%). Up to 22% of foreign languages (mostly English) were found in Vietnamese shop signs (e.g., *shop*, *café*, *buffet*, *hotel*, etc.). In English, the FOREIGN LANGUAGE category is less frequent and arbitrary, accounting for only 0.6% and mainly concentrating on some familiar words derived from immigrant communities, such as *bonjour* 'hello' (French), *hola* 'hello' (Spanish), *sushi* 'rice rolls' (Japanese). However, the English subjects mentioned foreign countries and landmarks more often than Vietnamese ones (7.3% vs 4.9%, and 1.7% vs 0.8%, respectively). Generally, while English perceives foreignness as international origins (e.g., *The German Deli*, *Paris Baguette*), Vietnamese relate it to high quality, usually with developed countries. In addition, foreign landmarks in Vietnamese shop signs are usually limited to famous Chinese culinary regions such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, Beijing, and Chaozhou. Another striking difference is that Vietnamese subjects often include

imported origin to emphasize international standards and better quality (e.g., *Trái cây nhập khẩu* ‘imported fruits’); such expression is rarely found in English counterparts.

Table 12

Categories of OFFICIAL SOURCE

American English		Vietnamese					
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%	
.	.	.	.	<i>chính hãng</i>	+PRODUCT/ mass production	26	1.6
.	.	.	.	<i>chính gốc</i>	+CUISINE, +IDENTITY	17	1.1
.	.	.	.	<i>chính hiệu</i>	+ORIGIN	10	0.6
.	.	.	.	<i>chính chủ</i>	+REAL ESTATE, +VEHICLE	5	0.3
0	0	Total	0	4	Total	58	3.7

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

The OFFICIAL SOURCE category is hardly noticed in English shop signs but is often used in Vietnamese subjects to ensure reliability in terms of quality and origin. As shown in Table 12, prototypes of this category in Vietnamese shop signs include (1) *chính hãng* ‘official producer’ for important or large products to emphasize official production (e.g., *Xe máy chính hãng* ‘motorbikes of the official producer’, *Mỹ phẩm chính hãng* ‘cosmetics of the official producer’), (2) *chính gốc* ‘official origin’ for specialties of a region (e.g., *Đặc sản Phú Yên chính gốc* ‘specialties of Phú Yên’s official origin), (3) *chính hiệu* ‘official brand’ for cuisines of an heirloom brand or a long-standing business to emphasize quality assurance and reputation (e.g., *Phở Quỳnh chính hiệu* ‘phở Quỳnh of the official brand’), and (4) *chính chủ* ‘official owner’ for sale or rental of real estate and vehicles to emphasize the official ownership from which transaction will be directly conducted without intermediaries or fake companies (e.g., *Nhà bán chính chủ* ‘house on sale with official owner’).

Cultural Categories of RELATIONSHIP

Shop sign language often employs the RELATIONSHIP category to connect businesses with customers, creating a feeling of warmth, familiarity, and closeness. This increases customers' trust in the business. Relationships commonly mentioned in English and Vietnamese shop signs include family relations (KINSHIP category), friendship (FRIENDSHIP category), and romantic relationships (LOVE category).

As can be seen from Table 13, KINSHIP categories generally have a higher frequency in Vietnamese than in English shop signs (17.2% vs 12.2%). However, English has 17 prototypes to be found, more than Vietnamese with 14. To compare them between the two languages, *grandpa-ông*, *sister-chị*, *brother-anh*, and *family-gia đình* are typical pairs of semantic equivalents; *dad/pop/papa/father* and *son* only appear in English subjects, while *út* ‘the youngest child’ and *bé* ‘a little sister/brother’ only exist in Vietnamese ones; *mẹ* and *bà* in Vietnamese have many equivalent expressions in English, that is, *mom/mama/mother* and *grandma/nana/granny* respectively; nevertheless, *auntie* and *uncle* in English have many equivalent expressions in Vietnamese, that is, *cô/dì/thím* and *bác/chú/cậu* respectively.

Table 13

Categories of KINSHIP

American English		Vietnamese					
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%	
1.2	21		<i>mom</i>				
0.6	11	+CUISINE, +HOUSEWORK	<i>mama</i>	<i>mẹ</i>	+CUISINE, +BABY, +PROPER NAME	28	1.8
0.6	10		<i>mother</i>				
0.6	10	+FOOD, +ALCOHOL	<i>dad</i>				
0.6	10	+HAIR, +EQUIPMENT, +FASHION,	<i>pop</i>				
0.7	13	+HOUSEWORK,	<i>papa</i>				
0.9	15	+ANTIQUE	<i>father</i>				
0.6	11	+CARE, +CUISINE,	<i>grandma</i>				
0.6	10	+DECORATION,	<i>nana</i>	<i>bà</i>		19	1.2
0.5	8	+ANTIQUE	<i>granny</i>				
0.6	10	+PRODUCE, +CUISINE, +DECORATION, +ANTIQUE	<i>grandpa</i>	<i>ông</i>		12	0.8
0.6	10	+CUISINE, +FASHION	<i>sister</i>	<i>chị</i>	+CUISINE,	15	0.9
0.8	14	+CUISINE, +VEHICLE	<i>brother</i>	<i>anh</i>	+PROPER NAME,	10	0.6
				<i>cô</i>	+ORDINAL NUMBER	23	1.5
0.7	13	+CUISINE, +DECORATION, +ANTIQUE, +PROPER NAME	<i>auntie</i>	<i>dì</i>		22	1.4
				<i>thím</i>		5	0.3
0.6	10	+CUISINE, +JEWELRY, +HOUSEWORK, +PROPER NAME	<i>uncle</i>	<i>chú</i>		32	2.0
				<i>bác</i>		3	0.2
				<i>cậu</i>		16	1.0
0.7	12	+FATHER,+MOTHER	<i>son</i>				
1.5	26	+CARE, +HOUSEHOLD GOODS	<i>family</i>	<i>gia đình</i>	+CUISINE, +CARE, +ENTERTAINMENT, +HOUSEHOLD GOODS, +FURNITURE	21	1.3
.	.			<i>út</i>	+CUISINE, +PROPER NAME	52	3.3
.	.			<i>bé</i>		14	0.9
12.2	214	Total	17	14	Total	272	17.2

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

There are also other differences to note. First, kinship words in English shop signs are often used for a variety of products and services (e.g., *Mom's Pie House*, *Dad's Garage*, *Pop's Barber Shop*, *Auntie's Antique Mall*, *Family Fresh Market*, *Father & Sons*, *Men's Clothing*), while Vietnamese subjects mostly mention them with culinary objects (e.g., *Bếp mẹ Đăng* 'mother Đăng's kitchen', *Mì Chú Tắc* 'uncle Tắc's noodles', *Quán ăn gia đình* 'family bistro', *Quán Ốc Chị Tư* 'sister Fourth's snail bistro', *Bánh xèo Dì Ba* 'aunt Third's pancakes'). Second, kinship words in Vietnamese shop signs always go with the category of PROPER NAME or ORDINAL NUMBER, whereas English subjects are independent of these in use; some might include names (e.g., *Auntie Ruth's Donuts*, *Uncle Woody's Popcorn*) but barely numbers.

Table 14

Categories of FRIENDSHIP

		American English		Vietnamese	
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n %
0.6	10	+CUISINE/ creating a feeling of youthfulness, wit, intimacy, familiarity	<i>pal</i>	<i>anh em</i>	19 1.2
0.3	6	+CUISINE, +FURNITURE, +HOUSEHOLD GOODS/ creating a sense of perennial camaraderie	<i>buddy</i>	<i>huynh đệ</i>	12 0.8
0.7	12	+CUISINE, +CARE, +PET/ creating a sense of friendliness, loyalty, and trustworthiness	<i>friend</i>	<i>bạn</i>	10 0.6
0.3	6	+CUISINE, +ALCOHOL/ used for places for groups of friends to meet and party	<i>sidekick</i>	<i>đồng đội</i>	10 0.6
0.3	5		<i>wingman</i>	<i>chiến hữu</i>	8 0.5
0.7	13	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ cooperating and supporting customers	<i>partner</i>	.	. .
3.0	52	Total	6	5	Total 59 3.7

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

Table 14 shows that prototypes of this category in Vietnamese are generally more frequent than in English (3.7% vs 3.0%). However, in terms of generative capabilities, English prototypes have more diverse combinations with various categories such as cuisine (e.g., *Friend's Café*), alcohol (e.g., *Pal's Lounge*, *Wingman Liquor & Deli*, *Sidekicks Bar & Grill*), furniture or household appliances (e.g., *Buddy's Home Furnishings*, *Buddy's Small Lots*). Their Vietnamese equivalents are generally limited to dining and partying contexts (e.g., *Quán ăn Những người bạn* 'friends' bistro', *Ám thực huynh đệ* 'buddies' cuisine', *Quán Chiến hữu* 'wingmen's bistro', *Bia hơi đồng đội* 'sidekicks' beer'). In addition, the prototype *partner* has the highest frequency in English shop signs (e.g., *Your Thrift Shopping Partner*, *Fitness Partner*, *Your Pet's Partner*), but its Vietnamese equivalents are rarely used.

Table 15

Categories of LOVE

		American English		Vietnamese	
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n %
1.4	25		<i>love</i>	<i>yêu</i>	+PRODUCT 10 0.6
0.9	15	+CUISINE, +FASHION,	<i>heart</i>	.	. .
0.6	10	+HEALTH, +ART	<i>valentine</i>	.	. .
0.9	15	+CUISINE	<i>sweetie</i>	<i>cưng</i>	+PET, +KID 5 0.3
3.7	65	Total	4	2	Total 15 0.9

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

As is presented in Table 15, English shop signs often use such words as *love*, *valentine*, *heart*, and *sweetie* to increase connection with customers, while Vietnamese ones only usually favor *yêu* ‘love’ and *cưng* ‘sweetie’ with certain categories such as flowers, pets, and kids (e.g., *Hoa yêu thương* ‘flowers loving’, *Cửa hàng thú cưng* ‘store of sweetie pets’, *Con cưng* ‘baby sweetie’). Moreover, the frequency of using the love category in English is significantly higher than in Vietnamese (3.7% vs 0.9%). The English prototypes also have a combination with more diverse categories such as HEALTH (e.g., *Love Yoga Center*), FASHION (e.g., *Valentine's Salon*), ART (e.g., *Purple Heart Tattoo*), and CUISINE (e.g., *Sweetie's Café*).

Cultural Categories of QUALITIES

In addition to such usual positive qualities as *delicious*, *pretty*, *beautiful*, *wonderful*, etc., shop sign language is also characterized by several highly cultural categories, namely ETHICS (normative qualities), HEALTH SAFETY (natural qualities), SUPERIORITY (outstanding qualities) and SPECIAL TREATMENT (priority qualities).

Table 16

Categories of ETHICS

		American English		Vietnamese			
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%	
0.6	10	+HEALTH, +CUISINE, +CHARITY, +GIFT/ sharing, gentleness, thoughtfulness	<i>kindness</i>	<i>hiền</i>	+CUISINE, +FASHION/ dedication, thoughtfulness, accessibility	24	1.5
0.7	12	+CUISINE, +FASHION, +HOUSEWORK, +HEALTH, +FEMALE/ thoughtfulness and attraction	<i>grace</i>	<i>duyên</i>	+CUISINE, +FASHION, +FURNITURE/ thoughtfulness and elegance	23	1.5
0.6	11	+CUISINE, +HEALTH, +SKILL/ strength and encouragement	<i>courage</i>	<i>dũng</i>	+CUSINE, +FASHION, +FURNITURE, +MACHINE/ strength	21	1.3
0.6	11	+REPAIR, +CONSULT/ dedication and trustworthiness	<i>integrity</i>	<i>ngĩa</i> <i>tín</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ dedication and trustworthiness	18 16	1.1 1.0
0.6	10	+HEALTH, +SKILL, +TECHNOLOGY/ healing and connection	<i>unity</i>	<i>đoàn kết</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE/ dedication and trustworthiness	6	0.4
0.6	11	+HEALTH/ understanding and trustworthiness	<i>compassion</i>	.	.	.	.
0.6	11	+HEALTH, +CUISINE, +GIFT/ friendliness and peace	<i>gratitude</i>	.	.	.	.
0.3	6	+CUISINE, +REPAIR/ sincerity and devotion	<i>honest</i>	.	.	.	.
4.7	82	Total	8	6	Total	108	6.8

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

Table 16 shows that Vietnamese shop signs have a higher frequency of applying ethical categories than English (6.8% vs 4.7%). However, English has a greater number of prototypes to be found (8 vs 6). Generally, both speech communities have an ethical approach to a variety of products and services. English examples include *Kindness Café*, *Grace Hair Salon*, *Courage Strength Fitness*, *Integrity Auto Repair*, and *Unity Technologies*. Vietnamese examples can be taken in *Nhà thuốc Tín Nghĩa* ‘intergrity drugstore’, *Duyên quán* ‘grace bistro’, *Cửa hàng điện máy Anh Dũng* ‘courage machine store’, *Cơ sở sắt Đoàn Kết* ‘unity iron branch’, *Shop Hiền* ‘kindness shop’. Such prototypes as *compassion*, *gratitude*, and *honesty* are more common in English (e.g., *Compassion Medical Center*, *Gratitude Gifts*, *The Honest Mechanic*).

Table 17

Categories of HEALTH SAFETY

		American English			Vietnamese		
%	n	Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	Prototypes/ Subcategories		Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning	n	%
3.3	58	+CUISINE, +HEALTH, +CARE, +FURNITURE, +HOUSEHOLD GOODS	<i>healthy</i>	<i>khỏe</i>	+CUISINE, +HEALTH, +COSMETIC	20	1.3
1.6	28		<i>natural</i>	<i>tự nhiên</i>	+CUISINE, +FURNITURE, +FASHION	8	0.5
0.7	12		<i>non-toxic</i>	.	.	.	.
2.3	41		<i>fresh</i>	<i>tươi</i>	+CUISINE	25	1.6
2.3	40		<i>organic</i>	<i>hữu cơ</i>		8	0.5
1.1	20		<i>green</i>	<i>xanh</i>		18	1.1
1.0	18	+CUISINE	<i>clean</i>	<i>sạch</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	24	1.5
0.8	14		<i>plant-based</i>	.	.	.	.
0.7	13		<i>gluten-free</i>	.	.	.	.
0.7	13		<i>non-GMO</i>	.	.	.	.
14.7	257	Total	10	6	Total	103	6.5

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

According to Table 17, the category of HEALTH SAFETY in English shop signs has more diverse expressions and higher frequency than Vietnamese. Specifically, English has 10 prototypes, appearing with a frequency of 14.7%, while Vietnamese has only 6 found with a frequency of 6.5%. Both the speech communities make frequent use of *healthy* (3.3%)-*khỏe* (1.3%), *fresh* (2.3%)-*tươi* (1.6%), *green* (1.1%)-*xanh* (1.1%), and *clean* (1.0%)-*sạch* (1.5%) although each member of English generally has a higher frequency. Prototypes of *organic* and *natural* are common in English shop signs (2.3% and 1.6%), but their Vietnamese equivalents, i.e., *hữu cơ* and *tự nhiên*, are rarely mentioned (0.5% and 0.5%). In addition, English subjects often use refer to *plant-based*, *gluten-free*, *non-GMO*, and *non-toxic*, while these are rare in Vietnamese counterparts.

The category of SUPERIORITY is also employed in shop sign language to create a strong impression on the quality of products or services. This category usually refers to ROYAL objects or those of SUPERLATIVE as follows.

Table 18

Categories of ROYAL

		American English		Vietnamese		
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%
0.7	12	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>royal</i>	<i>hoàng gia</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	33 2.1
0.9	16	+CUISINE, +VEHICLE, +FURNITURE, +JEWELRY	<i>king</i>	<i>vua</i>	+CUISINE, +FURNITURE	27 1.7
0.6	10	+CUISINE, +FASHION	<i>prince</i>	<i>hoàng tử</i>	+CUISINE, +ENTERTAINMENT, +FASHION	12 0.8
0.6	11	+CUISINE, +CARE, +JEWELRY, +HOUSEHOLD GOODS	<i>queen</i>	<i>nữ hoàng</i>	+CUISINE, +ENTERTAINMENT, +FURNITURE, +FASHION	5 0.3
1.0	17	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>palace</i>	<i>hoàng cung</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	4 0.3
0.6	10	+CUISINE, +FASHION, +CARE	<i>princess</i>	<i>công chúa</i>	+CUISINE, +FASHION	3 0.2
0.6	10	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>crown</i>	.	.	. .
4.9	86	Total	7	8	Total	84 5.3

(N=1,748)

(N=1,585)

Table 18 shows that English shop signs have quite even distribution of ROYAL categories while Vietnamese subjects are mainly concentrated in *hoàng gia* ‘royal’ (2.1%), *vua* ‘king’ (1.7%), and *hoàng tử* ‘prince’ (0.8%). The prototypes of *palace* (1.0%)-*hoàng cung* (0.3%), *queen* (0.6%)-*nữ hoàng* (0.3%), and *princess* (0.6%)-*công chúa* (0.2%) occur frequently in English but are quite limited in Vietnamese. Particularly, *a crown* is almost exclusive in English subjects (e.g., *Crown Fried Chicken*). In general, this category in both languages has a diverse combination with many different categories on shop signs. Some typical English examples are *Burger King*, *Palace Barber Shop*, *Royal Spa*, *Queen's Nails*, *Prince Tailoring*, and *Princess Jewelry*. Vietnamese examples include *Nhà hàng Hoàng gia*, ‘royal restaurant,’ *Vua nệm* ‘king of the mattress,’ *Thời trang nam Hoàng tử* ‘male fashion of the prince,’ *Lẩu công chúa* ‘the princess’ hot pot’; *Phấn nụ hoàng cung* ‘the palace pollen.’

Table 19 indicates that SUPERLATIVE categories are used more often in Vietnamese than in English (4.5% vs 3.1%). Shop signs of either language mainly favor *luxury* (0.7%)-*cao cấp* (1.5%) and *best* (1.1%)-*đệ nhất* (1.4%), although Vietnamese subjects have a significantly higher frequency. The other prototype pairs, including *top-số 1/hàng đầu*, *exclusive-độc quyền*, *premium-thượng hạng* are almost alike in all the dimensions between the two languages.

Table 19

Categories of SUPERLATIVE

		American English		Vietnamese				
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>		<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%	
0.7	13	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>luxury</i>	<i>cao cấp</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	23	1.5	
1.1	19		<i>best</i>	<i>đệ nhất</i>		22	1.4	
0.1	2		<i>finest</i>					
0.6	10		<i>top</i>	<i>số 1</i>			11	0.7
				<i>hàng đầu</i>			5	0.3
0.6	10		<i>exclusive</i>	<i>độc quyền</i>			7	0.4
0.1	1	<i>premium</i>	<i>thượng hạng</i>		4	0.3		
3.1	55	Total	6	6	Total	72	4.5	

(N=1,748) (N=1,585)

Some English examples are *Luxury Perfume*, *Best Donuts*, *Top Fitness Store*, *Exclusive Salon*, *World's Finest Chocolate*, and *Japan Premium Beef*. Vietnamese examples are also given as in *Rèm cửa cao cấp* 'luxury curtains', *Đệ nhất mì cay* 'best spicy noodles', *Tiệm bánh số 1* 'bakery No. 1', *Mỹ phẩm độc quyền* 'exclusive cosmetics', *Tròng kính Pháp hàng đầu thế giới* 'world-top French lenses', *Lẩu bò thượng hạng* 'premium beef hotpot.'

Table 20

Categories of SPECIAL TREATMENT

		American English		Vietnamese				
%	<i>n</i>	<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>Prototypes/ Subcategories</i>		<i>Generative capacity/ Pragmatic meaning</i>	<i>n</i>	%	
1.4	24	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	<i>sale</i>	<i>giảm giá</i>	+PRODUCT, +SERVICE	24	1.5	
0.8	14		<i>discount</i>				8	0.5
0.8	14		<i>special</i>	<i>đặc biệt</i>				
0.6	11	+PRODUCT	<i>bargain</i>	<i>giá rẻ</i>	+PRODUCT	9	0.6	
0.9	15		<i>clearance</i>	<i>xả kho</i>			21	1.3
4.5	78	Total	5	4	Total	62	3.9	

(N=1,748) (N=1,585)

Some beneficial qualities related to price or preference are also often mentioned to increase the competitiveness of the product or service. It is clear from Table 20 that SPECIAL TREATMENT categories in English shop signs have a greater number of prototypes and higher frequency than Vietnamese counterparts (4.5% vs 3.9%). The main prototypes of both languages are *sale* (1.4%)/*discount* (0.8%)-*giảm giá* (1.5%) and *clearance* (0.9%)-*xả kho* (1.3%). The remaining pairs, i.e., *special*-*đặc biệt* and *bargain*-*giá rẻ*, have almost equivalent performance. Here are some examples in English: *Entire Store on sale*, *Discount Furniture*, *Special Auto Repair*, *Bargain clothing store*, *Clearance event*; and in Vietnamese: *Giảm giá toàn bộ đến 50%* 'full discount up to 50%', *Phở gà ta đặc biệt* 'special chicken noodle soup', *Siêu thị xả kho* 'supermarket warehouse clearance.'

Discussion

The study focused on cultural categories in American English and Vietnamese shop signs. The prototypes and subcategories of these cultural categories are analyzed in three aspects: (1) linguistic expressions and frequency of occurrence, (2) generative capacity (in combination with other categories), and (3) pragmatic meaning (other communicative functions). Some conclusions can be drawn as follows.

About Similarities between Cultural Categories

As can be seen from Table 21, shop signs in both English and Vietnamese have a distinct distribution of categories into two groups. The frequently used group of categories in both languages includes subjects related to BRAND NAME, FOREIGN ORIGIN, SCALE, KINSHIP, and HEALTH SAFETY. The others belong to a less common group, in which ROYALTY, SUPERIORITY, and SPECIAL TREATMENT are categories with very little variation between the two languages in all aspects of semantics, frequency, generative compacity, and pragmatics.

Table 21

Variation of cultural categories in shop sign language

(American) English			Vietnamese	
+Categories	Frequency	Cultural categories	Frequency	+Categories
Various	*****	BRAND	*****	Various
CUISINE	****	FOREIGNNESS	*****	Various
Various	****	SMALL/MEDIUM	*****	Various
Various	****	KINSHIP	*****	CUISINE
Various	****	LARGE SCALE	*****	Various
Various	*****	HEALTH SAFETY	**	Various
Various	**	GENDER	*	FASHION
Various	*	DOMESTIC ORIGIN	***	Various
Various	*	LANDMARK	**	Various
Various	*	ETHICS	**	Various
Various	*	AGE	*	FASHION
Various	*	FRIENDSHIP	*	CUISINE
Various	*	ROYAL	*	Various
Various	*	SUPERIORITY	*	Various
Various	*	SPECIAL TREATMENT	*	Various
Various	*	LOVE	.	PRODUCT
Various	.	SIGNATURE	*	CUISINE
.	.	OFFICIAL ORIGIN	*	Various
Various	.	JOB	.	CUISINE
Various	.	CLASS	.	CUISINE

(Notes: Each * represents every 3% of the category's occurrence in the register. Each represents less than 3% of the occurrence. The colored area marks the difference.)

The above similarities reflect some systematic move structures or generic patterns of advertising discourse (see Bhatia, 2005), such as 'detailing the product or service' (with FOREIGN ORIGIN, SCALE, HEALTH SAFETY), 'creating credibility' (with KINSHIP, ROYALTY), 'confirming verifications' (with SUPERIORITY), 'providing incentives' (with SPECIAL TREATMENT), 'presenting slogans and logos' (with BRAND NAME). In other words, these categories are said to

be universal in all advertising discourses of different speech communities and, therefore, have little intercultural difference. However, Biber & Conrad (2001) argue that similar communication activities should be compared to distinguish modal characteristics. In fact, some categories occurring with the same frequency may nevertheless embed different cultural conceptualizations that manifest themselves in different forms, reflecting the different specific perceptions of speech communities (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). The next section will discuss the differences that occur within these cultural categories and their prototypes or subcategories in terms of distribution, generative compacity, and pragmatics.

About Differences between Cultural Categories

Table 21 shows that English shop signs generally have a uniform level of application among categories, each of which is quite like another from the frequency to the diverse combination with other objects. In contrast, Vietnamese shop signs tend to have an uneven distribution between the categories applied in terms of frequency and diversity of the combined objects. In other words, some categories are more favored while others are not because of preferences or the status of the economy and society in Vietnam. Sharifian (2017) explains that cultural cognition is 'enactive' (formed through linguistic and social interaction), 'distributed' (different levels of comprehension and shared understanding), and 'dynamic' (varied across space and time). Accordingly, it can be observed that cultural categories in English shop signs are more enactive and dynamic, manifested in a richer number of prototypes and applied flexibly in a variety of contexts, whereas those in Vietnamese counterparts are limited to certain choices (e.g., see comparisons on categories of GENDER, JOB, FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, and ETHICS).

Generative capacity (i.e., the ability to combine with some specific categories) is one of the aspects of analyzing cultural characteristics associated with language (Lakoff, 1986, 1987; Biber & Conrad, 2001; Jenshen, 2017); in other words, category is a powerful tool for analyzing cultural conceptualizations entrenched in language (Sharifian, 2011, 2017). The results of the current study have tried to briefly present certain distinctives in the generative capacity of each prototype, helping to distinguish them from objects of the same category or cross-cultural equivalents. For example, *Grandpa* distinguishes itself from other prototypes of KINSHIP in English shop signs in its ability to incorporate with the category of farm products (e.g., *Grandpa's Garden*, *Grandpa's Farm*, *Grandpa's Cheese Barn*), and get distinctive from its own Vietnamese equivalent, which is more accompanied by a proper name or an ordinal number (e.g., *Quán ông Diệm hủ tiếu mực* 'Grandpa Diem's octopus noodles bistro', *Quán ông Tám lẩu và nướng bình dân* 'Grandpa Eighth's hotpot and grill popular bistro').

Cultural categories reflect not only cultural conceptualizations related to semantic structures but also potential pragmatic meanings that are specific to the cultural cognition of each speech community. Each category used in shop sign language is associated with one or more certain speech acts/events (i.e., potential pragmatic actions/ contextual actions), which tend to vary between speech communities. For instance, FOREIGNNESS categories in English shop signs are associated with 'describing the origin of products or services,' while in Vietnamese, they are more likely to relate to 'affirming international prestige and better quality.' On the other hand, cultural categories can be interpreted as pragmemes that are general situations where typically specific linguistic expressions (i.e., prototypes) are conducted as pragmatic acts or practs (Mey,

2001, 2010). Kecskes (2010, 2014) refers to such linguistic practices as “formulaic language”, that is, typical linguistic expressions of a given pragmatic unit shared among members of a language community and thus considered a cultural indicator, marking the ability to identify or integrate with native speakers. For example, *ladies, elite, local, senior, whole, father and son* are standard linguistic practices to identify the characteristic cultural pragmatic meanings of English shop signs, while Vietnamese counterparts are characterized by *trung niên* ‘middle-aged’, *mẹ và bé* ‘mom and kid’, *bình dân* ‘common’, *thiên đường* ‘paradise’, *út* ‘the youngest’, *nhà làm* ‘home-made’, *xuất khẩu* ‘exported’, *nhập khẩu* ‘imported’, *chính hãng* ‘official producer’, etc.

Conclusion

Although there are limitations in the size of the survey data and analysis methods, the study has basically accomplished the initial goals, that is, analyzing and comparing cultural categories in shop sign language between (American) English and Vietnamese in terms of linguistic expressions, frequency, semantics, and pragmatics. The results show that cultural categories have characteristics of both advertising discourse and shop sign language as a register. These linguistic features have many variations found in English and Vietnamese due to differences in the degree of enactment, distribution, and dynamic of cultural conceptualizations in the cognition of each speech community. Besides, the results of the study consist of detached hierarchies to clarify cultural categories (cultural categorizations/ cultural conceptualizations) in shop sign language. Specifically, the pragmatic cultural schema of ‘advertising’ underlies the specific speech acts/events associated with certain pragmemes that are eventually expressed into specific categories as pragmatic acts. It is these specific categories (i.e., prototypes/ linguistic expressions) that are instrumental in approaching and evaluating cultural conceptualizations (through semantic structure, application frequency, and pragmatic meaning).

The study contributes some useful insights into the characteristics of shop sign language in English and Vietnamese from the perspective of Cultural Linguistics, thereby adding some practical theoretical foundations that might be effectively applied in teaching, learning, research, translation, and intercultural communication between the two languages. For example, Pham (2023) suggested adapting the linguistic landscape as content for TEIL (Teaching English as an International Language) to develop learners’ meta-cultural competence, which involves skills in handling cultural conceptualizations during the interaction between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. In this context, cultural categories in shop sign language can be delivered directly to learners with teacher presentations, or indirectly through awareness-raising tasks, or incidentally in exploratory projects. The knowledge of categorizations between speech communities is supposed to be useful for the learners to accept other cultural conceptualizations, get curious enough to ask for more explanations as well as be able to explicate their own and know how to make decisions on the degrees of conceptual adaptation. The approach was favored and suggested in Tran & Bui’s study (2021) with arguments for the conceptual analysis of (cultural) categories in EFL teaching and learning.

The current findings on cultural categories will also serve as basic criteria for assessing the degrees of cultural contact manifested in the linguistic landscape. Pham (2021a, 2021b)

explained that public signage language can be known to have been used based on the knowledge of local conceptualizations (native cultural categories), foreign conceptualizations (borrowed cultural categories), or both sources (mixed cultural categories). Thanks to this, cultural contact in a certain linguistic landscape will not only be investigated from the perspective of semiotics but also from the conceptual levels. In addition, the approach will contribute to the strategies of creating and translating shop signs with certain choices of cultural target, that is, native base, international base, or cultural-blended base. Apparently, these implications are open to further studies with detailed examples, larger scales, and updated theoretical and analytical methods, that is, more cultural backgrounds should be taken into account, more items should be collected for the corpus, and more dimensions should be considered in the framework.

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Alignment between Course Learning Outcomes and Assessments: An Analysis within Linguistic Programs at a University in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Alignment, learning outcomes, assessment, linguistic programs

Internationally, the trend of student-centered learning in higher education has emphasized the importance of aligning student learning outcomes with corresponding assessment methods. This study is conducted at a university in Vietnam by investigating 32 sets of syllabi and test specifications varied from English Language programs to English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) courses. The findings reveal that a lack of precision in verb usage within learning outcomes can introduce ambiguity, potentially hindering the effectiveness of both teaching and assessment. The study also highlights the significance of balancing the quantities of requirements within a single learning outcome to foster a positive and manageable learning experience. As a result, it is believed that a careful selection of verbs in writing learning outcomes, coupled with a balanced approach to requirements, can contribute to a more coherent and effective curriculum within linguistic programs.

Introduction

Considering the alignment between assessment and learning outcomes in improving educational practices and fostering student learning represents a significant focus in higher education globally, particularly with the shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach (El-Maaddawy & Deneen, 2017; Ngatia, 2022). A major concern in developing learning outcomes is their measurability, as they must lend themselves to assessment procedures that successfully evaluate what students have obtained after learning the courses. Theoretically, the critical requirement is to develop evaluation methods and assessment tasks that can determine the extent to which these established learning outcomes are satisfied. This cohesive connection between assessment strategies and intended learning outcomes is crucial in enhancing the transparency of the overall learning experience (Coates, 2014). However, teachers may confront the difficult challenge of selecting and designing suitable assessments to

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guarantee a smooth alignment with the specified learning objectives. As a result, the difficulty is not only in articulating precise and measurable learning goals but also in integrating them into a framework that improves the learning experience. This study mainly aims to assess the use of Bloom's Taxonomy in conveying learning outcomes and analyze the correlation between stated learning objectives and assessment methods among linguistic courses and EMI courses.

Literature Review

Course learning outcomes

In recent decades, 'learning outcomes' has gained widespread usage in educational literature and among higher education practitioners (Hussey & Smith, 2008). In terms of curriculum studies scholarship, Pollard (2014), Fautley and Savage (2013) and Butt (2006), among others, remark that writing learning outcomes is essential to excellent lesson design. In general, learning outcomes, also known as intended learning outcomes, learning objectives, or student-focused goals, are classified as week- or lesson-long planning. All these terms include the idea of intention and maintain an emphasis on the students' educational objectives. Consequently, formulating learning outcomes necessitates instructors to accurately predict what they intend their students to acquire, demonstrating the expected interaction between teaching and learning during sessions.

Learning outcomes are statements outlining the achievements of learning and describing what a learner is supposed to demonstrate an understanding or apply knowledge at the end of a period of learning (Adams, 2006). A successful learning outcome should be measurable, necessitating careful consideration of summative assessment at the beginning of the planning stages (Kibble, 2017). These outcomes must delineate the specific behaviors of learners to be assessed and emphasize the content of knowledge acquired by students, rather than detailing the instructional methods the educator will employ in shaping their learning experience (McNeill et al., 2012). An outcome denotes the output or resultant effect of a particular action or process and encompasses action verbs that are both observable and measurable, describing the capabilities of students' acquisition upon concluding a designated learning encounter. Therefore, the essential principle for creating well-designed courses hinges on ensuring harmony between the content that students intend to master and the strategies employed to assess their grasp of that content (Abu-Hamdan & Khader, 2014; Kibble, 2017).

In the context of this study, a suitable operational interpretation is as follows: "Learning outcomes are statements of what a student is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completion of a process of learning" (European Commission, 2015, p.10). In essence, learning outcomes establish a connection between anticipations, instructional methods, and evaluation. These outcomes play a pivotal role in enhancing clarity and understanding in:

1. what kinds of knowledge, skills, and abilities students should develop as a result of taking part in the unit or course
2. what students will be expected to demonstrate in assessment activities.

Assessment

Assessment is an ongoing process for measuring, monitoring, improving learning, evaluating achievements, and determining the degree of objective accomplishment. (Dao, 2021; Fernandes et al., 2012; Parker et al., 2001; Taylor, 2009). In Yambi's opinion, assessment is a term that refers to a procedure aimed at gathering information utilized to make decisions concerning students, as well as curricula, programs, schools, and educational policies (Yambi, 2018). As outlined by Chapelle and Brindley (2002), "assessment refers to the act of collecting information and making 'judgments' about a language learner's knowledge of a language and ability to use it" (p. 267).

Assessing educational outcomes is gaining significance in higher education as accreditation organizations emphasize the significance of measuring student academic learning (Allen, 2006; Bers, 2008). This highlights the necessity of appropriately documenting student academic achievements through the assessment process (Praslova, 2010). A study was conducted on two types of assessments, namely: 1) assessments designed to track students' progress (referred to as assessment for learning), and 2) assessments conducted to verify outcomes at the conclusion of a study period or program (referred to as assessment of learning) (Stiggins, 2005).

In this study, the researcher focuses more on summative assessment as the Assessment of Learning aimed at measuring and quantifying the level of learning accomplishment that students have reached at a specific point in time (Stiggins, 2001). The assessment and quantification of learning outcomes are based on predefined criteria or standards that, when followed, produce statistical information in the form of test scores (Ahmad, 2020).

Alignment

Alignment pertains to the degree of concordance between objectives and assessments, ensuring their harmonious correlation, and thereby guiding the educational framework towards the intended outcomes for student learning (Webb, 2002). Alignment focuses on "the degree to which expectations and assessments are in accord and function in combination with one another to lead the system toward students learning what they are expected to know and accomplish," in addition to curricular alignment (Webb, 1997).

Alignment entails an analysis of how explicit criteria are constructed hierarchically within a specific educational pathway. This process requires a close correlation among intended learning outcomes, instructional methods, and assessment procedures, ensuring their harmonious reinforcement. Essentially, alignment serves as a mechanism to gauge the extent to which various elements within an educational system collaboratively contribute to a common objective (Martone & Sireci, 2009). As advocated by Biggs (2011), a sequential approach is recommended, prioritizing intended learning outcomes, followed by learning activities, and then assessment practices. This sequence not only enhances transparency and significance in the overall learning experience for students but also guarantees that assessment practices are purposefully designed to evaluate the achievement of learning outcomes.

Furthermore, this approach functions as a guiding principle, directing a wide array of deliberate actions (Ambrose et al., 2016). Neglecting such alignment could result in a failure to impart the essential skills that are the intended learning outcomes. The concept of alignment is often

associated with "excellent teaching" (Biggs, 1996), and students' educational attainment is anticipated to be enhanced thanks to the alignment (Antes, 2014).

Theoretical framework: Bloom's Taxonomy

Bloom's Taxonomy is a logically organized framework that illustrates the cognitive abilities needed for students to gain a deep and meaningful understanding of knowledge (Nurmatova & Altun, 2023). In this research, Bloom's taxonomy is employed to classify the cognitive processing levels that learning objectives and assessments aim to address. Bloom's Taxonomy is a well-established cognitive hierarchy of learning objectives, and a broadly accepted tool for categorizing types of thinking including remember, understand, apply, analyze, evaluate and create (Lau et al., 2018). The framework offers a structured approach to categorizing educational goals based on their cognitive complexity in which the upper levels of Bloom's taxonomy embrace lower levels—for example, an analysis-level inquiry necessitates mastery of application, understanding, and knowledge (Momsen et al., 2010). However, inexperienced educators encounter challenges when it comes to incorporating Bloom's Taxonomy into language instruction because it necessitates a comprehensive understanding of their students' language proficiency levels (Nurmatova & Altun, 2023).

Bloom's taxonomy is widely employed for writing learning outcomes since it gives a pre-built structure and collection of verbs (Kennedy et al., 2007). It might be claimed that using the proper verbs is essential for successfully writing learning outcomes. Learning outcomes should be written using action verbs so that students are able to demonstrate that they have learned or achieved the outcome (Reichgelt & Yaverbaum, 2002). Course designers should consider guidelines and experience in writing learning outcomes (Table 1) to ensure clarity, alignment with educational objectives, and consistency in assessment practices.

Table 0

Guidelines and experience in writing learning outcomes

i.	Action verbs from Bloom's Taxonomy with an emphasis on higher-order thinking skills should be used.
ii.	To facilitate the assessment of outcomes, one verb per learning outcome should be used.
iii.	There should be between 4-8 learning outcomes for each course, in fact the fewer the better.
iv.	Course learning outcomes should describe what a student should be able to DO at the end of a course rather than what the instructor teaches.
v.	Course learning outcomes should be written in language that students (and those outside the field) are able to understand.
vi.	Course learning outcomes are typically not content-specific.
vii.	Ideally, each course or program should include learning outcomes from more than one domain (cognitive, psychomotor, and affective).
viii.	Each course learning outcome should be measurable and can be assessed, preferably using more than one assessment tool.
ix.	Weak verbs such as "be aware," "appreciate," "identify," "read," and "recognize," are to be avoided in general. For example, recognizing a phenomenon is weak compared to understanding that phenomenon.

Note: Adopted from “Measuring course learning outcomes” by Keshavarz, M., 2011, *Journal of Learning Design*, 4(4)

Research Questions

In order to find how alignment between course learning outcomes and assessment is occurring, the research aims to answer the questions below:

How do the stated course learning outcomes align with the assessment methods?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting

The study is situated within a dynamic academic environment, specifically in the Faculty of English Language, which administers a diverse range of programs that cater to both linguistics and non-linguistics disciplines. Within the linguistics programs, the focus is on providing a comprehensive educational experience for English-majored students. Simultaneously, the faculty offers English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) courses tailored to non-English-majored students from Tourism, Tourism & Travel Service Management and Hotel Management program, who engage in content-driven studies entirely in English. This dual focus on linguistic and non-linguistic programs, with a specialized emphasis on English proficiency through EMI courses, creates a distinctive academic backdrop for the study, presenting an opportunity to explore the effectiveness of alignment between learning outcomes and assessments across varied educational contexts within the same academic institution.

As part of the research methodology, 32 sets of syllabi and test specifications were collected and analyzed, providing a robust foundation for understanding the nuances of outcome formulation and assessment alignment within linguistic programs. This deliberate sampling ensures a representative examination of the university's pedagogical approach, shedding light on the difficulties of course development employed by the Faculty of English Language and EMI.

Design of the Study

This study is part of a broader thesis dedicated to uncovering the current course design and development. A qualitative data collection and analysis approach was employed to achieve the aims. In the initial phase of the research procedure, data collection serves as the foundational step towards systematically analyzing the alignment between course learning outcomes and assessment methods within linguistic programs at a Vietnamese university. This phase occurs within one month and entails the acquisition of 32 sets of syllabi and corresponding assessment guidelines from a diverse range of linguistic courses. The alignment assessment is conducted using the predefined coding scheme, focusing on assessing the extent to which learning outcomes align with the cognitive demands implied by assessment methods. The qualitative method enabled in-depth investigation and understanding of the complicated relationship between stated learning outcomes and assessment tasks used in educational environments.

Data collection & analysis

The procedures for collecting and analyzing data spanned a duration of approximately one month (September 2022 – October, 2022) and revealed significant outcomes. Through a purposive sampling method, data was collected from two main sources of the Faculty of English language and EMI group, including 17 sets of syllabi and test specifications from English-major courses and other 15 sets from EMI courses. The data collection process focused on distinguishing and evaluating how learning outcomes were written, emphasizing the use of verbs and their association with specific levels of Bloom's taxonomy. Besides, the data assists in figuring out how the assessments align with the learning outcomes.

Results/Findings

In considering the critical relationship between learning outcomes and assessment, two essential facets emerge in crafting learning objectives. Another crucial finding involves examining the alignment between the stated learning outcomes and the assessments conducted, ensuring a seamless integration that accurately reflects the intended educational goals and effectively measures students' achievement of those objectives.

The clarity of verbs in learning outcomes

The analysis of documents from linguistics courses reveals a significant observation regarding the utilization of verbs from Bloom's taxonomy in learning outcomes (LOs).

Table 2 indicates that the majority of these LOs do not incorporate verbs from Bloom's taxonomy. Instead of writing “*Demonstrate the ability*”, the course designers started the requirement for the LO by “*Be able to ...*” or “*Have skills to ...*” (Cross-cultural Communication, English Translation and Interpreting Theory) or “*Ability to...*” (English Listening Skills 2).

Therefore, some LOs employed language that cannot be easily measured, such as terms like “*effectively*”, “*be aware of*”, “*be able to*” and “*have the ability to*”, etc. This finding is similar to the experience in writing learning outcomes mentioned in Table 1 (Keshavarz, 2011). These imprecise expressions in LOs might hinder the clear communication of the cognitive level of skills or knowledge that students are expected to achieve. By not employing Bloom's taxonomy verbs, these LOs might fail to effectively communicate the cognitive level of skills or knowledge that students are expected to achieve.

Table 2*The clarity of verbs in learning outcomes*

Course name	Intended learning outcomes	Assessment purpose	Test methods
English Translation and Interpreting Theory	L2: <u>Be able to search for information</u> relevant to lesson content from different sources of translation and interpretation documents	- Ability to search for information relevant to lesson content from different sources of translation and interpretation documents	Presentation
Cross cultural Communication, English Translation and Interpreting Theory	G1: <u>Able to describe, explain and analyze</u> intercultural knowledge G2: <u>Have skills to effectively search and synthesize</u> information, <u>be able to solve communication situations</u> and demonstrate adaptation to changes in new cultural environments	- <u>Ability to describe, explain and analyze</u> students' intercultural knowledge - <u>Students' ability to effectively search and synthesize</u> information related to cross-cultural communication - <u>Some concepts related to culture</u> include | communication strategies, verbal and nonverbal communication, culture shock phenomenon - <u>Solve communication situations</u> through knowledge learned about cross-cultural communication such as communication strategies, sign language, politeness, direct/indirect speech.	- Group presentation - Speaking test
English Skills 2	L1: <u>Ability to remember and recognize</u> vocabulary in context to serve listening comprehension on familiar topics such as personality, time, family, work, life, and some social events. L2: <u>Ability to listen and understand</u> the main ideas and important details of speech and simple conversations about areas such as society, personality, time, family, work, life, and Fields equivalent to levels A2, B1-	L1: <u>Ability to remember and recognize</u> vocabulary in context to serve listening comprehension on familiar topics such as personality, time, family, work, life, and some social events. L2: <u>Ability to listen and understand</u> the main ideas and important details of speech and simple conversations about areas such as society, personality, time, family, work, life, and Fields equivalent to levels A2, B1-	- Written test (matching, true/false, gap-fill, short answer, quiz)

*The quantities of requirements within a single LO***Table 3***Learning outcomes of linguistics courses*

Course name	Intended learning outcomes
English Reading Skills 4	L1: <u>Memorize and use</u> vocabulary... <u>Apply</u> reading comprehension strategies to <u>determine</u> the meaning of polysemous words..., <u>synthesize</u> detailed information..., identify detailed information..., <u>identify</u> summary information..., <u>determine</u> the author's attitudes..., <u>determine</u> the causes of the event...
English Translation and Interpreting Theory	L1: <u>Describe</u> and explain ... and <u>apply</u> necessary strategies before translating and interpreting...
English Interpreting practice 2	L1: <u>Describe</u> , <u>explain</u> and <u>apply</u> interpretation skills ...
English Listening Skills 1	L1: <u>Apply</u> vocabulary and listening strategies... to <u>determine</u> detailed information..., to <u>determine</u> reasons, instructions, quantity, time of events/ events...
English Reading skill 2	L1: <u>Memorize and use</u> vocabulary ... and <u>apply</u> some reading comprehension strategies; understand the main ideas...; <u>distinguish</u> between practical and theoretical information; <u>understand</u> complex sentence structure; <u>understand</u> cause-effect relationships; <u>understand</u> different expressions; identify participle clauses; <u>understand</u> the implications of the reading; <u>determine</u> the author's views and attitudes; <u>summarize</u> reading information

Another interesting finding in the construction of linguistics course LOs revealed in Table 3 is a consistent trend where many LOs include numerous demands or objectives within a single statement. A wide range of requirement could be mentioned Table 2 as “*Memorize and use vocabulary... Apply reading comprehension strategies..., distinguish..., determine..., identify detailed information...*” (English Reading Skills 4). L1 of English Translation and Interpreting Theory shows the expected outcomes to “Describe and explain..., identify and apply...”. This tendency could lead to information overload for students enrolled in these courses, make it challenging for students to focus on the core objectives of the course, and result in confusion. This observation raises concerns about the clarity and manageability of LOs within linguistics courses.

Besides using only one or two verbs to describe learning outcomes, LO should incorporate a learning taxonomy such as Bloom's or Biggs' SOLO taxonomy for specifying instructional objectives (Biggs, 2014). The LOs in EMI courses are examples characterized by using only one specific requirement in each statement.

Table 4*Learning outcomes of EMI courses*

Course name	Intended learning outcomes
Basic Economics	L1: Demonstrate understanding of... L2: Apply obtained knowledge...
Communication in Tourism	L1: Demonstrate an understanding of... L2: Suggest solutions for...
Introduction to Tourism	L1: Demonstrate the understanding of... L2: Identify...
Visiting accommodation models	L1: Analyze the characteristics of... L2: Formulate a startup idea...
Travel Business 1	L1: Demonstrate understanding of... L2: Analyze fundamental knowledge...

In contrast to the issues identified in linguistics courses, Table 4 illustrates that the analysis of LOs in courses delivered in EMI reveals a positive trend. One key principle is to use a single, action-oriented verb in each learning outcome, ensuring precision and focus. For example, instead of using a phrase like "understand the principles of," a more specific verb like "analyze" or "evaluate" can be employed. This specificity helps in clearly defining the intended outcome and provides a basis for designing assessments that align with these outcomes. Each LO in EMI courses focuses on only one certain request which contributes to exceptional clarity, making it easy for both students and educators to follow and assess progress. By incorporating a single, well-defined requirement in each LO, EMI courses eliminate ambiguity and ensure that students' learning objectives are clear.

Furthermore, learning outcomes should be designed to encourage higher-order thinking skills in addition to language proficiency. Verbs such as "analyze", "formulate", and "suggest" prompt critical thinking and problem-solving, contributing to a more enhanced learning experience. Assessments corresponding to these outcomes can then include tasks that require students to demonstrate their ability to think critically and apply language skills in complex situations. This approach not only enhances language proficiency but also fosters the development of cognitive skills essential for academic and professional success.

Alignment between stated in LOs and assessment

According to the data, the examination of course discovers a concerning pattern in matching LOs with assessment. It is evident that in many instances, there was a misalignment between the stated LOs and the requirements of the assessments. In such cases, the assessments demand more from students than what was originally stated in the LOs. This misalignment poses a significant challenge for both educators and students, as it can lead to confusion regarding what students are expected to achieve and be evaluated on.

Table 5*Different requirements between learning outcomes and assessment*

Course name	Learning outcomes	Assessment
English-speaking country	L1: <u>Present</u> knowledge about many different aspects of social life in England, America and some English-speaking countries	L1: <u>Describe</u> , <u>explain</u> and <u>analyze</u> knowledge about many different aspects of life social life in English-speaking countries
	L2: Effectively <u>apply information search skills to collect information</u> about many aspects of social life in the UK, America and some English-speaking countries	L2: <u>Work independently</u> , <u>research</u> and <u>search for information</u> about many different aspects of social life in the UK, America and some English-speaking countries.
Employability Skills (for English major)	L2: <u>Solve</u> work-related situations such as first day of work, time management, negotiations, meetings, customer service, and innovation.	L2: Proactively <u>solve</u> different situations at work; <u>instruct</u> and <u>supervise</u> others in performing defined tasks; Demonstrate a sense of respect for organizational culture.
	L3: <u>Organize</u> and <u>operate</u> groups effectively.	L3: <u>Establish</u> , <u>organize</u> , <u>manage</u> and <u>operate</u> effective group activities.
English Interpreting practice 2	L3: <u>Demonstrate confidence</u> when communicating in translation practice activities; <u>demonstrate adaptability</u> when performing different translation tasks; <u>Demonstrate professionalism</u> in translation tasks	L3: <u>Organize</u> and <u>manage</u> appropriate translation activities; <u>Demonstrate</u> professional ethics and take responsibility for assigned translation tasks

A related finding shown in Table 5 is that the differences between the specific requirements outlined in the assessments and the language used in the LOs. The requirements in the assessments were often phrased differently or included additional criteria not mentioned in the LOs.

The first misalignment here lies in the English-speaking country course. The discrepancy exists between the relatively passive action of presenting knowledge and the more active requirements of describing, explaining, and analyzing that knowledge. Presenting knowledge might involve a straightforward demonstration or presentation, whereas describing, explaining, and analyzing require a deeper understanding and engagement with the material. Another case is expanding requirements in assessment compared to stated learning outcome in the Employability Skills (for English major) course. While the learning outcome emphasizes the application of information search skills, the assessment introduces additional elements such as working independently and conducting research. While independence and research skills are valuable, they may not directly align with the initial learning outcome.

This incongruity between LOs and assessments can hinder the transparent communication of expectations, making it crucial for educators to harmonize the language and content between these two components.

Discussion

The alignment between course learning outcomes and assessments is critical to effective educational practices, especially within linguistic programs at Vietnamese universities. As highlighted in Table 1 and mentioned by Savage (2015), the challenge of maintaining a balance between the number of learning outcomes and their effectiveness in a lesson is an important consideration. Savage recommends a streamlined approach, suggesting that one or two outcomes per lesson suffice. This insight raises questions about the optimal number of outcomes that enhance rather than weaken the educational impact.

Furthermore, Gronlund & Brookhart (2009) contribute valuable perspectives on addressing the issue of overloading outcomes with multiple statements of learning. They emphasize the importance of using action verbs as the primary defining element in restricting learning outcomes. To be more specific, they contend that each outcome statement should center around a single action verb, ensuring a clear focus on what students are expected to learn. This emphasis on precision aligns with the broader goal of communicating instructional intent without becoming overly tied to specific topics. The implication is that outcomes should be practical and transferable, fostering students' understanding of the subject matter.

The implications of how learning outcomes are written and implemented extend beyond mere formulation, significantly influencing the clarity of expectations for both students and educators. The finding supports the idea that consistent association of verbs with specific levels of Bloom's taxonomy can substantially reduce ambiguity in articulating expertise levels within learning outcomes (Stanny & Albright, 2016). This approach not only facilitates a more straightforward understanding for students but also simplifies the assessment process for instructors, allowing them to more easily monitor progress against well-defined and distinct objectives. The link between clarity in language and improved educational outcomes emerges as a crucial factor in enhancing the educational experience for both learners and educators.

The analysis of alignment between course learning outcomes and assessments within linguistic programs this university emphasizes the importance of thoughtful outcome formulation. Balancing the number of outcomes, employing action verbs, and ensuring specificity contribute to a clearer understanding of instructional intent. The finding supports the finding mentioning that if the curriculum is hefty and demanding; it becomes unproductive (Le & Le, 2022). This clarity not only aids students in fulfilling their expectations but also facilitates more effective assessment practices for educators. The implications extend to the broader pedagogical landscape, emphasizing the crucial role that language precision plays in optimizing the educational experience.

Conclusion

The findings from process of collecting and analyzing data reveal that the clarity of verbs used in the statements pertains to learning outcomes. The language employed in LOs plays a crucial role in conveying the expected skills and knowledge to be acquired by students. The study highlights that imprecise verb usage in learning outcomes can lead to ambiguity, potentially hindering the effectiveness of both learning and assessment. Additionally, the examination of the quantities of requirements within a single learning outcome uncovered insights into the potential challenges students may face in meeting the outlined expectations.

The implications of this study on the alignment of course objectives and assessments within linguistics programs provide useful insights for educational practitioners. Firstly, educators should prioritize careful verb selection when developing learning objectives to guarantee clarity and accuracy, hence improving the efficacy of learning and assessment. Furthermore, the findings emphasize the significance of maintaining a balance in the quantities of requirements within a single learning outcome, thereby promoting realistic and achievable educational goals.

Furthermore, the analysis of the alignment between stated learning outcomes and assessments revealed areas of congruence and misalignment. This aspect of the study highlights the need for continuous evaluation and refinement of assessment methods to ensure they accurately measure the intended learning outcomes. The findings suggest that regular reviews of both LOs and assessments can contribute to a more coherent and effective curriculum, ultimately enhancing the quality of education within linguistic programs.

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Instruction-Giving in EFL Classrooms: A Case of a University in Viet Nam

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ABSTRACT

Organizing effective instruction is a characteristic of classroom management, which minimizes time wasting and keeps students moving at a good pace. The primary purpose of this study is to explore the current practice of instruction-giving strategies being utilized in EFL classrooms in a Vietnamese public university. To achieve this goal, both qualitative and quantitative methods were utilized to explore the critical characteristics of instruction-giving. Classroom observations were the primary data collection method. During 19 observations, 25 instructions were noted for analysis. The findings of this study present certain characteristics of instruction-giving, namely attention-grabbing skills, repetition, the use of mother tongue and language, demonstration, and checking understanding to support instruction delivery. Also, the study's findings propose weaknesses that EFL teachers can take into consideration for better instruction-giving.

Keywords:

Instruction-giving;
current practice; EFL
classrooms

Introduction

Effective instruction-giving in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms plays a vital role in facilitating students' language acquisition and overall academic development (Angulo, 2023). In the context of the ever-evolving educational landscape in Vietnam, where the demand for English proficiency continues to grow, understanding the intricacies of instruction-giving becomes increasingly crucial. Prior research has emphasized the critical role of instruction-giving in fostering effective learning outcomes in EFL settings. The significance of effective instruction is highlighted in promoting students' active engagement and language development (Gündüz & Kılıçkaya, 2021). Similarly, Sowell (2017) underscores that when students do not understand what they are supposed to do, the activities may be on the verge of failure.

Despite its undeniable importance, the specific practices of instruction-giving in EFL classrooms, particularly within the context of Vietnamese universities, still need to be explored in the current area of research. Only a few studies have been done, including Nguyen (2019),

which explores instruction-giving practices in EFL classrooms. However, the study only utilizes a conversation analysis approach to analyze. Recognizing the limited attention given to EFL instruction-giving methods in Vietnam, my study seeks to bridge the gap and contribute valuable insights to the existing knowledge base in the field.

Instruction is a plan of teaching and learning activities in which learning is organized with components, including teachers, students, materials, and learning environment (Dick & Carey, 1996). In our study, we focus on instruction-giving, which refers to how teachers provide guidelines for classroom activities. In the context of a Vietnamese university, this study seeks to comprehensively analyze the challenges and effective guidelines that EFL teachers employ in facilitating language acquisition and proficiency among their students. Through an in-depth examination of the instruction-giving dynamics, the study attempts to contribute to the existing pedagogical practices in EFL instruction, offering practical recommendations for the enhancement of instruction-giving strategies in Vietnamese university settings.

Literature Review

Definition of instruction-giving

There have been various ways to define and interpret the definition of instruction-giving.

In the field of education, Şen (2021) defines instruction-giving as the act of conveying information or guidance to facilitate learning. He emphasizes that effective instructions should be clear, concise, and tailored to the learner's needs. In detail, Marzano (2003) acknowledges instructions as verbal or written orders that belong to classroom management strategies. Similarly, Sowell (2017) supports this view that when a task is presented to students, it is vital to provide instruction; before beginning the assignment, pupils must have a complete understanding of what they are going to perform; otherwise, the activity will be a failure. As a result, the main purpose of instruction is to inform pupils of what they must do before engaging in an activity.

Instruction-giving sequence

The sequence of instruction-giving typically includes the preparation stage, where teachers carefully plan and analyze instructions; the delivery stage, where teachers employ various strategies to convey information to students effectively; and the post-delivery stage, where teachers check for understanding and monitor the activity (Sowell, 2017).

Research has indicated that pre-planning instructions are a fundamental phase in delivering instructions. Kemma (2019) highlights that teachers should think about the right words and illustrations to use to ensure students understand the activity. Woodberry and Aldrich (2000) advise teachers to write them down as they prepare the lesson plan for the lessons. The words for instructions should be familiar to students; hence, if the sentences are too long or complicated, omit the redundant words as long as the original meanings remain (Scrivener, 2005).

In the delivery stage, teachers should get students' attention first (Sowell, 2017). He confirms that there are various strategies to get attention, such as ringing the bell, clapping hands,

blowing a whistle, raising your hand, or even standing still. According to (Arifadah et al., 2020a), clue phrases such as "Time to start"; "Listen up" are commonly used to get attention. Besides, he insists that giving handouts during delivery may distract students' concentration because they focus on handouts instead of what teachers say. The activities will inevitably fail if the students do not listen to the instructions. Holmes (2014) mentions that teachers can use three types of directives to deliver instruction: imperatives, interrogatives, and declaratives. Imperatives are more effective and suggested due to shortness and conciseness. Some principles, such as using repetition, demonstrating, giving a time limit, and using the mother tongue, are recognized as the key to effective instruction in the classroom (Sowell, 2017).

Harmer (2007) underscores that after giving instruction, it is important to ensure that all students understand the requests; therefore, if students are encouraged to ask questions, their comprehension abilities can be enhanced (Loaiza & Jean, 2022). Kemma (2019) elucidates that teachers normally use oral checking questions such as "Do you understand?"; "OK" to check understanding; however, there are various better methods teachers could utilize to grasp the situation, including inviting a student to describe the exercise or asking someone to perform the activity in front of the class (Harmer, 2007). If instructions are given in the right order, there is clarity, and students typically do not get the teacher's point (Loaiza & Jean, 2023; Sowell, 2017).

Strategies and Techniques for Effective Instruction-Giving in EFL Classrooms

Instructions and how to deliver them can determine whether a lesson succeeds or fails (El & Abderrazak, 2019). This is especially true in EFL classrooms, where students are learning a new language and may not be as proficient as native speakers. In this context, teachers need to use strategies and techniques to help students understand what they should do.

First and foremost, teachers should speak less and use simple, understandable vocabulary while delivering instructions for students to follow (Loaiza & Jean (2023). Scrivener (2005, p.90) shares the same perspective that "teachers use short sentences — one sentence for each key piece of information", which is referred to as "KISS" in the literature, which stands for "keep instructions short and simple." Besides, teachers deliver good instruction in classrooms using appropriate demonstration, repetition, or mother tongue support (Sowell, 2017).

Secondly, all English learners come to the classroom with their first language (L1) (Harmer, 2007), and beginners have a tendency to translate everything they learn from English to their L1 to understand what teachers explain. "It is a natural process of learning a foreign language" (Harmer, 2007, p. 38). It has become a topic of controversy that teachers should use the mother tongue- their first language (L1) or the second language (L2) to deliver instruction in the classrooms (Sowell, 2017). On the one hand, teachers can explain the learners' L1, allowing for more precise understanding, followed by tasks requiring students to repeat the instructions in their L1 to assess comprehension (Harmer, 2007). Using the mother tongue can also foster metalinguistic awareness, enhancing language proficiency (Yüzlü & Atay, 2020; Cummins, 2006). On the other hand, we should not abandon the advantages of creating an English environment for English learners (Harmer, 2007). Besides, Le (2022) clarifies that advanced students hold a negative attitude towards using L1 in their English classes, while elementary and intermediate students generally perceive the judicious use of their L1 positively. Allocating

time for L1 instruction could divert valuable exposure to the target language (Gündüz & Kılıçkaya, 2021). Inappropriate L1 use during activities may hinder students' understanding of contextual cues and inferences (Paker & Karaağaç, 2015). Hence, it is essential to balance using the L1 for support and providing ample opportunities for target language practice and production (Wilden & Porsch, 2020).

Thirdly, teachers' most difficult problem in classroom management is having students pay attention (Arifadah et al., 2020a). According to Taylor and Parsons (2011), student attention encompasses willingness, need, desire, and compulsion to engage and succeed in lessons, with paying attention to teachers' explanations being paramount. McIntosh et al., (2004) provide various strategies that exist to capture and maintain students' focus, including hissing, sounding, singing, and clapping. Direct requests for attention and physical movements like clapping hands or using body language are also useful (Gumilar et al., 2023). Despite employing attention-grabbing techniques, some students may still need to respond due to distractions like conversing with peers or engaging in unrelated tasks (Arifadah et al., 2020). Hence, teachers must employ suitable strategies to capture students' attention effectively.

Finally, visual aids and technologies also play a crucial role in delivering effective instruction. According to Shabiralyani et al. (2015), visual aids help teachers quickly convey concepts to students and pique their interest. Technology integration, including the use of interactive whiteboards, could enhance student engagement and motivation (Ha, 2021).

Factors influencing instruction-giving in EFL classrooms

According to Phan (2018) and Şen (2021), the key factors affecting their instruction-giving are activity-based, instruction-based, student-based, and teacher-based.

As a teacher-based factor, Linse (2006) states that problem comes from unplanned and unstructured oral instructions. Some teachers do not prepare instructions before the lessons because giving instructions could be spontaneous.

Activity-based factors refer to the complexity of instructions, which require long and specific procedures (Swift, 2008). Sometimes, instructions with a format or topic that students are unfamiliar with or above their level are examples of instruction-based factors (Şen, 2021). Students sometimes stop listening before the teachers finish the instructions, which causes misunderstanding (Arifadah et al., 2020b).

For student-based factors, Weinstein and Andrew (2007) indicate that the process might be more difficult if students need to pay attention in class. Some students are distracted by their studs around the table, chatting with mates, or doing their work (Weinstein, 2007). Swift (2008) clarifies that some students might think they have understood the instructions while they truly have yet to. It is called a mismatch between them.

Noticeably, Instruction-based factors are the form or content of instructions that students are not familiar with or, above their level, long or complex instructions (Şen, 2021). Instructions with strange forms, unknown vocabulary, and long sentences with confusing explanations entail more teacher clarification, paraphrasing, simplifying, monitoring, and increased teacher talking time. Consequently, as Hughes et al. (2007) concluded, students stop listening before the

teachers finish the instructions, which causes misunderstanding.

Previous studies

Several researchers have studied instruction-giving principles, and other investigations are relevant to the strategies and techniques of instruction delivery in classrooms (e.g., El & Abderrazak, 2019; Şen, 2021; Angulo, 2023; Nguyen, 2019).

The study of El and Abderrazak (2019) revealed several key strategies that have been found to enhance instruction-giving in EFL classrooms. It also provides clear and concise instructions that are crucial for effective communication and comprehension. Teachers should use simple language, break down complex tasks into manageable steps, and provide visual aids or demonstrations when necessary.

Şen (2021) provides a detailed overview of teachers' perspectives on how to plan instruction, secure students' attention, and give and check instruction in the classroom. The study finally points out the determining factors that affect instruction-giving, including activity-based, instruction-based, student-based, timing of the syllabus, and teacher-based.

Angulo (2023) highlights the significance of effective instruction-giving in enhancing students' performance in English lessons. The findings also emphasize the crucial role of educators in ensuring that learners comprehend the requirements of class activities and experience a sense of accomplishment in completing various tasks. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of delivering instructions in a clear and easily understandable manner, regardless of the chosen instructional approach.

Several studies have also been conducted in Vietnam about instruction-giving in EFL classes.

Nguyen (2019) characterizes two types of primary instruction delivery methods: interactive instruction, which involves students' participation, and monologue-type instruction, which involves little learners' involvement. It is emphasized that one technique for measuring learners' understanding without having to devote time to concept-checking questions is to ask students to participate in the teacher's lesson.

Furthermore, Phan's (2018) findings illustrate that there is a significant disconnect between what experienced teachers believe and what they actually do. Participating teachers are aware of the benefits of interactive activities to students' communication skills. However, they adopt a teacher-centered approach in the classroom and use much of the first language to give instruction instead of the target language.

This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of instruction-giving in EFL classrooms and highlights the importance of adopting effective instruction-giving strategies, such as demonstrating rather than simply explaining, to enhance comprehension and promote active participation among students. It can serve as a foundation for conducting and analyzing the data, which will delve further into the instruction-giving practices in EFL classrooms at the university in Vietnam.

Research Question

To find out the recent practices of instruction-giving in EFL classrooms. The research aims to answer the following question:

How do EFL teachers give instructions in EFL classrooms at a Vietnamese University?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at a public university in the capital of Vietnam. The university provides courses in various majors and subjects, such as Information technology, electronics, marketing, tourism, languages, and so on. The university puts effort into educating non-English significant students on English as a Foreign Language (EFL), providing students with the necessary skills to communicate effectively in English and meet the requirements of languages in their career path.

This study's participants were random EFL teachers who were both new and experienced in teaching English. The random selection of EFL teachers as participants mitigates the risk of unreliable research outcomes and provides a comprehensive overview of the entire teaching faculty at the research site. Nineteen teachers were observed in total, and each lesson lasted 50 minutes.

Table 1.

Participants' work experience

Year of experience	
<5 years	5-20 years
7	12

As shown in Table 1, seven EFL participants have less than 5 years of teaching experience, while 12 participative participants have experience teaching for over 5 years.

All the students were non-English majors. All the lessons taught basic English for communication; hence, the level of all classes varied from A1 to B1 according to CEFR standard (the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages).

Design of the Study

The study was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the research question. Nineteen lessons were observed and audio recorded during the research process to collect the data. An observation checklist is adapted from Sowell (2017) to evaluate the effectiveness of instructions that given in EFL classrooms. The checklist consists of 15 criteria that evaluate the effectiveness of instructions throughout three stages: the preparation stage, delivery stage, and post-delivery stage. The criteria in the checklist were

grouped based on three stages of instruction-giving, each of which criterion belongs to.

Data collection & analysis

As part of a broader thesis, this minor study employed observation as a primary data collection instrument to find out the current practices of instruction-giving in EFL classes and the strategies and techniques used while giving instruction.

The observation is used to gather live data about teachers' practices in the classroom setting. A consent letter from the university's principal was approved before conducting the observation. The major goal of the observation was to understand how teachers give instructions in a Vietnamese university context. Each teacher is observed once only in one 50-minute lesson at the teacher's convenience. There were 19 observations throughout the research, and 25 instruction-giving observations were observed in total. The name of each teacher was numbered from one to 19 based on the observation order. Besides, teacher 1 with instruction 1 and 2 was coded based on 1.1 and 1.2. This was coded similarly to other teachers and given instructions.

There is a huge amount of literature on qualitative and quantitative data analysis. To make sense of the qualitative data gathered for the study, it was noted, analyzed, and categorized based on instruction-giving characteristics. The number of instruction-giving following instruction-giving techniques or without instruction-giving techniques was calculated and analyzed to explore the percentage of each characteristic of each instruction.

Along with class observation field notes, each observation was audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Results/Findings

After investigating the data, the section illustrates several typical extracts of the research findings on the current state of instruction-giving in EFL classrooms at the case study site.

Teachers utilize some instruction-giving strategies effectively.

Teachers effectively establish time constraints for activities and employ repetition to reinforce instructions. Firstly, students tend to work more seriously when given limited time for each activity. For example, in the activity of listing materials, teacher 5.1 instructed: "So 2 mins, let's start. You have two mins." thanks to giving a specific time, students focused on working in 2 minutes and were aware that two minutes later the teacher would check their results.

Secondly, teachers cannot guarantee that when they give instructions, 100% of students are paying attention, not doing their own work, or wandering their minds elsewhere. Therefore, teachers must repeat instructions to students, and teachers at this university have applied this technique relatively well. For example, teacher 7.2 said: "Work individually. Close your books. Close all your books. Work individually." in contrast to 7.2, teacher 3.1 said, "I want you to work in two groups. Group A, group B, OK? I want each group to come to the board and ring the bell to answer the question. OK? I will show the questions in the slide, and then you will ring the bell." "Are you clear?". On the contrary, very few students in instruction 3.1 responded with the answer "Are you clear?" because they had not yet had time to think through the

instructions they received.

Most EFL teachers used long and academic structures to deliver instructions.

Short and imperatives, which include most words at levels A1 and A2, help students quickly understand information. In case instruction 5.1 "Now, as you can see in the book or in the slide here, I would like you to work individually, and in two minutes, you have to write as many words related to materials and properties that you have learned in lesson 1, and you have learned online.", "What I would like you to do here is I will say a letter, and you raise your hand to give me a word; if you can give me the word correctly, you can sit down with your row or column" because the instructions are too academic, lengthy, grammatically complicated, students face confusion, difficulty in filtering out the main ideas to focus on, thus potentially consume additional time.

On the contrary, instructions with imperative sentences, such as "First, work individually" and "Then, look at the picture," without redundant words such as "I would like you to...", "I want you to...", "And you guys have to...", or "What I would like you to do here is...", present minimal challenges for students in comprehending and adhering to the specified requirements, thereby resulting in significant time savings during the lesson.

When an activity requires multiple steps, each of which requires different instructions, the teacher should break it down rather than giving all the instructions in one utterance. Sequential conjunctions such as "first," "then," "next," and "after that" and simple linkers, namely "and"; and "so," benefit students by helping them visualize the steps they need to take in the upcoming activity.

The use of mother tongue appears among EFL teachers.

The mother tongue was used to support EFL teachers' instructions at the case study site. In some situations, teacher 7 used their mother tongue permissibly because the teacher only spoke the mother tongue when she wanted to check students' understanding. Several EFL teachers, namely 3 and 10, habitually translate instructions for students as soon as they are given. The data reveals two reasons for this phenomenon. Primarily, teachers express concerns regarding their students' potential difficulties in comprehending English instructions, prompting them to consistently provide translations in the student's native language to ensure the students fully grasp all the necessary requirements. They are not aware that students can completely get their requests because, in addition to verbal instructions, other non-verbal aids such as slideshows and body language support students partly understanding the instructions. In addition, speak-fast teachers tend to deliver the instruction repeatedly; once English instructions fail, they switch to using their mother tongue to interpret the requirements.

Within the subset of Vietnamese-speaking teachers, some exhibit a tendency to intermingle both languages in a single sentence. For example, in instruction 15, the teacher said: "There are some given information, ở đây các bạn nhìn hai các cái phần task này nhá, A and B, sau đó sẽ thành lập câu hỏi liên quan đến các từ đã cho sẵn ở đây, cái hoạt động giống mình đi thi ý", means "There are some given information. Look at these two task sections, A and B, and then you will form questions related to the given words here. This activity is similar to participating in an English quiz, alright?". in instruction 10.1, the teacher mentioned: "OK nào, bây giờ các bạn

làm gì nhỉ? Thảo luận theo cặp trong 8 phút, and then hỏi và give position, đưa ra vị trí của các địa điểm công cộng trong thành phố, dựa trên cái bản đồ, OK?", which means "Alright, now what are you guys going to do? Discuss in pairs for 8 minutes, and then ask and give positions, indicate the locations of public places in the city based on the map, OK?" in English. Some even spoke Vietnamese entirely to give instructions to students. These situations, which have not been illustrated in any previous study yet, can be considered superfluous and constitute an abuse of the English language.

The habit of checking understanding

After the delivery stage, four behaviors are observed: Asking checking questions, getting summary or repetition from students, asking for demonstration or sample, and not checking the given instructions.

Many teachers predominantly employ the questioning technique as a means of assessing comprehension. Commonly utilized phrases in this context encompass:

“OK?”

“Is this clear to you?”

“Do you understand?”

“Got it?”

“Understand?”

“Are you clear?”

In fact, the students ignore the questions to check their understanding. They tend to remain silent for several reasons. First, they need help understanding the instructions. In some cases, they understand the requirements. However, they are shy and too lazy to reply to the questions. Consequently, when students reply indecisively, teachers also implicitly understand that their students have already grasped the information. It is considered a bad habit in the classrooms because this situation may cause misunderstanding among students and put the activity's success at risk. For instance, in instruction 11.1, the teacher used their first language to support the instruction and then checked understanding by asking, "You got it?" However, students were still confused and needed clarification about what they had to do; some worked individually instead of in pairs as required.

The characteristics of instruction-giving practices in the preparation stage are presented in the table below.

Table 2

Problems in the preparation stage

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Number of "Yes"</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number of "No"</i>	<i>%</i>
1. There is evidence that teachers prepared the instruction before delivery	22	90%	3	10%
2. Student groups are arranged before the instructor gives instructions.	8	31%	13	69%

As shown in Table 2, the number of instructions that teachers prepared the instruction before

delivery accounts for 90%; only 10% of instructions were prepared after lessons. However, most teachers needed to remember to group students before instruction delivery (69%). Table 3 shows the current practices of instruction-giving in the delivery stage.

Table 3

Problems in the delivery stage

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Number of "Yes"</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number of "No"</i>	<i>%</i>
3. The instructor gets students' attention before giving instructions.	23	91%	2	9%
4. The instructor hands out materials at appropriate times.	6	24%	19	76%
5. The teacher uses language at or below/above students' current level of understanding.	3	12%	22	78%
6. The instructor uses imperatives to deliver the instruction.	19	76%	6	24%
7. The instructor uses extra-linguistic devices to aid meaning.	15	60%	10	40%
8. The instructor provides a time limit for the activities.	10	40%	15	60%
9. The instructor checks for understanding before letting students start an activity. How is it checked?	8	33%	13	67%
10. The instructor provides modeling/ demonstration for the activity. What types of demonstration are utilized?	11	44%	14	56%
13. Teachers use their mother tongue to give instructions	6	26%	19	74%

As shown in Table 3, the data presents on challenges encountered by teachers during the delivery stage reveals several critical areas for improvement. Notably, the figures indicate some significant prevalence of issues such as insufficient demonstration of concepts (56%) and handing out materials at inappropriate times (76%).

In terms of language use, although 78% of the instruction was given at students' current level of understanding, there needs to be more attention to imperatives in instruction-giving (76%); only a few teachers used imperatives to deliver instructions (24%). Besides, the misuse of the student's native language (L1) during instruction (26%) suggests potential communication barriers that may hinder effective knowledge transmission. A relatively lower percentage of instruction was delivered without attention acquisition (8%); almost all EFL teachers remembered to get attention before delivery.

The current practices of instruction-giving in the post-delivery stage are presented in Table 4.

Table 4*Problems in the post-delivery stage*

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Number of "Yes"</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number of "No"</i>	<i>%</i>
11. The instructor monitors students after they start an activity.	25	100%	0	0%
12. The instructor gives students opportunities to ask questions in case they do not understand the activity	25	100%	0	0%
14. The instructor is available if students need further help with instructions after the activity has started.	25	100%	0	0%
15. The instructor gives instructions in a logical sequence, following the instruction order.	11	44%	14	56%

Noticeably, all EFL teachers did well in the post-delivery stage. Table 3 indicates that all EFL teachers monitored class activities, gave students opportunities to ask questions, and provided further support if necessary.

Overall, after observing and analyzing the data, 44% of the instructions were in a logical sequence and followed the given instruction order, and 56% were delivered inappropriately.

Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the current state of instruction-giving practices in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms within Vietnamese universities. Through the analysis of the data collected from a diverse range of lessons and teachers, several key patterns and challenges have emerged, necessitating a comprehensive discussion of their implications within the Vietnamese educational landscape.

In terms of strengths, it is observed that teachers employed specific strategies, such as gaining attention, providing time limits, checking understanding, and monitoring the class, to enhance the instruction-giving process.

Firstly, by employing techniques like using body language or visual aids, EFL teachers at the study site can create a conducive learning environment where students are fully engaged and receptive to the forthcoming instructions. This aligns with the findings of Arifadah et al. (2020), who emphasize the role of attention-grabbing techniques in enhancing students' receptiveness to teaching content. Secondly, by setting explicit time constraints, teachers encourage students to prioritize tasks and effectively manage their time, fostering a sense of discipline and accountability in their learning process. Thirdly, using simple and concise language helps students understand. This supports Sowell's (2017, p. 14) suggestion that "using simplified language common in instruction-giving, which often includes imperatives and short sentences," is an essential technique for instruction-giving. Nguyen (2019) also shares the same finding that linguistic linkers such as "but, so, and then" significantly enhance language clarity and

guarantee that students fully comprehend the assigned tasks.

Besides, three techniques of checking instructions are implemented by EFL teachers in our case study, including asking checking questions: getting a summary or repetition from students, asking for a demonstration or sample. This finding is complementary to the study of Şen (2021), which underscores there are two main techniques with some sub-techniques observed in EFL classes in s. He adds three sub-types of questions teachers utilize: play questions, referential, and L1 display questions. The practice of regularly checking students' understanding during instruction, as highlighted in the study, reflects the mutual recognition of the pivotal role of feedback and clarification in ensuring effective comprehension. Thanks to good classroom management skills, teachers can identify any potential barriers or areas where students may require additional support. This finding aligns with the insights provided by Magno & Lizad (2015, p.24) that underscore checking understanding as a formative assessment task "to determine what the students know and do not know, what they can do and cannot do, and their misconceptions, and their confusion."

Thus, this proactive approach allows teachers to provide timely assistance, guidance, and encouragement, thereby fostering a supportive learning environment where students feel valued and understood.

In terms of weaknesses, teachers encounter instruction-giving issues, including the lack of student grouping before instruction-giving, providing demonstrations, checking understanding, misuse of the native language (L1), gaining students' attention, time-consuming processes, and using imperatives. Some remember to ask questions to check if understanding is a formality and do not really care about students' answers. Comparatively, these findings resonate with the observations made by previous studies, which highlight similar challenges faced by teachers in EFL classrooms. For instance, Sowell (2017) emphasizes that students may miss the instruction if it is carried out after grouping. Besides, it is a topic of controversy whether teachers should speak L1 in the classroom. Some argue that when dealing with logistical issues, it seems to be more practical to use L1 in the classroom. However, according to the suggestion of Meyer (2008), they should be exposed to the use of English right from their first class, and maximum use of L2 should be the goal of every language class. This approach helps students be aware that foreign languages are not merely academic subjects to be learned, but rather, they serve as vital tools for effective communication.

The challenges related to gaining students' attention align with the insights provided by Surya Gumilar et al. (2023) that emphasize the need for effective attention-grabbing strategies and provide useful techniques to gain attraction and engagement in classrooms. Additionally, long instruction delivery was contradicted by Phan (2018) in the Vietnamese context, emphasizing the role of precise language use in facilitating effective comprehension and task execution among EFL students.

The problems Vietnamese EFL teachers face are different from what happened in EFL classrooms in an Argentinian Primary school. Liruso and de Debat (2003) reveal that the most conflicting category is the inappropriate use of native language (28%) in primary school, while a few teachers forget to ask for classification before hearing the whole instruction (8%).

Notably, the percentage of each issue that teachers encounter at schools in Argentina does not exceed 30%.

Conclusion

Key themes have emerged in the current practices of instruction-giving in EFL classrooms at a Vietnamese university. First, EFL teachers at universities in Vietnam are aware of the importance of instruction-giving. Hence, they utilize quite effective strategies, namely getting attention, using demonstration, checking to understand, and using visual aids. Secondly, some try their best to speak clearly, clearly, and simply or use imperative sentences to deliver good instructions. Besides, some problems related to the misuse of the mother tongue, checking understanding, giving demonstrations, or language uses need more consideration and improvement.

The present study has some limitations that can affect the generalization of its findings. Firstly, the data were collected from a specific educational setting; therefore, the results can be only applicable to the study context and are unable to represent the perspectives of the whole community of EFL teachers and students in Vietnam. Secondly, in addition to the research instrument, which is observation, more data could have been collected through interviews for deeper understanding of teachers' perspectives of instruction-giving.

For further research on a similar topic, the effects of using the mother tongue to deliver instructions or techniques for grabbing attention could be considered. Future studies can also investigate the comparison between oral and written instruction or utilizing body language and visual aids to support instruction-giving for better classroom management.

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Biodata

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APPENDIX 1: CHECKLIST FOR INSTRUCTION-GIVING PRACTICES**Date:****Teacher Name*:****Lesson :****Class:**

	Criteria	No	Yes	Note
	1. There is evidence that instructor prepared the instruction before delivery			
	2. Student groups are arranged before the instructor gives instructions.			
	3. The instructor gets students' attention before giving instructions.			
Delivery stage	4. The instructor hands out materials at appropriate times.			
	5.			
	6. The instructor uses language at or below/above students' current level of understanding.			
	7. The instructor uses extra-linguistic devices to aid meaning.			
	8. Instructor provides time limit for the activities.			
	9. The instructor checks for understanding before letting students start an activity. How is it checked?			
	10. The instructor provides modelling/demonstration for the activity. What types of demonstration is utilized?			
Post-delivery stage	11. The instructor monitors students after they start an activity.			
	12. The instructor gives students opportunities to ask question in case they don't understand the activity			
	13. Students face confusing and misunderstanding while doing the activity.			
	14. The instructor is available if students need further help with instructions after the activity has started.			
	15. The instructor gives instructions in logical sequence, follow the giving instruction order.			

*Teachers' names are written anonymously in numbers.

Becoming an Ecological Citizen: The Concept of an Ecological Citizen in the movie *Avatar*


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ABSTRACT

Keywords:
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responsibility

Avatar intricately intertwines ecological resistance and citizenship themes on Pandora, presenting a rich avenue for ecological scholarship. Despite its cinematic prowess, there is a research gap in understanding the film's impact on ecological consciousness. This paper aims to explore *Avatar* within the context of environmental cinema, analyzing its portrayal of ecological themes. Recent trends in film studies demonstrate a growing interest in such intersections, making *Avatar* a pertinent subject for investigation. Experts like Levinas, Dobson, and Rousseau are selected for their profound insights into ethics, environmental citizenship, and the human-nature relationship, offering relevant, authoritative, and influential perspectives that align with the research goals. By examining existing literature on the urgency of ecological awareness and critical reviews, the paper aims to uncover the film's influence on ecological attitudes. The implications extend to environmental advocacy and education, emphasizing the potential of popular media, like *Avatar*, to shape attitudes toward sustainable coexistence and ecological citizenship. Integrating *Avatar* into educational curricula has the potential to enhance environmental literacy among students, fostering a deeper understanding of ecological issues and inspiring proactive engagement. By leveraging the film's themes of interconnectedness and ecological stewardship, educators can instill values of environmental responsibility and citizenship in future generations.

Introduction

Avatar, a James Cameron blockbuster movie that was produced in 2009, portrays the concept of ecological citizenship through the protagonist's transformation from a human soldier to a defender of Pandora's environment and indigenous inhabitants. Cameron's film aligns with what Wicaksono, Y. T., Ginting, D., & Sunardi, F. D. (2023) claim that "the theme of environmental issues is often raised [in media] as a form of criticism of human behavior that damages the environment and an effort to invite humans to care more about environmental problems and act to overcome them" (p 292). In the movie, humans travel to other planets in the universe to find the resources they need. Humans find Pandora, a biologically diverse planet

with a complex environment. The indigenous inhabitants of Pandora (the Na'vi) fight the humans in defense of their home planet. Brereton (2022) argues that Na'vi “literally plug into the exotic, ecologically benign, and idyllic flora and fauna, rather than just naturally appearing at one with their habitat” (p. 337). The environmental theme of *Avatar* encourages peace and balance between people and the natural world. The film has essentialized Indigenous people to serve as a representation to maintain the equilibrium.

The movie opens in 2154, with the depletion of Earth's natural resources. Jake Sully, the protagonist and former marine who has lost his legs, goes to Pandora, an Earth-like habitable extrasolar moon 4.4 light years away. Humans, with the support of the Resources Development Administration and some military force, have controlled it for thirty years and are mining rare minerals required for energy generation on the surface of the Earth. With selfish intentions, the Administration strives to forge a close relationship with the dwellers of Pandora—tall blue warriors “Na’vi” so as to enslave them and exploit their resources. As Pandora’s atmosphere is toxic to humans, a team of scientists creates 'avatars,' genetically engineered Na’vi—human hybrids driven by human neurological systems. Then, Jake is called up to drive one “made with the DNA of his dead twin brother so that he can gather intelligence to use against the Na’vi” (*Avatar: Reaching the Height*, 2010, p. 6). On the contrary, he is captivated by Pandora's environment and supported by Neytiri, a Na’vi princess; he succeeds in navigating the moon's landscapes and changes his views on them. As a result, he starts to respect its creatures and understands its spiritual power. Ultimately, he transforms himself into Na’vi and leads Pandora’s defense against humans that encroach on their habitat and resources for their gain.

The Na'vi are therefore portrayed and characterized as being closer to nature in their function as the "ecological citizens" as a counter-narrative to Earth's technology-dependent, resource-intensive culture. Here, some of the humans play a very vital role in saving the ecological narrative of the indigenous people (The Na’vi) and helping them fight against their own race (the human race). The movie employs an ecological voice to further its environmental as well as ecological message by utilizing antiquated representations of Indigenous people. The film's usage of images of Indigenous people and how these images affect and further the film's environmental message, moving towards the notion of "ecological citizenship," are graphically analyzed in this article.

Indeed, “citizenship” has been a burning issue of debate within the green literature since the 1990s (Melo-Escrihuela, 2015, p. 113). Concepts like ecological and environmental citizenship are often linked with green politics and theories of citizenship. “Despite the widespread use of these terms, the relationship between green political thought and citizenship remains under-explored, and the concepts of ecological and environmental citizenship under-theorized” (Melo-Escrihuela, 2015, p.114). The meaning of the term "ecological citizenship" is not uniform, for it is still a novel concept. Nevertheless, we can find countless suggestions with respect to different ways that citizenship and the environment might be related. The most common definition of environmental citizenship is limited to the state territory and is practiced exclusively in the public domain. However, “ecological citizenship is a virtue-based account of citizenship” (p. 120) characterized by non-contractual and non-reciprocal duties in terms of injustice triggered by the socio-environmental impact of one’s acts.

Revkin (2012) argues that "ecological thinking" views citizens and citizenship within co-defining relationships from the start, and by doing so, it incorporates ecological impact into the picture it draws: as an element in a system, a citizen is both impacted by and has an impact on this system. Thinking about citizenship through an ecological lens makes it impossible to ignore our ecological impact. But it is the inducement of ethical thinking—the one that repeatedly asks

us the question of responsibility—to open our eyes to coax us to the impact we have as such citizens. Both active and passive ecological citizenship can make an impact on nature. Since no citizens can live without a community, citizens should be aware and responsible for everyone's well-being. In Revkin's (2012) words, "[e]cological citizenship is the framework in which we can see both the need for individual responsibility and the absurdity in laying the onus of responsibility on the individual, both the ecology that sustains communities and the sustainability demanded from communities in order to maintain a balanced ecology." A perfect harmony between ecology and sustainability is required to give continuity to the existence of ecological citizenship.

Furthermore, ecological citizenship is a "post-cosmopolitan citizenship" (Dobson, 2013, p. 83) that creates a concept of 'beyond the state' idea. The question may arise: Can citizenship go beyond the state? The main idea of citizenship is participation in the public sphere. And there is no defined rule that the public sphere should be confined within the state. The public sphere can move into a different perspective, which can be based upon "moral responsibility and participation" (p. 86). The public sphere is not always legally bound and confined within a distinct periphery. Having discussed different voices about ecological citizenship, we can define ecological citizenship as the ethical responsibility and active participation of individuals in maintaining and enhancing the health and balance of the natural environment beyond national borders and legal constraints, emphasizing virtues such as sustainability and collective well-being.

Adhering to the essence of different definitions of ecological citizenship, in the movie *Avatar*, the protagonist character demonstrates immense responsibility and as well as participates in saving the aboriginal clan (Na'vi clan) from the intervention of humans who try to colonize their land, Pandora. Having both ecological and environmental consciousness, the protagonist, Jake Sully, moves out from his private sphere and acts in the sphere of public. Through a combination of qualitative studies and case studies, we argue that *Avatar* deals with ecological concerns (not only talks about environmental issues but also responsibilities) and tries to bring forth the concept of ecological citizenship by showing concern towards minorities.

Literature Review

Avatar has garnered significant attention, with numerous critical overviews exploring its themes. Much of the scholarly discourse surrounding *Avatar* examines ecological and environmental concepts, but grounding this analysis in key theoretical concepts of ecological citizenship is essential for a robust understanding. One theoretical framework that underpins discussions of ecological citizenship is the idea of environmental stewardship, emphasizing individuals' responsibilities towards the environment and the interconnectedness between human societies and the natural world. This perspective extends beyond environmentalism to encompass broader notions of citizenship, participation, and ethics in relation to ecological concerns. Moreover, the concept of environmental justice is crucial, addressing the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and burdens, highlighting the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalized communities, and emphasizing the need for inclusive decision-making processes and equitable distribution of resources. Additionally, theories of deep ecology and ecofeminism provide valuable insights into the interconnectedness of social and ecological systems. Deep ecology advocates for a radical shift in human consciousness towards recognizing the intrinsic value of all living beings and ecosystems, challenging anthropocentric worldviews. Ecoromance explores the intersection of love,

ecology, and connection with the environment. By incorporating these theoretical concepts into the analysis of *Avatar*, we can deepen our understanding of its environmental themes and critically examine its portrayal of Indigenous peoples, navigating issues of environmentalism, representation, and indigenous rights within the framework of ecological citizenship.

The research papers that mainly focus on this topic generally revolve around the concepts of environment and ecology. Here, the ecological and environmental discourse focuses on the environment itself, mainly nature. For example, a paper written by Justin Fritz mainly focuses on environmentalism and native peoples. This paper mainly visualizes how this film uses a stereotypical representation of the local Indigenous people, which delivers the environmental message implicitly or explicitly being spoken in the movie. In addition to that, this paper argues that the movie “by using archaic portrayals of Indigenous peoples, the film uses an Indigenous voice to propel its environmental message” (Fritz, 1969, p. 68).

In another article written by Robert Baird, he brings in the philosophical ideology of Jean Jacques Rousseau and contends that this movie not only treats the ecological Indian concept superficially or in a narrative convention but goes beyond it and challenges to place the people in nature, which is eternal. William Brown reflects upon the significance of the film in a more general way, ranging from environmental issues to political agendas and ideologies. He states that the movie *Avatar* should not be viewed only from its technological as well as financial successes; rather, it should be pushed to understand the myriad of problems that are prevalent in this world today.

The articles range from various theoretical lenses, so the next article, which was written by Yeong Ji Huang and Taig Youn Cho (2021), bases its study on psychological analysis. Their paper mainly attempts to verify a couple of hypotheses. First, scenes in which the audience experiences good feelings will reveal the Earth's natural landscape. Second, viewers will experience good feelings even if Pandora's landscape exaggerates natural patterns. So, to find out their claims, they chose 215 subjects and asked them how the scenes of *Avatar* impressed them or what kind of emotion they evoked in them.

Some of the articles talk about literary utopias as well as dystopias that reflect a wide variety of issues, ranging from class, gender, and environmental issues. The article written by Cenk Tan titled "Between Green Paradise and Bleak Calamity" focuses on the theme of environment, mainly concerning postcolonial ecocriticism that exposes the "relationship between colonialism and ecocriticism" (Tan, 2020, p. 301). The movie *Avatar* depicts, according to Tan, the notion of irrevocable destruction of the environment, which was the result of colonialism, and finally delivers a message of an ecocentric mentality that will result in a peaceful, humane, and sustainable future.

Similarly, Bergthaller illustrates how industrialization exploits natural resources. He sees the Na'avi's love for their ancestral land and their fight as resistance to corporate exploitation from outsiders. Admiring the film, he says *Avatar*:

Places the question of environmental protection squarely within the context of environmental justice and indigenous rights while defining the latter in terms of ecocentric identification. The preservation of Pandora's ecology is inextricably linked with the Na'avi's struggle to hold on to their ancestral land and protect it from commercial exploitation by a transnational (or, more precisely, trans-planetary) corporation. (Bergthaller, 2012, p. 155)

Marry Anne Potter depicts the conflicting nature of the director himself. In his earlier films, James Cameron essentialized that the feminine is more connected towards nature, whereas, the

masculine is with technology. In her article Potter even criticizes the director for serving the masculine agenda, where the masculine protagonist is the ultimate savior and feminine supports the masculine agenda. This is further substantiated by the dialogue below.

Jake: Hey! Hey! Stop! Stop.

Operator: I got one of the natives blocking my blade here.

Supervisor (to Selfridge): What do we do? He'll move. These people have to learn that we don't stop. (as cited in C.N., p. 2018)

Neyitri's concern for her ecology brings Jake (a male protagonist) to the frame point. She feels helpless when she eye-witnesses bulldozers crushing their sacred forest. Being a Pandora native, it becomes impossible for her to resist the technological exploitation of nature in such a horrified state. This exactly reflects Chongbang's (2022) claim that most Limbu native rituals have come under attack by modern or Western cultural practices such as technology or industrialization. Native roots are being replaced indiscriminately. The order and behavior of Selfridge are similar to a colonial who is interested in maximizing more profit at the cost of hurting nativist feelings.

Even though this article criticizes this agenda, it debates the concept between essentialist and posthumanist views. She claims that Cameron offers the essence of humanity through the relationship between nature and technology "alongside antonymous absolutes" (Potter, 2019). A paper written by Joni Adamson discusses the emergence of Indigenous cosmopolitics. So, Adamson reveals the plot as well as the connection it has with the concept of cosmopolitics. Cosmopolitics is the nature of universal consciousness, interests, and politics. It is the political cosmos of both humans and non-humans. Henceforth, this article reveals the plot where "Eywa" is controlling the entire ecosystem "described as a network of energy" (Adamson, 2012, p. 143). So, with the cinematic effect of the luminous setting, this article also reveals the connection of all these living entities with one another. In addition to this, Marsha S. Collings's essay "examines *Avatar*'s echoing of longstanding romance conventions while creating ecocentric romance or eco romance" (p. 103). This article also delves into the insight of the ecological ideology, connects it with romance, and reveals how romance remains an "enduring and popular fictional form" (p. 103).

The movie incorporates a number of religious concepts, argues Florain Jeserich. The name itself has been derived from the Hindu context that creates a theosophical preface. Jake Sully neurologically merges with his *Avatar*, and descends to the moon Pandora in this form. Jeserich argues that there are several overt and covert allusions to religious ideologies. The narrative structure revolves around religious subjects; however, it also opposes the established religion.

Silvia Martinez Falquina argues that James Cameron's *Avatar* (2009) has received contentious reactions, and it has been used to forward a number of political and ideological objectives. According to the perspective of trauma studies, the movie's portrayal of the underlying dread of human separation from nature, which is a component of the wounded state of our contemporary civilization, may hold the key to its impact. Based on the repetition of stereotypes and the rebuilding of ecotopia, this essay begins a study of how trauma is shown in the film and how it is dealt with. Falquini further adds that the movie concludes by problematizing the unthinking use of the trauma paradigm.

The essay written by Vijayasekaran, P., and G. Alan analyzes how humans in the film *Avatar* exploited scientific advances to their advantage in order to conquer the planet Pandora, kill its natives, and steal the priceless natural material unobtainium. This research paper reveals that nature is the basis for everything, but humans are destroying it with the help of scientific

breakthroughs, which is arguably like making our own lives miserable. This movie is an indirect depiction of science vs nature. This study paper further analyzes whether or not humans actually need science for a happy existence, given that the native inhabitants of Pandora were content with their way of life even before science invaded their planet.

Erb (2014) comes up with the distinctive idea of “deep ecology.” “The Norwegian philosopher who coined the term ‘deep ecology’, Arne Naess, once remarked that there are many ways that people can take in order to arrive at the realization that all species have value, even if humanity cannot discern a ‘use’ for them. This leads me to wonder about many other things that might have played a role in my own path to ecocentrism” (Brown, 2012, p. 9). The ecological project constructed around *Avatar* comprised both mainstream and “deep” ecological themes and practices. “Deep ecology is known for creating a metaphorical distinction between shallow practices—such as recycling and composting—and the deep, probing questioning a person needs to engage to take shape as an ecological self. Deep ecology’s rejection of anthropocentric, resource-based approaches to nature leads to an absolute embrace of a biosphere regarded as rich and diverse. This embrace jeopardizes conventional notions of self; emphasis is placed on self-realization born from intense experiences in nature. *Avatar*’s themes correlate with many of the ideas from deep ecology. The film’s textual system may thus be “deeper” than promotional efforts such as planting trees” (p. 7). The underlying message of the movie *Avatar* is not only the protection or conservation of nature that humans have been advocating for but also the need for a new type of membership—ecological citizenship.

Given all these research papers, most of them focus on cosmopolitics, human-technology relationships, human-nature relationships, ecocriticism, and a critical stance toward the colonial mindset of humans. All these articles have their own system of theoretical analysis, whereas this article develops its thesis through an “ecological citizenship” lens, a theoretical concept that tries to amalgamate the Private and the Public. Henceforth, this paper tries to fill the gap that has not been discussed in the earlier papers, revealing a theoretical background of ecological citizenship. None of the papers that we read for this research actually discussed the citizenship concept from an ecological viewpoint. So, we wanted to put forth our points of view on how *Avatar* discloses and imparts the knowledge of universal citizenship with its impression on ecology.

Avatar: An incarnation and its connection to the citizenship

Avatar is a Sanskrit word. It basically means to descend (Avatar), which alludes to the incarnation of a superbeing in a different form. *Avatar* is a form or a characteristic that is connected to the manifestation of a divine soul. The term “avatar” truly refers to “Divine Descent” which is also mentioned in Brahmavaivarta Purana. This particular word also connects to the transformation of a being into another being. So, in this movie, Jake Sully, the human character, has been transformed into one of the characters of the Na’vi people. He not only transfers or has been changed into another form, but he has actually accepted his transformation and has acted to be like them. His structure has been changed but he is basically the same character.

This change can become one of the important aspects of a character who changes for the betterment of the other. When the concept of the betterment of the other evolves, the concept of ecological citizenship arises. The forest is a neural network to people (Na’vi tribe), and the entire ecosystem being connected to each other creates a discourse that each environmental being helps each other one way or the other. Here not only Jake Sully but Grace and other couples of characters transform themselves to help the clan and also go against their own race.

Analyzing Ecological Citizenship with the Thematic Representation of Avatar

The Blockbuster movie that history seems to have forgotten is the Hollywood sci-fi movie *Avatar*, which was released worldwide in 2009. *Avatar* thematically discusses the apocalyptic situation on Earth and the environmental destruction resulting from colonialism. The well-known director James Cameron, on the backdrop of post-climate change Earth scenario, asserts the emerging futurist planetary wars between Earthlings and Pandorians for the sake of energy sources. James Cameron, in his interview to The Telegraph, tells: "... the West can learn from Indigenous peoples is how to live an environmentally conscious life: 'a life that's in balance with the natural cycles of life on Earth'" (as cited in C.N., 2018, p. 40). His message is the ideas of conservation, preservation, and ecology from above. For him, although the Na'vi and Indigenous peoples are of nature, they serve as a bridge between "man" and "nature." "So, while they must be controlled by Sully during the Navi-Earthling war near the end of the film, the Na'vi fight for both themselves and Pandoran life. Indigenous peoples are thus valuable, for Cameron, in the sense that they have something to teach the West—they allow the West to preserve "their" way of life in the face of environmental degradation" (Fritz, 1969, p. 80). The West must now realize that no groups or inhabitants are going to surrender their ancestral property to them easily. They should give up their colonialist ideology not to let any war break out. *Avatar* can be described as mankind's eye-opener.

"The strong prey on the weak" a voiceover narrated by Jake Sully in the movie *Avatar* can be seen as the thematic minority essence of the movie. This particular dialogue seeps into the notion of the presence of humans in a territory. If someone is weak, the stronger one tries to displace the weaker one and shows their power. In the name of showing the power, the sphere they share moves into the power packet of the stronger. Just to break that share and disseminate equally among people, as discussed by Hannah Arendt, then only an actual practice of the public sphere can be seen. During this practice of the public sphere, a space of dissensus appears, and the concept of ecological citizenship comes into practice.

Ecological citizenship, as initially defined by Robert Dobson, is post-cosmopolitan citizenship. This concept is an offshoot of environmental citizenship and its notion related to it. Dobson further adds, "environmental rights have been canvassed as an addition to the standard triumvirate of civil, political, and social rights" (Dobson, 2003, p. 84). There is a debate and it is commonly argued that "environmental rights are a type of social right rather than something completely different" (p. 84). Environmental rights need to be perceived as a special category right that acts for the well-being of all the residents of the universe—living and non—living things.

The concern is that citizenship in ecological footprints has its closeness towards its sibling cosmopolitan citizenship, which was initially propounded by Zeno. But ecological citizenship is post-cosmopolitan citizenship because it is "global awareness associated with ecological thinking" (Scoville, 2016, p. 84). "The interconnectivity of individuals' relations to the shared material basis of political life raises the question of how one is to define and circumscribe matters of concern for ecological citizens. Ecological citizenship, he argues, 'refers to the source rather than the nature of the responsibility to determine what counts as citizenship virtues'" (p. 3).

Barry's concept of ecological citizenship transcends both the public and private sectors since it is based on a moral idea of "stewardship" that each person should embrace. Barry defines green citizens as engaged political actors who have an ethical need to protect the environment. He views green citizenship as fundamentally a kind of "ecological stewardship" (MacGregor, 2006, p. 90). They approach the environment with respect and an "ethic of usage," not by acting

in their own self-interest or by seeing ecological and human interests as intertwined. The stewardship philosophy, which has its foundation in small-scale family farming that the care for the environment cannot be independent of human interests. The ideal social-environmental connection is one in which human needs are addressed over the long term through sustainable consumption and production without the unjustified exploitation of land and animals, much like in excellent farming. Green citizens, in their capacity as ecological stewards, are able to balance and occasionally sacrifice their own specific interests with the common and environmentally sustainable good because they are aware of their dependency on nature.

Now, to dovetail into the culminating ideology of ecological citizenship is the individual claiming to sacrifice himself or herself for the benefit of the environment. Here as mentioned already, the environment is the combination of everything that also includes political as well as social connectedness and rights. So, ecological citizens have the willingness to act upon something that is unbalanced. People argue that the birth of the concept of ecological concerns and citizenship is due to the problem of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy's main problem is its "short-sightedness and profit-driven regime of production" (as cited in Jagers, 2009, p. 19). So, there is a need to shift from the ideologies of liberal democracy into more democratic concerns. The shift from all the democratic ideologies is taking place because all the challenges that have been evoked are developed due to the geographical and political boundaries. Therefore, without the concept of creating a global human, no individual state can succeed in abolishing all these environmental as well as ecological problems.

Three crucial characteristics set ecological citizenship different from other traditional citizenship. First of all, ecological citizenship is not just a public issue. Dobson's ecological citizenship integrates the private sphere into the political sphere (public sphere). This is a result of the realization that various sorts of private environmental behavior can have negative effects on the public. Like all citizenship, ecological citizenship is also based on duty, compassion, and social justice. Most importantly, it is encapsulated in the premise that says: "When I live my life I affect others, and to these others, I have obligations (regardless of whether or not I know them)" (Jagers, 2009, p. 20). In an interview, director James emphasizes the necessity of protecting ecology by offering resistance against environmental destruction:

Avatar indirectly discusses the struggle for survival and sustainability that makes human beings to depend on other energy sources for their living. But, in this process, they deliberately forget the ethics of reconsidering nativist feelings and the existence of ecology. The necessity of protecting ecology along with the theological cultural pattern of natives made the sci-fi movie *Avatar* a serious subject for scrutiny. (C.N., 2018, p. 40)

The movie is claimed to have brought these urgent issues to the notice of the concerned.

There is a need for a connection between theories and sociological aspects. Nguyen and Truong (2021) claim that four factors- actors, relationships, environments, structures, and processes- are interconnected when it comes to ecological construction and reconstruction, such as teacher identity. In a same vein, Scoville (2016) adds "Ecological citizenship theorists seek to respond to this concern by conceptualizing the role of a political agent caught up and constituted by webs of ecological interconnectivity" (p. 11). He further puts it "I suggest that the challenge facing ecological citizenship scholars is to bridge the gap between environmental political theory and empirical sociology on matters pertaining to environmental politics" (p. 14).

The analysis of *Avatar* and scholarly perspectives has suggested the urgency of collective global action in addressing environmental issues. It highlights the wisdom of indigenous peoples and advocates for integrating environmental concerns into public and private spheres through ecological citizenship. This approach calls for transcending profit-driven ideologies and embracing democratic and environmentally conscious systems. Bridging theoretical frameworks with sociological insights is essential for understanding environmental politics and promoting sustainable living. Overall, the message is clear: a holistic approach, incorporating indigenous wisdom and ethical stewardship, is crucial for tackling environmental challenges effectively.

Dialogues and counter dialogues: A way towards the principles of ecological citizenship

In one of the instances the head of the Pandora mission, Parker Selfridge shows a cunning behavior of how they could convince the natives. “Look, you’re supposed to be winning the hearts and minds of the natives. Isn’t that the whole point of your little puppet show? If you look like them, if you talk like them, they’ll trust you? We build them a school, teach them English.” This particular dialogue reveals an unconscious secret about how colonizers work. This is absolutely against the concept of ecological citizenship. Yes, we are supposed to be like them, talk like them, and teach them, but at the same time, we need to learn from the natives also. And, if there is a problem to be solved, we need to empathetically jump into their shoes and act instantly. Here Selfridge is very human-centric because he is worried that the communication and conversation with the natives are not going well, but becoming worse. This particular dialogue unfolds how Parker Selfridge is self-centered and he and his team are there just to extract the unobtainium.

Grace, another positive character, is criticizing why the relationship between the natives and the humans is getting worse; the reason is the gun violence, “that tends to happen when you use machine guns on them.” Here Grace reveals her feelings towards the natives and criticizes the killing decision made by Parker. Though Parker ironically says that he doesn’t want to kill the natives, he is doing the opposite. “The idea of citizenship normally refers, inter alia, to a status which arises with a membership of a polity and confers on citizens a set of reciprocal responsibilities and rights” (Hayward, 2006, p. 435).

Jake Sully, the main protagonist of this movie tells the Na’vi people that he was hired to find out all the information from them and act against them. Drive them away from their own lands. Initially, he was on that mission, but later, he fell in love with the forest, with the people, and even with one of the girls (i.e., Neytiri). He is now going to help them and fight against those sky people (the humans) and be one of them. "Dobson suggests that the duties and responsibilities of ecological citizenship arise from the impact individual citizen's activities have on the opportunities of other citizens within or outside the same country" (Wolf et al., 2009, p. 506). Within and outside the same country or within and outside the periphery of one's own place, or one’s own planet, or it may go beyond the planet.

When Tsutey tries to attack the *Avatar* form of Jake by accusing him of making love with his woman and being the reason for inviting sky people (These are humans who are trying to colonize Pandora) to their homeland, Jake Sully replies that he is not the enemy of the clan, rather the enemies are out there. He is there to help them fight against those enemies. A deep feeling towards the native (Na’vi), a citizen instance, is one of them. “[A normative green political theory] embeds a theory of change, the idea that ecological citizenship could be a motivating force for sustainable lifestyles and living standards” (as cited in Wolf et al., 2009, p. 504). “As Hayward notes, ‘ecological citizenship can be construed as a condition of practical

virtue attainable . . . through processes of education and deliberative association and by all, as citizens of the polity in which they find themselves” (p. 508).

After having a brief tussle with Tsutey, Jake tells the entire clan that he is Omaticaya, and he is one of them and he also says that he has the right to speak. When the concept of rights comes into action, he now speaks like a citizen of Omaticaya. This turns out to be an ecological concern and duty towards another group. Risking one's own life to act for the other. This concept somewhat connects with the concept of Immanuel Levinas's face of the other. "What is needed is the creation of a new 'ecological citizenship', that is, a population of human beings who have internalized knowledge and information about the contemporary situation in such a way as to lead to a new will and to a renewed motivation to act. 'Many things have to change course'" (Howles, 2018, p. 998).

According to Lévinas, the "face of the Other" justifies the priority of ethics over ontology. Before employing reason to create opinions or views about the Other, one must first recognize his "alterity," or otherness, as represented by the "face." One's relationship to the Other is one of infinity insofar as the moral obligation one owes to him cannot ever be fulfilled since, according to Levinas, he is "endlessly transcendent, infinitely alien." "[Dobson's] suggestion for stimulating environmental change is through educational, attitude-changing programmes offered through mainstream education, which create environmental citizens who will then engage in environmental living” (Middlemiss, 2010, p. 156). “Dobson argues for a responsibility orientation, with an emphasis on citizens’ responsibility to remain within the limits of a sustainable ecological footprint” (p. 156).

In one moment, Grace shares how nature and the trees are connected with each other. It is a kind of global network, where they can upload and download data and memories. While saying this Parker tries to mock her by accusing her of being insane and smoking some weird things. To this, she replies that the wealth of Pandora's world is not in the ground (she is referring to the unobtainium) rather it is around us. The Na'vi people are fighting to save this, so Grace adds that Parker and his team should understand this. She adds, "If you want to share this world with them, you need to understand them." So, here, understanding the other is very important. When we put ourselves in someone else's shoes then we are focusing on ecological concerns and being ecological citizens. It is not only that, but the scientists in the movie also find out that the trees have a neurological connection with the entire surroundings, which leads us to environmental concerns. This also criticizes how we humans are exploiting nature without understanding its essence of it, whereas these Na'vi people are doing their best to save it. Even if they kill something, they chant their own mantras to free the dead soul. This is an ultimate example of respect towards nature, an ecological concern, and being an ecological citizen. “The construction of a ‘design for living’ is itself more than a built environment; it is a physical manifestation of a system of values and a record of power. In the name of a shared planetary, a community of fate, new assemblages of authority and practices of governance are emerging into what I call ecological citizenship” (as cited in May, 2008, p. 238).

Jake speaks to the tree of Eywa and requests it to look into the memory of Grace, who died, and see the world where they came from (that is Earth). He mentions that there is no green left on Earth and humans have killed their mother, and they are there in Pandora to do the same. He requests some help from the Eywa (the godmother) to help him to fight against the odds and against the enemies. There and then Neytiri comes and says that the Godmother never takes any sides, but only balances life. This is the epitome of environmental concern, the balancing of life, that's it, nothing more nothing less. Through this, we can drive the conclusion that Jake has accepted their hospitality and wants to become one of them. "The design and building of the

Huangbaiyu project brings to light these tensions of ecological citizenship through the particular chiaroscuro of the doubled development divide between the USA and China, and between urban and rural populations within China. What is at stake in Huangbaiyu is not only of consequence to the persons who have inhabited its spaces, but to all those who are encountering the ethical claims operationalized by ecological citizenship, or are thinking of making such claims on others” (May, 2008, pp. 238–39).

Jake had to pass lots of tests to become one of the Na’vi people and finally, he became one of them. This is an example of the acceptance of outside people into the clan. Though it was not easy for Jake to become one of the members of the clan, he did his best to become one of them and he passed. So, this acceptance is the acceptance by nature, the environment, and ecology.

Upon assessing some dialogues of the movie, it can be claimed that *Avatar* provides profound insights into ecological citizenship, critiquing colonization and violence while emphasizing mutual understanding and respect between cultures. Jake Sully's transformation and the Na’vi's connection with nature underscore the importance of ecological consciousness. Neytiri's belief in life balance highlights harmony in human-nature relationships. Ultimately, the film advocates for unity and responsibility towards nature and its inhabitants, offering a compelling narrative on ecological citizenship principles.

Implications

Wood and Kallio (2019) state that many countries recognize the challenges of environmental planning and sustainability, especially given the mounting evidence indicating rapid rates of climate change, environmental degradation, and dwindling resources. However, there have been less attempts by concerned departments. But a movie like *Avatar* has taken the initiative to protect the Earth. The Pandora inhabitants are closely linked to their environment, and the same has influenced Jake's thoughts. Finally, Jake and Na'vi community succeed in their effort to save their motherland from the clutches of Earthly Colonizers and their Unobtanium extraction mission. Fortunately, our common home Earth is not being invaded by any other beings. If we analyze what we are doing with nature, we will soon realize that we are bringing down an axe to our own legs. We still have time to learn from how environmental degradation is occurring in front of our eyes. We need to find a Jake within us. We need to save everyone’s home. “Sci-fi movie *Avatar* puts forward many issues related to the environment including deforestation, exploitation of nature, ecosophy, deep ecological sense etc. on the backdrop of neo-colonial movements” (C.N., 2018, p. 40). As Edward W Said mentioned in *Orientalism*, it is better to attack the orientals before they invade occident is the misconception followed in Eco-Imperial movement over Pandora.

In “An Ecocentric Journey,” Tayler (2019) shares his personal reflection on the urgent need of environmental conservation:

Especially influential were understandings emerging from conservation biology and island biogeography. It did not take long for me to realize that human beings, through the devastating impact of such activities as logging, mining, river damming and road-building, were driving untold species off the planet, and that anthropogenic climate change was looming as possibly the most critical extinction driver yet. I also began to understand where and why some bioregions are exceptionally rich in biodiversity and biomass, and are thus particularly important to conserve, especially if conservation is motivated by ecocentric values. (p. 8)

The *Avatar* movie integrates various thematic aspects, and this paper has discussed the ecological aspect of this movie. Not only that, but the paper also discusses ecological citizenship in accordance with the context, setting as well as characters. The primary goal was to show that the movie depicts the ecological citizenship project, which has resulted in the development of ecological citizens. For this, the paper has descriptively analyzed the notion of ecological citizenship. To reiterate in an open-ended conception, an ecological citizen is more aware of the interdependence between people and the environment and has a higher level of ecological consciousness. An ecological citizen accepts the duties of expanding, active citizenship, including modifying personal habits to advance the common good and joining forces with others to fight for responsible, systemic change. This is in addition to having rights on our planet.

In *Avatar*, even if Jake adopts a form of Na'vi avatar, he thoroughly comprehends the neo-colonial and ecoterror activities of Earthlings over Pandora. He shares his deep ecological concerns with Na'vi community:

Jake: If Grace is there with you... look in her memories. She can show you the world we come from. There's no green there. They killed their mother, and they're gonna do the same thing here ... More sky people are gonna come. (as cited in C.N., 2018, p. 42)

From the above statement, Jake clearly hints at the apocalyptic changes on his own planet Earth owing to environmental destruction by neo-colonials. It is this injustice that incites Jake to fight for the environmental rights of Pandora and its civilization. This is because Jake cannot ignore the call of Pandora inhabitants. According to Levinas, while responding to the call of the Other, one is rarely worried about his or her life; one puts herself/himself whilst rescuing the other out of danger. To elaborate on Levinas' major points, the face of the other is what calls for a response. It asks one to respond immediately or be responsible. Levinas writes "the Other faces [him] and puts [him] in question and obliges [him]" (p. 207). One cannot remain indifferent to the plea of "the Other." The movie ends with optimistic note as the colonials are returning to Earth, and Jake gets transformed to be a complete Na'vi and thereby becoming part of Pandora forever. If we humans turn into ecological citizens forever like Jake, the universe is bound to be a common beautiful and peaceful home for everyone and everything.

Finally, integrating *Avatar* into educational curricula presents a promising avenue for enriching environmental literacy among students, thereby cultivating a more profound comprehension of ecological issues and igniting proactive involvement in environmental conservation efforts. By harnessing the film's powerful themes of interconnectedness and ecological stewardship, educators have the opportunity to imbue students with essential values of environmental responsibility and citizenship. Through critical analysis and discussion of the movie's narrative, characters, and dialogues, students can explore complex ecological concepts such as biodiversity, ecosystem dynamics, and the intrinsic value of nature. Several studies provide evidence that children and young people maintain a strong interest in and concern for environmental issues. Research conducted in Australia (Harris and Wyn, 2010) and across the OECD (Schulz et al., 2010) indicates that young individuals view climate change and environmental degradation as among the most pressing challenges of their time. Furthermore, there is international evidence suggesting that young people are increasingly engaging in community-based initiatives and participating in online campaigns, particularly related to environmental issues and ethical consumption (Sherrod et al., 2010). Moreover, Luzon-Aguado (2022) "the youngest are currently leading the way in the definition of human-nature relationships (p. 259). Moreover, by contextualizing the film within real-world environmental challenges, educators can empower students to recognize the relevance of these issues to their

own lives and communities. By engaging with *Avatar* in educational settings, students not only gain knowledge but also develop the empathy, critical thinking skills, and sense of agency necessary to become informed and active stewards of the environment.

Conclusion

This study of *Avatar* unveils a rich tapestry of themes centered around ecological citizenship and its implications. The movie serves as a profound exploration of humanity's relationship with nature, critiquing colonialism, violence, and environmental destruction while advocating for mutual understanding, respect, and responsibility towards the environment. Through the character of Jake Sully, viewers witness a transformation emblematic of ecological consciousness, as he embraces the Na'vi way of life and fights against Earthly colonizers to protect Pandora. Neytiri's belief in life balance underscores the importance of harmony in human-nature relationships, while Grace's reverence for nature stresses the interconnectedness and intrinsic value of all life forms. The dialogues within the movie provide insightful commentary on the principles of ecological citizenship, emphasizing the need for empathy, understanding, and collective action in safeguarding our green planet. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that ecological citizenship transcends mere environmental activism; it entails a fundamental shift in perspective towards recognizing the inherent rights and responsibilities we hold towards the environment and its inhabitants. Ultimately, *Avatar* serves as a call to action, urging viewers to adopt the mindset of ecological citizens and work towards building a sustainable and harmonious future for all living and non-living entities on Earth.

Avatar stands as a cinematic masterpiece that goes beyond mere entertainment and the embellishment of technology, delving into profound ecological themes and the concept of ecological citizenship. Through the transformative journey of protagonist Jake Sully and the Na'vi people, the film sparks reflections on the interconnectedness of humanity and nature. The portrayal of ecological citizens challenging exploitative forces resonates with contemporary discussions on environmental responsibility. The movie serves as a powerful visual metaphor, urging viewers to transcend conventional loyalties and embrace the idea of ecological citizenship. As research trends in film studies explore environmental narratives, *Avatar* remains a critical subject for investigation, bridging gaps in understanding the film's impact on shaping ecological attitudes. There is a need for producing such movies to raise awareness among general public.

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Teachers' Roles on English Language Teaching for Promoting Learner-Centered Language Learning: A Theoretical Review

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: teachers' roles, student-centered, learner-centered, language learning, language teaching

Both students' language learning and teachers' language teaching are interconnected components of the language-learning process, and they rely on each other to create an effective language-learning environment. This research article investigates the teachers' roles in language teaching to promote the students' learner-centered language learning. The method applied in this paper was a library research study where theories were summarized and synthesized from academic sources to provide the answers to the research problems. The instruments used in this study were journal articles, conference proceedings, books, and book sections in the field of language teaching and learning. The results indicated that English teachers, assuming diverse roles including controllers, assessors, managers, and facilitators, collectively contribute to shaping a dynamic and student-focused language learning environment, fostering autonomy, motivation, and self-directed learning throughout students' language acquisition journey. The findings can enhance the quality of teachers' teaching process by prioritizing students' needs, interests, and life-long learning.

Introduction

The growing global importance of English as a world language has significantly influenced English classrooms and their participants (Ly, 2022). The teaching of English has undergone considerable transformations in recent decades, paralleling shifts in students' profiles. With many students now initiating their foreign language learning journey in primary school, educators must demonstrate flexibility to facilitate effective learning. In this evolving scenario, English teachers not only impart knowledge about the language itself but also emphasize practical usage, placing a particular emphasis on fostering strong communication skills. This shift reflects the broader significance of English, necessitating a dynamic and adaptable approach to meet the evolving needs of students in today's educational environment.

Individual students exhibit varying aptitudes when acquiring a second language, with some

easily embracing it, while others encounter challenges that may lead to demotivation and declining interest. This poses the crucial question of what measures English teachers should undertake to ensure successful student learning. In the contemporary educational landscape, teachers are tasked not only with the responsibility of imparting knowledge but also with the creation of an environment conducive to effective learning. Recognizing and addressing the diverse learning capacities of students, English teachers play a pivotal role in fostering an atmosphere that supports and motivates learners, contributing to a more successful language acquisition experience (Brown & Lee, 2015).

The roles and responsibilities of an English teacher within the classroom are integral for fostering optimal learning growth. Various teaching styles and objectives may operate uniquely, yet collectively, they play crucial roles in aiding students in learning and advancing their language skills. This necessity to perform diverse roles within the classroom is essential for achieving the most effective learning development. Each role possesses distinct characteristics, operates in a unique manner, and serves varied educational aims. In combination, these roles contribute to the comprehensive and multifaceted approach required for creating an environment conducive to the best possible learning outcomes (Harmer, 2015).

The objective of this paper is to define the responsibilities of educators in the field of language teaching. The teacher's role will be clarified by drawing insights from various sources, each of which will be explained methodically. The aspiration is that this paper serves as a valuable resource for individuals engaged in the field of education, providing insights that enhance our understanding of the genuine responsibilities associated with language teaching.

Literature Review

Definitions of the concept 'teacher role'

Whether we are conscious of it or not, we routinely assume different roles in various daily situations, each accompanied by its set of expectations. Consequently, individuals have the capacity to engage in an assembly of roles, and teachers are no exceptions. As stated by Nunan (1989), the term 'role' relates to the expected functions that learners and educators are assigned during the implementation of learning activities, encompassing both the performance of tasks and the social and interpersonal relationships among the participants. Specifically, Richards (2015) highlights that the roles of teachers are connected to several aspects: the functions they are anticipated to perform, the extent of control they have over the learning process, and the level of responsibility they bear for the content.

The characterization of the teacher's role in the domain of English Language Teaching (ELT) is a complex and continually evolving concept that mirrors the dynamic aspects of language education. In shaping the language learning experience for students, educators hold a central position, impacting not solely the acquisition of linguistic proficiency but also cultivating a favorable and encouraging learning atmosphere (Gao, 2021; Umar, 2021; Hennebry-Leung & Xiao, 2023).

English language teaching can be defined "as the teaching activity that is doing by an English

teacher” (Ishak & Nahdhiyah, 2020, p. 83). Within the realm of ELT, the teacher's role covers a diverse set of responsibilities. As asserted by Sistyawan *et al.* (2022), teachers are not purely conveyors of information; they are facilitators who guide students through the language learning process. This involves not only delivering lessons but also engaging in interactive and student-centered teaching methodologies (Emiliasari, Prasetyo, & Syarifah, 2019; Almubarakah & Arifani, 2021; Sadaghian & Marandi, 2021). In addition, the evolving nature of technology in education has also redefined the teacher's role. Digital tools and online platforms have become integral in ELT, transforming the traditional teaching paradigm (Jones & Lee, 2020). Teachers now assume the role of digital facilitators, integrating technology to enhance language learning experiences.

The significance of assessment in the teacher's role cannot be overstated. Weideman (2019) argue that language teachers are not only evaluators of language proficiency but also designers of assessments that align with communicative language teaching principles. This underscores the holistic nature of the teacher's role in shaping the language curriculum. Moreover, the teacher's role extends beyond the classroom, as emphasized by Leotta (2021), who highlights the importance of teachers as cultural mediators. In a globalized world, ELT teachers play a crucial role in acquainting learners with diverse cultural distinctions, thereby fostering the cultivation of intercultural competence.

The definition of the teacher role in ELT is complicated, encompassing aspects of facilitation, cultural mediation, technology integration, and assessment design. A systematic comprehension of the teacher's role is essential for the ongoing improvement of language education (Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017; Naibaho, 2019; Umar, 2021).

Learner-centered language learning

Learner-centered language learning has emerged as a prominent pedagogical approach in the field of second language acquisition, emphasizing learners' dynamic engagement and autonomy throughout the language learning journey (Boyadzhieva, 2016). This paradigm shift from teacher-centered to learner-centered methodologies aligns with contemporary educational theories, fostering a more personalized and effective language learning experience (Amponsah, 2015; Gulnaz, Alfaqih, & Mashhour, 2015; Banavath & Reddy, 2023). Researchers suggest that learner-centered language learning is helpful in enhancing learners' motivation, self-efficacy, and overall language proficiency (Kassem, 2018; Nguyen, 2022; Afshar & Jamshidi, 2022).

One key aspect of learner-centered language learning is the integration of learner autonomy, allowing individuals to take ownership of their learning journey and tailor it to their specific needs and preferences (Begum, 2018). This is consistent with Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which emphasizes the importance of learner agency and collaboration in the learning process (Pathan *et al.*, 2018). Furthermore, learner-centered language learning is closely linked to constructivist principles, wherein learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful interactions and experiences (Ardiansyah & Ujihanti, 2017).

Learner-centered language learning represents a pedagogical pattern that places learners at the forefront of the language acquisition process (Jaiswal, 2019). The integration of learner autonomy, constructivist principles, technology, and collaborative learning underscores its

relevance in contemporary language education (Boyadzhieva, 2016; Ardiansyah & Ujihanti, 2017; Zeng, 2020; Zhou, Chen, & Chen, 2019). Ongoing research and practical applications are essential for refining and implementing learner-centered language learning approaches that cater to the diverse needs of language learners.

The influence of technology on teachers' roles and learner-centered language learning

Technology has profoundly transformed the roles of ELT teachers and promoting learner-centered language learning. Traditional teaching methods often centered around the teacher as the primary source of knowledge, but technology has shifted this dynamic (Harris, Mishra, & Koehler, 2009; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010). Teachers now serve as facilitators, guiding students through interactive and personalized digital resources (Cattaneo, Bonini, & Rauseo, 2021; Kumar & Mamgain, 2023). The integration of technology has empowered learners to take more ownership of their language acquisition, fostering autonomy and personalized learning paths (Nguyen, 2021; Trinh, 2023; Mhlongo *et al.*, 2023).

Incorporating technology into learner-centered language learning has garnered significant attention, as it provides learners with diverse resources and opportunities for authentic language use (Doan, 2023). Online platforms, mobile applications, and virtual reality tools offer avenues for immersive and contextually rich language learning experiences (Ahmadi, 2018; Ibrahimi, Yunus, & Sulaiman, 2023). Research suggests that technology-enhanced learner-centered language learning can positively impact learners' linguistic and cultural competencies (Hameed, 2020; Vellanki & Bandu, 2021; Zainuddin, 2023).

Previous studies regarding various roles of ELT teachers

In the study of Kumbakonam and Archana (2017), the authors discussed five major roles of an ELT teacher involving of learner, facilitator, assessor, manager, and evaluator. In addition to those, Naibaho (2019) added more teacher's roles including controller, organizer, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, observer, and performer. Both studies concluded that teachers play a vital role in ensuring successful learning aligned with objectives and fulfilling recommended roles during teaching is crucial for classroom success. As a result, through diverse responsibilities, teachers become typical guides, contributing significantly to shaping students' futures (Basalama & Machmud, 2018).

ELT teachers face potential barriers in adopting diverse roles within the classroom. As controllers and organizers, they may encounter resistance to relinquishing traditional power dynamics, hindering the shift towards student-centered approaches (Keiler, 2018). Time constraints and resource limitations can impede effective organization, impacting the continuous implementation of well-planned lessons (Harmer, 2015). The prompter's role introduces challenges in striking the right balance between guidance and autonomy, particularly when catering to a variety of learning styles and abilities (Kuswanto & Anwar, 2017).

Becoming a participant and resource provider demands flexibility in instructional methods and materials (Annisa, Saragih, & Bancin, 2021). Teachers may struggle to transition from the comfort of a directive approach to a more collaborative role, and resource constraints can limit their ability to tailor materials to diverse student needs (Brown & Lee, 2015). Simultaneously, taking on the roles of tutor, observer, and performer requires dedicated time for individualized

support, self-reflection, and professional development (Naibaho, 2019). Overloaded schedules and limited institutional support can hinder these roles, preventing teachers from fulfilling their potential as mentors, reflective practitioners, and dynamic contributors to the learning environment (Ur, 2012). In navigating these barriers, ELT teachers must continually seek opportunities for professional growth and advocate for supportive educational environments.

Previous studies regarding the relationship between teachers' roles and learner-centered learning

According to Keiler (2018), teachers play a pivotal role in shaping the learning experiences of students, with their instructional strategies and approaches significantly influencing the degree of learner-centeredness within a classroom. Learner-centered learning is characterized by its emphasis on active student participation and engagement (Tzenios, 2022). Teachers who adopt facilitative roles rather than traditional authoritative roles have been shown to contribute positively to the establishment of learner-centered environments (Darsih, 2018). In a study conducted by Singh and Singh (2021), it was found that teachers who empower students to take ownership of their learning foster a sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation.

Furthermore, the importance of teacher-student relationships in learner-centered learning cannot be overstated. According to Rasuli *et al.* (2023), positive teacher-student relationships contribute to a supportive learning atmosphere, enhancing students' confidence and willingness to engage actively in the learning process. This sentiment is echoed by To (2021), who emphasizes the role of teacher encouragement and feedback in promoting a learner-centric classroom culture.

In terms of instructional strategies, recent research by Olugbenga (2021) underscores the significance of varied and interactive teaching methods in learner-centered approaches. Teachers who integrate technology, collaborative projects, and experiential learning activities contribute to a more dynamic and student-focused educational environment (Ahmadi, 2018; Hameed, 2020; Philominraj *et al.*, 2020). Moreover, studies of Kusumoto (2018) and Ali (2019) have highlighted the impact of teacher modeling and demonstration in facilitating a learner-centered approach, encouraging students to apply critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Research Questions

As evidenced by the diverse research cited, teachers hold the key to creating environments that empower students to become active, engaged learners. In line with the study's objectives, the theoretical review aimed to address the specified research questions:

1. What are the various roles of teachers in English language teaching within student-centered learning?
2. How do the English teachers' roles influence the learner-centered language learning of the learners?

Methods

Design of the Study

The research employed a thoughtful methodology based on scholarly inquiry, specifically adopting a library-based research approach. This method involved an extensive review of diverse theoretical frameworks related to the subject matters under investigation, thereby contributing comprehensive insights to address the research problems.

Participants

Unlike empirical studies, theoretical reviews focus on aggregating and interpreting existing knowledge to develop a cohesive theoretical framework, offering valuable insights and advancing understanding in the chosen field (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). As a result, human participants were not applicable in this theoretical review paper.

Research materials

In this literature research, the research materials predominantly comprised scholarly articles, books, reports, and other academic publications relevant to the chosen topic. These materials were chosen for analysis and evaluation due to several following reasons (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Creswell & Guetterman, 2019; Snyder, 2019):

- **Relevance:** The selected materials directly addressed the research topic or provided insights into related concepts, theories, or methodologies.
- **Credibility:** The reliability of the authors and publishers lent credibility to the research materials, ensuring authority and trustworthiness of the information presented.
- **Recency:** Preference was given to recent publications to ensure the incorporation of the latest findings, developments, and perspectives in the field.
- **Diversity:** A range of perceptions and approaches represented in the research materials enriched the analysis, offering a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

Data collection procedure

The data collection procedure for this theoretical review paper involved systematically gathering and analyzing existing literature relevant to the chosen research topic. This process entailed comprehensive literature searches, critical evaluation of scholarly articles, and synthesis of key concepts and findings.

Data analysis

The data analysis methodology employed was synthesized in the principles of descriptive qualitative analysis, ensuring an extensive interpretation of the gathered information. This approach facilitated a systematic exploration and clarification of the complicated aspects of the research domain, affording a strong foundation for scholarly discussion and academic contribution.

Findings

Key roles of teachers in English language teaching

In an English classroom, a teacher takes on various roles with distinct objectives. The roles and duties of an English teacher within the classroom are crucial for fostering the most favorable and desirable learning progress. While teaching styles and goals may vary, each serves a significant purpose in aiding students' learning and the enhancement of their language skills.

Teacher as Controller

The dominant belief of the teacher's role often centers around that of a fully organized classroom controller, where the teacher assumes responsibility for arranging all aspects of the learning environment. This role involves maintaining control over classroom activities, providing instructions, organizing exercises, reading aloud, and demonstrating high-quality performance to students (Obilișteanu & Niculescu, 2015).

Educators who view their primary duty as knowledge transfer may find comfort in this role, drawing inspiration from fascinating instructors in their past (Naibaho, 2019). However, not all teachers possess the capacity to inspire students. The controller role is evident during specific instances such as making announcements, clarifying concepts, or leading question-and-answer sessions, particularly in language learning contexts (Durán & García, 2021). Additionally, there is acknowledgment that certain situations, like taking attendance or providing instructions, necessitate a controller's role. While this role serves organizational and informational purposes, the danger lies in limiting teachers to this singular function, as whole-class teaching offers advantages, but it should not be the exclusive role embraced in the diverse landscape of effective teaching (Harmer, 2015).

Teacher as Assessor

In ELT classrooms, teachers play a pivotal role as assessors, responsible for evaluating students through correction and feedback, both formally and informally. This evaluative process, occurring during lessons via graded tests or quick quizzes, is essential for understanding students' present achievements and charting a course for future learning (Ur, 2012). Assessing students is not only a tool for extracting knowledge but a crucial aspect of refining language skills. Teachers must ensure the accuracy and benefits of the assessment methods, including verbal feedback, quizzes, and assigned tasks (Rea-Dickins, 2004). This process informs not only immediate corrections but also guides future teaching techniques, contributing to students' language mastery (Weideman, 2019).

Students, relying on teachers as assessors, expect indications of correctness in language usage and feedback on their performance. Clear communication of assessment criteria is emphasized, guiding students on what aspects to focus on, such as correct speech and grammar during conversational exercises (Alharbi & Surur, 2019). Additionally, students need to understand the purpose and fairness of assessments, as objective evaluation fosters constant interest in language learning. The teacher's role as an assessor, involving feedback, correction, and diverse assessment techniques, thus shapes a dynamic and constructive ELT environment (Mentz & Lubbe, 2021).

Teacher as Manager

The role of an ELT teacher extends beyond lesson planning and teaching techniques; it consists of crucial responsibilities as a classroom manager. Classroom management involves various tasks, including bringing the class together at the beginning of a lesson, organizing group activities, and ensuring individual participation (Ur, 2012). As a manager, the teacher plays a significant and imperative role in maintaining order and fostering a conducive learning environment.

A teacher's role as a manager is complex and essential for successful teaching and learning. Beyond following time constraints, the teacher must expertly handle the diverse academic and interpersonal aspects of the classroom (Miller, Summers, & Miller, 2012). This requires employing various teaching techniques and practical approaches. Proficient classroom management, such as managing class timings effectively, becomes a pathway to the success of teaching and learning methods, displaying the teacher's indispensable role in creating a beneficial environment for students' academic and personal growth (Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017).

Teacher as Resource and Tutor

ELT teachers assume a dual role as both valuable resources and tutors for their students. As resources, teachers engage students through conversation, furnish English language materials, and provide additional information to address students' needs. This includes being a spoken language resource, facilitating communication and language development. Furthermore, teachers act as tutors, offering personalized guidance to students facing challenges in expressing themselves verbally or in writing. This tutoring role extends to one-to-one teaching situations, and even in larger classes, teachers allocate focused attention to individuals or small groups, enhancing the learning experience and contributing to students' language proficiency (Harmer, 2015).

During writing sessions or presentation preparations, the teacher's primary function may not be to control or instruct. Instead, students may seek the teacher as a source of information, asking about expressions, word meanings, or gathering information for assigned tasks. On these occasions, the teacher's readiness to provide information and maintain a supportive role is crucial, fostering a sense of trust and meeting students' informational needs in the learning process (Naibaho, 2019).

Teacher as Participant

In enhancing the efficacy of ELT, teachers sometimes need to engage with students as participants rather than organizers. This approach not only affords students the opportunity to communicate with someone possessing advanced proficiency in the target language but also provides teachers with valuable insights into students' English language learning progress (Annisa, Saragih, & Bancin, 2021). Acting as participants allows teachers to more equally connect with students, fostering a dynamic exchange of ideas that contributes to a lively learning atmosphere.

However, while the role of the ELT teacher as a participant can stimulate discussions and make

the learning experience more enjoyable, there are potential drawbacks. Teachers must ensure the balance between active participation and unintentionally dominating the discussion. Successful execution of this role requires a high level of sensitivity and skill, as teachers must avoid overwhelming students while still contributing to a lively and engaging English learning experience (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Teacher as Investigator and Monitor

The ELT teacher assumes the critical role of an investigator, a dimension of their responsibilities that extends beyond their observable behavior in the classroom. This investigative role is driven by a commitment to enhancing teaching strategies through a systematic examination of the teaching process and a keen focus on classroom dynamics (Pianta & Hamre, 2009). This role as an investigator emphasizes the teacher's proactive attitude in continuously seeking ways to optimize the educational experience .

Within the variety of roles carried by ELT teachers, that of a monitor and evidence gatherer emerges as integral to effective teaching. During communicative tasks, teachers attentively observe classroom activities, not only to ensure students follow assigned tasks but also to collect valuable information about their verbal interactions (Annisa, Saragih, & Bancin, 2021). This monitoring function serves as a foundation for informed decision-making, enabling teachers to measure the appropriate level of feedback required.

Teacher as Role Model

Beyond imparting language skills, ELT teachers serve as crucial role models for students. The influence of a teacher is not confined to the classroom but vibrates throughout a student's life. As students observe and emulate their teachers, valuable traits such as honesty, affection, and fairness are instilled (Fithriani *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, teachers act as linguistic prototypes, embodying the ideal English speaker during lessons. Students absorb not only language skills but also linguistic nuances, accent, and writing styles directly from their teachers (Hidayat, Fadhillah, & Septiawan, 2022). This modeling process is an integral part of language acquisition, emphasizing the importance of teachers embracing their role as influential figures in students' academic and personal journeys.

In reality, the ELT teacher's responsibility includes being a role model both inside and outside the classroom. Beyond task demonstration and modeling within academic contexts, teachers play a pivotal role in shaping students' character and language proficiency. The impact extends beyond immediate learning, contributing to the enduring development of students throughout their lives (Basalama & Machmud, 2018).

Teacher as Prompter and Editor

According to Harmer (2015), teachers in the field of ELT often play dual roles as prompters and editors. As prompters, they motivate students to persevere, offering guidance on the next steps in their language learning journey. Conversely, in the role of editor, teachers provide feedback on student writing or presentations, emphasizing improvement rather than mere correction. This feedback aims to enhance language skills, encouraging students to write and speak more effectively.

The nature of this guidance is distinct from traditional correction; it focuses on making constructive suggestions to aid improvement. Additionally, the teacher's feedback is crucial in the learning process, involving a delicate balance of corrective feedback, approval, and confirmation (Ur, 2012). Understanding what students are doing well, identifying areas for improvement, and providing guidance on enhancement are essential components of the ELT teacher's role in fostering language development.

Teacher as Instructor and Activator

Ur (2012) states that the role of an ELT teacher incorporates both instructive and activating functions. In the instructional aspect, the teacher, alongside teaching materials, imparts knowledge about language components such as sounds, letters, words, grammar, and communicative application. Crucial teaching skills involve offering appropriate language examples and delivering clear explanations.

However, the teacher's role extends further from instruction; it involves activating students in language use. Facilitating student engagement is pivotal for language acquisition, and this does not solely entail speaking or writing but may encompass listening or reading. To achieve this, the teacher must design tasks that prompt students to actively interact with language forms, meanings, and usages, thereby fostering a comprehensive language learning experience (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Teacher as Supporter and Facilitator

The role of an ELT teacher is crucial because they serve not only as educators but also as supporters and facilitators in students' development. It is imperative for students to feel a genuine concern from their teachers. As facilitators, teachers guide and support students in self-exploration and learning by creating an optimal learning environment that mirrors students' societal, intellectual, and linguistic experiences (Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017). The teacher, in the role of a facilitator, lays a solid foundation for students' personal growth. Additionally, the teacher plays a vital role in encouraging learners, aiding their comprehension as well as suggesting effective learning strategies. This not only enhances learning and motivation but also fosters independence, enabling students to continue progressing beyond the confines of the classroom (Ur, 2012).

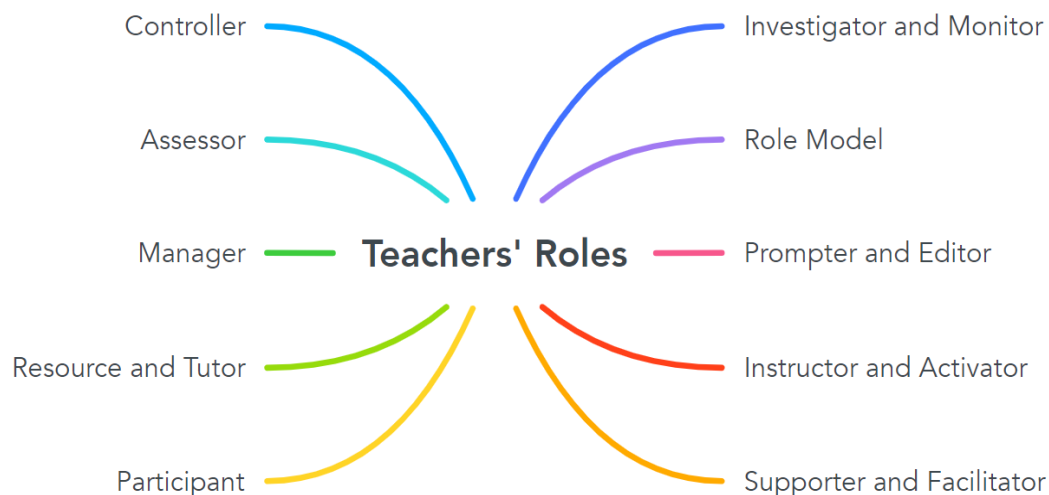


Figure 1. Different roles of teachers in English language teaching

The influence of English teachers' roles on learner-centered learning

English teachers play diverse and interconnected roles that significantly impact students' learner-centered language learning. These roles consist of being controllers, assessors, managers, resources, tutors, participants, investigators, role models, prompters, editors, instructors, activators, supporters, and facilitators. Each role contributes uniquely to shaping a dynamic and student-centric language learning environment.

On the one hand, the role of a controller can hinder learner-centered language learning if it is taken to an extreme. Excessive control may limit students' autonomy and initiative, impeding the development of self-directed language acquisition (Obilișteanu & Niculescu, 2015; Naibaho, 2019). Rigid control can restrict opportunities for students to make choices, engage collaboratively, and take ownership of their learning process, hindering the creation of a dynamic and interactive classroom environment (Harmer, 2015; Durán & García, 2021).

On the other hand, several roles of English teachers positively influence learner-centered language learning. The assessor's role fosters a dynamic and responsive environment by providing personalized feedback, correction, and guidance (Rea-Dickins, 2004; Ur, 2012). This approach empowers students to actively engage in their language acquisition, promoting autonomy and self-directed learning (Weideman, 2019; Mentz & Lubbe, 2021). The roles of classroom manager, resource provider, and tutor contribute to learner-centeredness by establishing a structured and supportive environment, offering tools and materials for autonomous exploration, and providing personalized assistance tailored to individual needs (Miller, Summers, & Miller, 2012; Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017).

In addition, the teacher's role as a participant enhances learner-centered language learning by fostering interactive and dynamic educational environments. Active participation in discussions alongside students models language use, encouraging active participation and ownership of learning (Brown & Lee, 2015; Annisa, Saragih, & Bancin, 2021). The investigator's role, through meticulous observation and adaptation of teaching methods, promotes autonomy and

active student involvement in shaping their language learning journey (Pianta & Hamre, 2009; Annisa, Saragih, & Bancin, 2021).

Furthermore, the role of a role model also has positive effects on the learner-centered language learning by shaping linguistic skills, attitudes, behaviors, and overall language acquisition approaches. Through authentic demonstrations of effective communication strategies, language usage, and cultural nuances, teachers inspire students to explore language independently (Basalama & Machmud, 2018; Fithriani *et al.*, 2021; Hidayat, Fadhillah, & Septiawan, 2022). The dual roles of a prompter and editor encourage independent thinking, active engagement with language, and reflective practices, promoting a learner-centered paradigm where students drive their own progress (Ur, 2012; Harmer, 2015).

Moreover, the dual roles of an instructor and activator positively impact learner-centered language learning by imparting foundational knowledge and prompting active engagement with language components. This structured foundation, coupled with interactive tasks, fosters autonomy, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the language within a student-centric learning environment (Ur, 2012; Brown & Lee, 2015).

The roles of supporter and facilitator also contribute to shaping a learner-centered language learning environment by establishing a foundation of trust and care, fostering a positive atmosphere, and guiding students in self-exploration and autonomous learning. The provision of effective learning strategies and resources enhances students' motivation and self-directed learning skills, contributing to a dynamic and learner-centric language learning experience (Ur, 2012; Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017).

Discussion

The research questions have been addressed through the data obtained from the above findings. In relation to the first research question, 14 major roles of teachers in English classes have been found. These roles include controllers, assessors, managers, resources, tutors, participants, investigators, role models, prompters, editors, instructors, activators, supporters, and facilitators. Seven out of these 14 functions of ELT teachers are mentioned in the study of Ur (2012), which are instructor, activator, model, provider of feedback, supporter, assessor, manager, and motivator. Besides, Harmer (2015) adds some more roles teachers play in English classrooms, which are controller, monitor and evidence gatherer, prompter and editor, resource and tutor, and organizer/task-settler. These functions of teachers have also been synthesized in the findings of this paper.

In student-centered learning environments, teachers in English language teaching take on complicated roles that extend beyond traditional lecture-based approaches. Firstly, teachers become facilitators who guide students through their language learning journey, encouraging active participation and critical thinking. Instead of being the sole source of knowledge, they create opportunities for collaborative learning, allowing students to engage in meaningful discussions and problem-solving activities. This approach not only enhances language skills but also fosters independent thinking and communication abilities (Osmani, 2019; Kim, Raza, & Seidman, 2019; Cosgun & Atay, 2021).

Furthermore, teachers in student-centered English language classrooms act as mentors and motivators. They understand the diverse learning styles and preferences of their students, tailoring instruction to accommodate individual needs. Through personalized feedback and constructive guidance, teachers inspire a sense of confidence and self-efficacy among learners. This supportive role helps cultivate a positive learning environment where students are encouraged to take risks, make mistakes, and learn from them (Anwar & Ijje, 2023). Ultimately, in student-centered English language teaching, teachers play pivotal roles as facilitators, mentors, and motivators, contributing to the holistic development of language skills and fostering a lifelong fancy of learning (Zahroh *et al.*, 2023).

Regarding the second question, English teachers' diverse roles significantly shape and enhance learner-centered language learning experiences. These outcomes share the same findings in other studies of Kumbakonam and Archana (2017) and Naibaho (2019). Sharing similar results, all findings emphasize the evolving role of teachers in education, focusing on understanding students' perspectives, facilitating learning as self-exploration, creating conducive learning environments, managing classes efficiently, and conducting fair evaluations to foster student growth based on strengths rather than weaknesses.

In terms of the English teacher's function as a controller, the discoveries of this research show that it has both positive and negative implications in learner-centered language learning. On the positive side, providing clear structure and guidance can offer a sense of security and direction, especially for beginners (Obilișteanu & Niculescu, 2015; Durán & García, 2021). Teachers, acting as controllers, can ensure that learners understand fundamental language concepts. However, there's a potential downside if excessive control stifles student creativity and autonomy. Over-reliance on the teacher's guidance may inhibit critical thinking and independent problem-solving skills in learners (Harmer, 2015). Striking a balance between control and learner autonomy is crucial to maximize the benefits of both structured instruction and student-centered exploration.

Among other functions of teachers in English classrooms, the role of a facilitator is remarkably pivotal, as it encourages students to actively participate in their learning journey. By creating an environment where students take the lead, teachers empower them to explore language concepts, collaborate with peers, and develop critical thinking skills (Ur, 2012; Kumbakonam & Archana, 2017). This learner-centered approach ensures that education is not a passive reception of information but an interactive process where students actively construct their understanding of the English language.

Additionally, the mentorship aspect of a teacher's role greatly influences learner-centered language learning. Teachers act as guides, offering personalized feedback, addressing individual strengths and weaknesses, and tailoring instruction to meet specific learner needs. This one-on-one support creates a more student-centric environment, fostering a sense of trust and connection (Brown & Lee, 2015; Naibaho, 2019). Furthermore, the teacher's motivational role is crucial in sustaining learner engagement. By inspiring a passion for language learning, setting achievable goals, and celebrating milestones, teachers contribute to a positive and learner-centered atmosphere, motivating students to take ownership of their linguistic development. In essence, the various roles of English teachers contribute synergistically to the

creation of an effective and student-centered language learning environment.

In short, English teachers' diverse roles significantly influence students' learner-centered language learning. While the role of a controller may have a negative impact if taken to extremes, the positive influences from roles such as assessor, classroom manager, resource provider, tutor, participant, investigator, role model, prompter, editor, instructor, activator, supporter, and facilitator collectively contribute to creating a dynamic, responsive, and student-centered language learning environment. These roles empower students to actively participate in their linguistic development, fostering autonomy, motivation, and self-directed learning throughout their language learning journey.

Conclusion

This paper aimed to delineate educators' responsibilities in language teaching, clarifying the teacher's role through insights from diverse sources. The research employed a meticulous library-based approach, reviewing theoretical frameworks relevant to the study's themes. Primary tools included scholarly books and articles chosen to align with the study's focus. The data analysis followed principles of descriptive qualitative analysis, enabling a thorough interpretation of gathered information. This systematic exploration provided a solid foundation for scholarly discussion and academic contribution, addressing research problems comprehensively. The methodology involved thoughtful scholarly inquiry, contributing valuable insights to the field of language teaching.

English teachers fulfill a variety of roles crucial to students' learner-centered language learning, including controllers, assessors, managers, resources, tutors, participants, investigators, role models, prompters, editors, instructors, activators, supporters, and facilitators. These roles collectively shape a dynamic and student-centric language learning environment. While an excessive focus on the controller role may have negative consequences, the positive impact of roles like assessor, manager, resource provider, tutor, participant, investigator, role model, prompter, editor, instructor, activator, supporter, and facilitator is instrumental. These roles empower students, fostering autonomy, motivation, and self-directed learning in their language acquisition journey.

The results have the potential to improve the effectiveness of teachers' instructional methods by giving priority to the needs, interests, and lifelong learning of students. Nevertheless, some limitations of this study were unavoidable. Particularly, this research only briefly and theoretically examined how each role affects learner-centered language learning. In addition, the absence of specific statistical data comparing the impact of each role on the effectiveness of learner-centered English learning represented another shortcoming.

To address these limitations, future research is recommended to prioritize in-depth statistical analyses to provide a more detailed understanding of how individual teacher roles contribute to the specific characteristics of the learner-centered English learning process. This approach will enhance practical foundation of the study and pave the way for more comprehensive conclusions in this academic domain.

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Blended Learning in EFL Classrooms at a Vietnamese University from Students' Perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: blended learning, EFL classrooms, students' perspectives

The utilization of blended learning in the field of English language instruction has shown a notable rise in recent times. Blended learning has the ability to provide an optimal setting for language education, enabling a transition from conventional instructional approaches to more progressive ways through the integration of technology. Nevertheless, several unresolved issues remain in relation to this methodology. This paper examines the perceptions of students regarding the potential benefits and obstacles associated with the implementation of blended learning in English language courses at a university in Vietnam. Additionally, the study proposes many solutions with the objective of enhancing the current situation and establishing a solid foundation for the future growth of blended learning. The study involved a sample of 165 first-year students, with online surveys and interviews being utilized as the primary methods of data collection. The results of the study indicate that contemporary students can be classified as digital natives. While they demonstrate proficiency in various technical skills, have easy access to technology, and exhibit a propensity for self-directed learning, their inclination towards traditional classroom environments is evident when it comes to their attitudes regarding online engagement with instructors and peers in English courses.

Introduction

Within the realm of education, technology has become an essential element on a global scale. Consequently, educational institutions and families alike have been compelled to invest significant resources in acquiring computers, mobile phones, and internet connectivity, among other technological tools, in order to remain current and competitive.

According to Okaz's study conducted in 2015, it has been shown that face-to-face interaction, when carried out in isolation, might impede students' capacity to engage in higher-order thinking abilities. Additionally, this kind of interaction may deprive students of the opportunity to actively participate in collaborative learning. Teh (2021) states that more empirical studies would further supplement the field of communicative teaching in the virtual atmosphere. As classrooms are moving towards an online presence, blended learning is on the rise. Blended learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates technology in order to effectively blend traditional classroom instruction with online learning, aiming to actively include students in the learning process. The combination of face-to-face and online learning in this modality offers a flexible approach for both instructors and learners (Garrison, 2004; Vaughan et al., 2013). It is postulated that the integration of face-to-face and online learning facilitates communication between learners and instructors in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. This amalgamation allows learners to allocate time for contemplation of the learning material and enables them to articulate their comprehension along the learning journey.

While the integration of face-to-face and online learning has promise as a widely adopted approach for information dissemination in the current day, it is noteworthy that higher education institutions have only recently embraced the concept of blended learning as a means to offer educational opportunities to students globally, during the past decade. Blended learning has been recognized as a valuable strategy in the realm of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL), since it addresses the issue of limited English language exposure among students (Hoang, 2015). Blended learning has been more popular in EFL courses in recent years due to its ability to combine the advantages of both traditional face-to-face instruction and online learning. Nevertheless, it is important to consider the preparation of students while evaluating the benefits and efficacy of blended learning.

The forthcoming academic year at an esteemed business university in Vietnam is poised to witness the implementation of blended learning methodologies inside the EFL curriculum. The university has implemented a Learning Management System (LMS) in order to offer students a user-friendly, valuable, and organized platform for their online learning experience. Additionally, video initiatives have been undertaken, leading to a substantial collection of video lectures that have been put onto the site. Thorough preparations have been undertaken to ensure readiness for the deployment of blended learning in English language education, encompassing technological infrastructure, classroom facilities, and instructor resources. The only thing that has not been revealed is students' eagerness and attitudes towards this kind of learning method. Hence, the objective of this study is to assess the preparedness of students for EFL courses prior to the introduction of blended learning. It provides background information on the implementation of blended learning methodologies within the EFL curriculum at a business university in Vietnam, highlights the significance of preparing students for the transition to blended learning, and identifies the research gap concerning students' enthusiasm and dispositions towards this pedagogical approach.

Literature Review

Definition of Blended Learning

Despite its frequent usage in educational contexts, there is a lack of consensus over the precise meaning of blended learning. Blended learning has several interpretations, owing to its extensive usage over about three decades. Blended learning gained popularity in the area of education as a result of increased computer accessibility, more educational options, and dissatisfaction with online learning that lacked some essential features commonly seen in traditional classroom settings (McDonald, 2008).

According to Graham et al. (2013), blended learning is a pedagogical approach that integrates several instructional modalities, methodologies, and both online and face-to-face training. Singh (2003) states that blended learning integrates many technological resources, such as live chats, instant messaging, social networking, blogs and forums, and webinars. These technologies are utilized to enhance the learning experience by fostering motivation and creating meaningful interactions.

Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) points out that blended learning integrates face-to-face and distance delivery systems. They add that it is more than simply displaying a website page in the classroom. Those who use integrated learning environments attempt to leverage the advantages of both face-to-face and online methods, utilizing the Internet for what it does best and class time for what it does best. Blended learning appears to be the combination of instruction from two distinct modalities of teaching and learning, namely face-to-face learning systems and online distance learning systems which is also the definition applied in this research.

Blended learning has the following characteristics: (1) lecturers are able to conduct the learning process in two modes, lecture directly in the classroom and provide additional explanations through online learning; (2) instruction can be conducted face-to-face learning and online learning; (3) students are offered two forms of learning (offline and online); and (4) lecturers are already proficient in two different modes of the learning process.

These characteristics highlight that blended learning cannot be carried out holistically at all levels of education. In other words, blended learning has several requirements in its implementation, such as the ability of lecturers to apply two learning models; the motivation of lecturers to adapt to advances in digital technology, the availability of ICT equipment owned by universities, lecturers and students; the willingness of students to accept the burden of the two models; as well as a flexible schedule of learning activities (Albiladi & Alshareef, 2019).

Learner Perceptions of Blended Learning

Students' perceptions of their own experiences are one of the key components of learning and teaching (Ginns & Ellis, 2009; Ayres, 2002; Yanguas, 2010; Chao & Lo, 2011), and others have studied learners' perceptions of the use of some ICT for the development of the four skills in various languages, reporting positive perceptions about their usefulness, especially in assisting students in the areas of spelling and grammar, communicative skills development, listening, and writing. The perceptions of EFL students toward blended learning settings, however, are seldom discussed in prior research (Aysel, 2014), and little work has been done to analyze

students' perceptions over a lengthy period of time.

Therefore, it is crucial to longitudinally examine how learners perceive their blended learning experience. In the current study, five elements that influence blended learning of Vietnamese EFL learners' perspectives are surveyed using the mix method. Learner motivation is a crucial element in determining student performance and learning outcomes, particularly the effectiveness of online learning (Cole et al., 2004). Interest in the course content and activities and perceptions of the relevance of online learning to the course are two of the most crucial factors that affect learners' motivation (Zimmerman, 2008; Huang & Chou, 2015). Wang et al. (2019) investigate the students' perceptions of the success of their blended learning, engagement, learning autonomy, and overall satisfaction level in addition to the motivation stated by EFL learners.

English as Foreign Language (EFL) Teaching in Vietnam

In order to promote English teaching in Vietnam, the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) launched a new initiative in 2008 called the National Foreign Language Project 2020. It was anticipated that this initiative would significantly alter language instruction in Vietnam. The administration emphasized how crucial it was for the country's social and economic growth as well as political integration to encourage foreign languages, especially English. The project's aim was "to thoroughly renovate the tasks of teaching and learning foreign languages within the national educational system" (Toan, 2013).

Among the foreign languages taught and learned in Vietnamese universities, English is the most popular. In order to prepare for its upcoming growth, MOET has piloted the teaching of mathematics, physics, and chemistry in English at a number of institutions in the nation's major cities. English is employed as the primary language of teaching in the MOET's Foreign Education Programs (MOET, 2014), which were introduced in 2014.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) has been used to assess the success of Project 2020. According to the Project 2020 guidelines, the CEFR would be used as a national reference framework to assess language proficiency, design curriculum, develop course materials and syllabus, and create teaching and learning plans in order to ensure that the various stages of foreign language teaching and learning in the educational system are compatible (MOET, 2008, 2013). The initiative attempts to solve the problems of teacher development and high-quality language instruction across the nation.

Given its growing significance in the economy and in global communication, English language instruction has taken center stage in Vietnam's educational reforms. One may argue that the increase of English education is a reflection of how the Vietnamese economy and society have expanded in reaction to the global marketplace, as has occurred everywhere. However, the fast increase in English's popularity has raised questions regarding the effectiveness of the educational system's teaching and learning processes.

Blended learning has been implemented in various educational settings in Vietnam, with a focus on English language development in middle schools. The potential for digital transformation in higher education through blended learning has been highlighted, with a call for investment in online learning activities (Tang, 2020). The effectiveness of blended learning in higher

education has been further emphasized, with the development of assessment criteria for its application. However, there is a need to consider students' expectations and experiences in the implementation of blended learning, as highlighted in a case study at Hanoi Open University (Vu, 2014).

Advantages of Blended Learning in ESL/ EFL Class

Multiple benefits of blended learning contribute to language acquisition and affective values among students. Sheerah (2020) argues the result of blended learning in EFL classes as 1) it helps improve the digital literacy skills of lecturers and students; 2) students have two knowledge transformation spaces (offline and online); 3) it promotes increased student affective values (learning motivation, responsibility, discipline, and autonomy); 4) it provides current teaching materials; and 5) students can practice communicating in English with native English speakers from different countries. Pham (2023) states that teachers also benefit from online assessments and reports since they can monitor students' learning progress regularly and conveniently with more thorough information about each individual. As a result, they can provide necessary support and scaffold students' learning.

Kenney and Newcombe (2011) discover in their study that, in terms of grades, students who had undergone blended learning scored slightly higher than those who had not been taught through blended learning mode. This leads researchers to hypothesize that blended learning will become one of the competitive advantages that higher education institutions offer students. (Yang et al., 2013) Numerous other studies have demonstrated that integrated learning can indeed contribute some positive effects to the instruction of reading skills, vocabulary, grammar, speaking skills, and listening skills. In addition, Moussa-Inaty (2017) states that blended learning is believed to have a positive effect and, as a result, it reduces the likelihood of cognitive overload among students. Blended learning can also increase students' motivation because they have greater autonomy in their learning voyage in addition to the face-to-face mode, which enables them to discuss further or obtain better clarification from instructors.

Factors Affecting the Implementation of Blended Learning in ESL/ EFL Classes

Despite the numerous benefits of integrated learning, it is essential to recognize that its effectiveness depends on a number of factors. The preparedness of students is an essential factor. Difficulty in accessing online classroom material due to differing socioeconomic circumstances or a lack of IT knowledge (Holley & Oliver, 2010) and a lack of initiative to engage in self-learning (Tang & Chaw, 2013) are potential barriers that may hinder students' readiness.

According to Hung et al. (2010), blended learning includes elements like computer self-efficacy, internet self-efficacy, online communication self-efficacy, self-directed learning, learner control, and motivation. Computer, internet, and online communication self-efficacy are related to computer and internet access proficiency. Self-directed learning and learner control, on the other hand, include students' learning strategies, self-assessment, access to resources, resource management, and time management. Consequently, the aptitude of students for blended learning may be evaluated based on a variety of factors. In a similar vein, Rasouli et al. (2016) have outlined five crucial factors for evaluating students' preparedness for blended learning. Following a discussion of the learning factors that may influence students' preparedness for

integrated learning, this study attempts to replicate his research model. The model shows how the variables such as technical abilities, technological accessibility, self-directed learning, attitude towards traditional classroom setting, and attitude towards blended classroom setting interact to produce readiness for blended learning. According to Cao (2023), it can be understood that teachers' and students' perceptions of the ease of using the LMS can also influence the way they employ this tool as part of blended learning.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of students' readiness for blended learning in EFL classes?
2. What are students' opinions on factors affecting blended learning in EFL classes?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was conducted at a prestigious Vietnamese public university. The university is renowned for its business school, where students can receive systematic and high-quality occupational training. In addition to receiving professional knowledge, students can also acquire the necessary skills for future employment, including English language abilities.

The university has developed its own LMS for the 2023-2024 academic year in order to implement blended learning in some EFL classes. Selected lecturers and students have been officially informed of the project's plans, and thorough training on the platform's use has also been conducted. Throughout the past semester, video lectures have been created and uploaded to the platform, making them accessible to students in all EFL courses. The adoption of LMS for teaching and learning will occur during the next academic year.

This study's participants are first-year undergraduates from a variety of academic disciplines. The questionnaire will be completed by 165 students from three EFL courses at that university, and ten of them will be invited to participate in online interviews. All participants in this study will engage in integrated learning-based General English 1 classes.

Design of the Study

This investigation is predominantly quantitative, with a minor qualitative component. Two instruments, a survey questionnaire and interviews are utilized. This study aims to investigate the perspectives of students and the factors that influence the use of integrated learning in a university EFL setting.

The study aims at investigating the students' perceptions and some factors affecting English language blended learning by using two data collection instruments. Participants were asked to respond to an online questionnaire containing items related to perceptions and five aspects for measuring students' preparedness for English language blended learning, including technical abilities, technological accessibility, self-directed learning, attitudes toward traditional classroom settings, and attitudes toward blended classroom settings. The questionnaire items

were adapted from Alaidarous (2016) and Rasouli et al. (2016) to better suit the study participants and to enable the researchers to address their research questions.

Data collection & analysis

In the online survey questionnaire, the participants were required to respond on each item based on a 5-point Likert scale. The data gathering process was divided into four phases: questionnaire design, pilot, delivery, and data encoding. The researcher created the questionnaires and strategies for data collection in the first phase. The questionnaire was distributed to roughly 5-7 pertinent respondents to get comments and determine the usability, then Cronbach's alpha is used to determine the reliability coefficient. After the corrections and changes, it was delivered to each respondent with a consent form that explains the study aim and purpose. Finally, it is crucial to encode the data to explore the pertinent content to the subject which was determined by synthesizing and analyzing. The incomplete forms were discarded while the completed ones were entered in the statistical analysis software SPSS 25, then analyzed by the mean of descriptive analysis.

In gaining more insight on the quantitative findings, ten students were then selected to be involved in semi-structured individual interviews. Interview investigation consists of thematizing, planning, conducting the interview, transcribing, analyzing, confirming, and reporting. Prior to the interviews, the researcher created the study's objectives and outlined the topic. The study design was then established with a focus on gaining the desired information. The interviews were conducted based on an interview guide, and the transcript was converted from oral speech to written text in the next stage. After that, the interview data was examined in order to assess the validity, reliability, and generalizability of the findings. Finally, all the data needed to transfer into a readable product. The information was interpreted by highlighting small chunks and classifying them into categories that were related to blended learning. Students were notified with their rights to withdraw and pseudonyms were assigned to them to ensure the privacy.

Findings

Students' Readiness towards Blended Learning in EFL Classes

The data obtained from the survey provides insights into the attitudes of students about the use of blended learning in future EFL courses at a Vietnamese university. Participants are asked about their readiness in terms of technical abilities, technological accessibility, self-directed learning and their attitudes towards traditional classroom settings and blended learning settings. The participants' viewpoints are assessed using a Likert scale consisting of five levels, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The results of the analysis are displayed in the table provided.

Table 1

Students' technical abilities towards blended learning in EFL classes

Statements	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
1. I can sit at the computer/ laptop for long hours.	3.8	7.7	42.3	42.3	3.8
2. I can confidently use the Internet to search for English learning materials.	3.8	19.2	46.2	30.8	3.8
3. I can confidently word-processing software (MS Word, MS PowerPoint, ...).	7.7	19.2	38.5	30.8	3.8
4. I am well trained with my school's learning management system (LMS).	7.7	3.8	23.1	61.5	3.8
5. I can confidently use all applications on my school's LMS.	7.7	23.1	38.5	30.8	0.0

The survey findings unveiled the extent of students' preparedness for blended learning in the English language. Upon examination of the table, it becomes evident that the majority of students have a neutral perspective about the impact of their technical skills on their inclination towards blended learning. Roughly 50% of the student population expressed a lack of confidence in their information technology (IT) aptitude, encompassing proficiency in utilizing the Internet for educational resource retrieval and employing processing programs. Regarding the educational institution's LMS, students expressed that while they received adequate training on its functionality, they were uncertain about their ability to utilize it proficiently. It underscores the importance of providing adequate support and training to enhance students' technical competencies in utilizing online educational resources and platforms.

Table 2

Students' technological accessibility towards blended learning in EFL classes

Statements	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
1. I frequently use a computer/ laptop to access the Internet.	0.0	3.8	50	50.0	38.5
2. I have easy access to Internet-based activities (emails, websites, social media).	0.0	3.8	30.8	57.7	7.7
3. I can easily access different online learning platforms.	0.0	3.8	46.2	46.2	3.8
4. I can easily access my school's LMS for e-learning.	7.7	7.7	50.0	26.9	7.7
5. I can spend a lot of time watching English video lectures on my school's LMS platform.	3.8	0.0	42.3	38.5	7.7
6. Applications on the school's LMS are useful and user-friendly.	7.7	3.8	34.6	50.0	3.8

The findings indicated that the level of technology accessibility does not appear to hinder students' preparedness for blended learning. A significant proportion of student participants indicated that they possessed convenient access to educational resources online. Nevertheless,

a significant majority of students, namely two-thirds, expressed their disagreement over the adequacy of the school's LMS in terms of accessibility. This highlights the need for improvements in the usability and accessibility of the LMS to better support students' online learning experiences.

Table 3

Students' aptitude of self-directed learning in EFL classes

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
1. I feel comfortable working and learning on the Internet.	7.7	11.5	30.8	42.3	0.0
2. I feel comfortable working and learning independently.	3.8	3.8	42.3	50.0	0.0
3. I always strive to do well when working on my assignments.	0.0	0.0	30.8	61.5	7.7
4. I turn in my assignments on time.	0.0	0.0	26.9	61.5	11.5
5. I can solve problems with online learning on my own.	7.7	19.2	69.2	19.2	0.0
6. I persevere when confronted with challenges.	11.5	3.6	53.8	30.8	0.0

It is well acknowledged that online learning necessitates a significant degree of student autonomy. When queried about their aptitude for self-directed learning, the majority of students expressed a sense of ease in acquiring knowledge using online platforms and consistently endeavor to effectively regulate their online learning experiences. However, individuals express uncertainty over their capacity to effectively address issues that may develop in the context of online learning, as well as their ability to maintain a consistent approach when faced with hurdles in their e-learning endeavors. It emphasizes the importance of fostering a supportive learning environment that equips students with the necessary skills and strategies to navigate the complexities of online learning effectively.

Table 4

Students' attitude towards traditional and online classroom setting

Statements	1 %	2 %	3 %	4 %	5 %
Attitudes towards traditional classroom setting					
1. I enjoy meeting and making friends in my English classes.	0.0	3.8	30.8	50.0	15.4
2. I enjoy receiving direct responses from my English teachers in class.	0.0	3.8	19.2	46.2	30.8
3. I find learning through face-to-face collaboration in English classes more effective.	0.0	3.8	34.6	30.8	30.8
4. I learn better through direct guidance from my English teachers in carrying out classroom activities.	0.0	3.8	42.3	23.1	30.8
5. I get more actively involved in English classes when I am physically in class.	6.6	19.2	23.1	26.9	30.8
6. I can get better results with offline learning.	0.0	3.8	61.5	15.4	19.2
Attitudes towards online classroom setting					
1. Learning English online is more effective and enjoyable than attending classes.	3.8	15.4	65.4	15.4	3.8
2. I find it easier to understand English lessons deeply through online platforms.	3.8	19.2	50.0	23.1	3.8
3. I find using technology in my study will help me get better results in my English subjects.	3.8	11.5	65.4	19.2	0.0
4. I feel more motivated to learn English via online platforms.	3.8	19.2	57.7	30.8	0.0
5. I can easily carry out online English activities with classmates and teachers on and off campus.	3.8	11.5	61.5	23.1	0.0
6. I can access a variety of learning resources.	3.8	7.7	57.7	26.9	3.8
7. I get more actively involved in English classes on online platforms.	3.8	7.7	73.1	15.4	0.0

When examining the attitudes of students towards online learning and traditional offline classrooms, it becomes evident that students exhibit a stronger inclination for in-person instruction in the context of EFL courses. Most students, namely 75%, preferred for in-person interactions with professors and classmates over virtual interactions facilitated by computer or laptop displays. In addition, attending courses allows students to get direct feedback and direction from instructors, therefore enhancing their comprehension of the subject matter. More than half of the surveyed participants concur that collaboration is an additional benefit of offline sessions. In contrast, 20% of the student population expressed disagreement, while 50% maintained a neutral stance about the efficacy of online learning. Regarding the active engagement in EFL programs, students expressed a preference for doing learning tasks inside physical classroom settings as opposed to online platforms. Regardless of whether the learning

modality is online or offline, a majority of students concur that there is no discernible disparity in their learning outcomes. This suggests the need for a balanced approach that integrates elements of both online and offline instruction to cater to diverse learning preferences and maximize student engagement and learning outcomes.

Students' Opinions on Factors Affecting Blended Learning in EFL Classes

Student participants are also surveyed about factors affecting their blended learning. Responses are shown in the following table.

Table 5

Students' opinions on factors affecting blended learning in EFL classes

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
	%	%	%	%	%
1. Technical abilities	7.7	11.5	69.2	19.2	0.0
2. Technological accessibility	0.0	0.0	61.5	38.5	0.0
3. Self-directed learning	0.0	0.0	61.5	38.5	0.0
4. Teachers' abilities	0.0	0.0	30.8	57.7	15.4
5. Usefulness of the school's LMS	3.8	15.4	38.5	30.8	11.5
6. Class time flexibility	0.0	7.7	50.0	30.8	11.5
7. Class size	0.0	0.0	69.2	26.9	3.8
8. Other factors (learning space/ noise/ ...)	0.0	7.7	42.4	38.5	11.5

The table reveals that the primary determinant seen by students as impacting on their English language classes with blended learning is teachers' proficiency. Approximately 60% of respondents agreed, while over 15% strongly agreed with this notion. The efficacy of this learning strategy is significantly influenced by the perceived use of the school's LMS. Similar replies were obtained from the majority of students on issues such as technology accessibility, self-directed learning, class schedule flexibility, and class size, with a neutral perspective being expressed. A significant proportion of students, namely one fifth, expressed disagreement over the potential for their technical abilities to provide challenges to their online learning. Conversely, a majority of students, above fifty percent, acknowledged that factors such as learning environment and noise levels can significantly impede their learning experience.

During the interview process, students are requested to provide clarifications and explanations about their questionnaire responses. Initially, when prompted to assess their technological competencies, 80% of the students said that they possessed a high level of confidence in their ability to navigate the Internet and utilize various programs. The individual mentioned that they currently reside in an era characterized by technological advancements, which results in regular exposure to electronic devices and online activities as part of their daily routine. Furthermore, throughout their time in secondary education, students received comprehensive instruction in computer literacy, which included the acquisition of online learning competencies necessitated by the global pandemic caused by the breakout of the coronavirus. In contrast, the remaining two students acknowledged their limited proficiency in technology, attributing it to their

inclination towards conventional and quiet lifestyles, which deterred them from extensively engaging with cellphones and computers. Furthermore, high schools lacked sufficient instruction in IT abilities. Nevertheless, each participant said that the necessity of conducting online research across several disciplines has significantly enhanced their technological proficiency since their enrollment in the university.

In the field of technological accessibility, students have expressed satisfaction with their access to the Internet and educational resources inside the university setting. Students have the ability to utilize the educational materials available in the electronic library offered by the school. Regarding the school's LMS, students have expressed that the platform is highly intuitive and valuable, with appropriately categorized video lessons. However, it was communicated that access to the platform is only feasible outside of class hours due to the system's limited functionality when faced with a high volume of concurrent student users.

In relation to the benefits of blended learning, students have stressed that the most notable aspects are its flexibility and diversity. The provision of a conducive atmosphere facilitates unrestricted access to educational resources, allowing individuals to engage in academic pursuits at their convenience, irrespective of geographical constraints, provided a stable Internet connection is available. Online learning, when supplemented with the careful direction of professors, may provide students with a diverse range of learning experiences that align with those found in traditional offline classrooms.

The platform makes communication between teachers and students more convenient because some students are too shy to ask questions in class. (Student 5)

First, I felt a little strange when I use the LMS, but later found it helpful for us to download the learning materials and to communicate with the teacher, because some of us are too shy to communicate in class. (Student 8)

This learning methodology is characterized by its time-intensive nature and cost-effectiveness, as studying at home eliminates the need for expenditures related to transportation and meals. Only a single student expressed that watching online video lectures helps her to learn independently. She expressed

It pushes me to form my self-discipline in the learning process.... It is a good chance for me to practice my English abilities. (Student 3)

They said that the primary merit of the school's LMS is its accessibility across many devices, such as mobile phones, iPads, and laptops, without any specific model requirements. Students possess the ability to readily locate the learning materials, identify the appropriate channels for assignment submission, and determine the appropriate avenues for posing inquiries. They really value the ability to engage in private communication with their instructors, such as through various social media platforms.

In terms of drawbacks, it is disconcerting to observe that students have identified blended learning as a contributing factor to their difficulties in comprehending their lessons. Additionally, students have expressed their lack of enthusiasm towards the notion of assuming personal accountability for their own learning, a fundamental principle inherent in the blended

learning approach. According to their statement, they expressed difficulty in independently engaging in learning activities without the guidance and oversight of a teacher. The act of repeatedly viewing video lectures is time-consuming, as it is necessary to revisit the information in order to comprehend the material being taught. Additionally, it should be noted that students have significant challenges while attempting to access the school's LMS during class hours. Consequently, they are compelled to resort to other platforms such as Zoom or Google Meet for their learning needs. Potentially, this factor may have had a detrimental impact on their perspectives towards blended learning.

A majority of the interview participants expressed a pessimistic outlook regarding blended learning, expressing concerns that online learning may lack stimulation and become repetitive.

Honestly, I'm not too optimistic about it. I worry that online classes might get boring. (Student 1)

Well, I have mixed feelings about it, to be honest. While I appreciate its flexibility, I do have concerns about the effectiveness of online classes compared to traditional in-person learning. (Student 7)

They expressed apprehension over the potential lack of interactivity within online educational settings, hence resulting in limited access to feedback and assistance from instructors and peers while encountering challenges throughout the period of remote learning.

It's tough to get help or feedback quickly when you're struggling with something during online learning. (Student 10)

They also expressed dissatisfaction with the abundance of distractions they must navigate when participating in an online class.

There are so many distractions at home, like pets, siblings, or just the temptation to check your phone. It can make it hard to focus. (Student 2)

The authors expanded upon their perspective, asserting a greater appreciation for conventional classroom environments due to the advantages of instant engagement with instructors and peers in instances of distraction.

Finally, the participants in the interview expressed their desires and provided ideas for enhancing the English language blended learning experience at the school. Consistent with the findings obtained from the questionnaire, the interviewed students concurred that educators assume a highly significant role in the context of online education.

I think teachers really need to step up in online classes. They have got to be good at teaching, not just tech-savvy. (Student 4)

It is frustrating when you're struggling with a concept, and the teacher cannot explain it well online. (Student 9)

The evaluation of instructors in an online learning environment encompasses not only their technical competence, but also their aptitude for information transmission and student inspiration. As previously said, the primary obstacle is in the accessibility of the school's LMS. Consequently, there is an expectation for the university to enhance the system's infrastructure

in order to optimize its operational efficiency. Regarding the learning materials available on the LMS, students have expressed the need for additional resources to facilitate supplementary practice. During the interviews, two students expressed their need for an increased availability of electronic books (e-books) to supplement their learning experience. They specifically emphasized the need for e-books that include reference materials and practice activities corresponding to each lesson.

I also feel like there should be more resources available on the LMS to help us practice and reinforce what we're learning. Like, having e-books with reference materials and practice activities would be super helpful. (Student 1)

Definitely. And you know, it's not just about the quantity of resources on the LMS, but the quality too. We need resources that really help us understand the material better. (Student 3)

Another suggestion is the reduction of class size. The enrollment of around 60 students per online class is considered excessive, which might provide challenges for instructors in effectively managing and facilitating interactions within the learning environment.

The class sizes are way too big for online learning. With around 60 students per class, it's hard for instructors to give everyone the attention they need and for us to interact effectively. (Student 4)

With smaller classes, you can actually have meaningful discussions and get personalized feedback from the teacher. (Student 6)

The suggestions for improvement include enhancing instructor evaluation criteria, increasing the availability of electronic resources such as e-books, and reducing class sizes to facilitate more personalized interactions and support.

The findings highlight the complex interplay between technological infrastructure, instructional strategies, and student perceptions in implementing of blended learning for English language education at a Vietnamese university. By addressing the identified challenges and leveraging the opportunities highlighted by students, educators and administrators can work towards enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of blended learning initiatives to better meet the diverse needs and preferences of learners.

Discussion

The study reflects a considerable level of readiness among students for engaging in blended EFL learning, and it demonstrates the alignment with Graham et al. (2013) of blended learning as an integrative approach that combines different modalities and methodologies. Osguthorpe and Graham (2003) established a distinction between online and face-to-face instruction, confirming that students feel equally at ease with both online learning activities and traditional classroom environments. This duality of readiness highlights the need for a pedagogical balance that caters to the intrinsic benefits of both online and offline learning, as the literature suggests. It also further underscores the pivotal role of learner motivation and interest in course content, resonating with the insights of Zimmerman (2008) and Huang & Chou (2015), and corroborates

Wang et al. (2019)'s findings on the correlation between blended learning success and learner engagement, autonomy, and satisfaction.

The varying opinions on technical skills and access to technology can be understood by considering the perspective presented by Albiladi and Alshareef (2019), which highlights the importance of infrastructure support and digital literacy among those involved. The fundamental assumption that blended learning requires a convergence of digital and traditional educational incentives and adaptations supports the perspectives presented in the research findings. The impact of blended learning on English language teaching in Vietnam is assessed within the context of the National Foreign Language Project 2020, which is led by the MOET in 2014. Blended learning significantly enhanced student performance and engagement, benefiting both students and educators (Toan, 2013). This improvement is attributed to increased digital literacy, knowledge transformation spaces, student affective values, and the opportunity for real-time communication with native speakers. The initiative represents a national focus on English language proficiency, thus confirming the significance of blended learning as a means of educational reform.

The effective implementation of blended learning goes beyond simply combining technology with traditional teaching methods; it is closely connected to a combination of factors, including proficiency in technology, easy access, and a student's ability to learn independently. Furthermore, the efficiency and ease of use of the LMS are crucial for guaranteeing a seamless educational process (Holley & Oliver, 2010; Tang & Chaw, 2013; Hung et al., 2010; Rasouli et al., 2016; Cao, 2023). The empirical evidence obtained from this study clearly demonstrates the importance of having a framework that supports individual learning paths, which is further enhanced by the crucial role played by educators. In addition to being technologically proficient, they must also possess the skill to cultivate an atmosphere that encourages student participation and facilitates the effective integration of blended learning approaches.

In synthesizing these observations, this research contributes to the broader discourse on blended learning in EFL contexts by offering valuable insights into the potential for digital transformation in language education. It highlights the necessity of aligning technological advancements with pedagogical objectives to foster an inclusive, engaging, and effective learning experience for students and navigate the complexities of language acquisition.

Conclusion

The results obtained from the survey and interviews indicate that student respondents exhibit a preference for acquiring English language skills within a conventional classroom setting. This inclination is attributed to the belief that direct interaction with instructors facilitates enhanced retention of information and fosters a more comprehensive comprehension of the subject matter. Despite students' preparedness for English language blended learning in terms of technological proficiency and learner autonomy, they nonetheless exhibit a certain degree of reluctance towards engaging in blended learning methodologies. In other words, while technologies provide a modest obstacle, the preparedness of these technologies is not on par with what students indicated in the interview. They reported that repeated technical concerns, such as

malfunctioning gadgets and inadequate internet access, negatively influenced their perception of blended learning. Students tend to choose conventional classrooms as their preferred mode of learning. This preference is mostly attributed to the inaccessibility of the university's LMS and concerns over the pedagogical abilities of teachers during class sessions.

As highlighted in multiple studies, blended learning in EFL contexts offers significant benefits for both learners and instructors. For students in a Vietnamese university setting, blended learning can compensate for limited exposure to English, fostering interest, language skills development, personalized learning, and technological proficiency. Additionally, blended learning enhances teaching conditions, provides access to global resources, and improves student engagement, motivation, and reflective capacities. Therefore, implementing blended learning in English language teaching at Vietnamese universities can enhance students' language proficiency, technological skills, and overall learning experience while supporting instructors in creating effective and engaging learning environments.

In order to address the aforementioned challenges associated with blended learning in EFL classrooms in this university, many potential solutions are proposed as follows:

In this particular scenario, the educational institution should allocate additional resources towards the assessment and enhancement of the LMS employed by the university, as well as the improvement of the Wi-Fi connectivity infrastructure. Furthermore, the utmost importance should be placed on fostering a sense of connection among students in a blended learning environment. Pedagogical techniques necessitate the incorporation of interpersonal elements in online interactions to ensure that students can experience levels of engagement comparable to those in a traditional classroom setting. This might be achieved through the utilization of educational software and leveraging the expertise of teachers. Hence, it is recommended that the institution should provide instructors with concise training programs focused on pedagogical approaches for blended English learning.

Blended learning is expected to become increasingly prevalent in educational practices, necessitating further research to maximize its potential benefits. Future studies should focus on designing innovative software applications and instructional approaches tailored to students' specific needs and preferences of students in EFL classrooms. Additionally, ongoing assessment and evaluation of blended learning practices can inform continuous improvement and refinement of instructional strategies. In order to enhance the overall experience of blended learning classrooms, it is imperative to design software applications that facilitate real-time interactions and provide continuous feedback between professors and students.

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Biodata

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Common syntactic errors in the writing skills of the 3rd year students at Van Lang University

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ABSTRACT

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This study aimed to analyze common syntactic errors found in the argumentative essays of third-year English major students at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, Vietnam. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to obtain data in this study. The quantitative approach involved counting and calculating the frequency, percentage, and ranking of syntactic errors, while the qualitative method was adopted to explain these errors. The instrument for collecting data was argumentative essays written by 37 third-year English majors enrolling in Writing-5 at Van Lang University. Microsoft Word was used to collect and analyze syntactic errors and sentence structures, while Microsoft Excel was employed to calculate the frequency and rank of these errors and structures. The results found that the five most frequent errors in their essays were at the noun phrase and sentence levels. These errors included run-on sentences, preposition errors, article errors, sentence fragments, and pronoun errors. Through error analysis, it was indicated that the majority of errors made by students were due to the negative transfer from their first language and the literal translation. Based on the findings, language teachers and syllabus designers could use these results as guidance to design appropriate teaching methods and materials.

Introduction

In today's social context, English has been known as a “global language” (Rao, 2019, p.67). It plays an important role in various fields of life, including engineering, education, medicine, etc. (Ilyosovna, 2020). English is a helpful tool in education that opens doors of opportunity for learners' future career prospects. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills are the four basic criteria for assessing English language proficiency. Especially, writing skill is considered a complicated production compared to the other skills. It not only requires learners to practice regularly but also requires a lot of criteria to produce a proficient writing piece. According to

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Wee et al. (2009, cited in Phuket & Othman, 2015), no matter how long it takes to learn English, errors are frequently made by most EFL learners in their writing abilities. Learners face various difficulties in their written texts, including grammar, vocabulary, spelling, word choice, punctuation, etc. (Bryne, 1988, as cited in Pratiwi, 2016).

According to Nguyen (2009), problems in teaching and learning to write EFL can be addressed by a variety of methods such as psycholinguistics, syntax, pragmatics, sociolinguistics, and SLA. It is undeniable that readers need to combine various criteria in students' writing pieces. However, it will be tough for readers to evaluate effectively if grammatical errors, especially syntactic errors, are frequently found in students' writing. Tahaineh (2010) states that the theme and structure of writing will be negatively affected in their entirety by the incorrect use of syntactic elements, such as verbs, prepositions, articles, relative clauses, etc. Therefore, syntax criteria should be taken into consideration as they are one of the top requirements for evaluating an effective writing piece.

Writing effectively does not root in innate ability but rather in the process of accumulating knowledge and practice. According to Hadley (1993, cited in Andrian, 2015), practice and learning through experience are essential to writing skills. However, learners' writing ability will not improve by simply practicing without detecting deficiencies and drawing experience from these shortcomings. Therefore, Error Analysis (EA) is created to detect, classify, and evaluate learners' errors more effectively. This facilitates students' learning from their errors and avoiding the same ones. According to Khansir et al. (2013), the reduction of errors is a positive sign of progress in the person's capacity. Moreover, EA also provides reliable feedback for the remedial training methods created to address those shortcomings (Weireesh, 1991, cited in Khumpee, 2015). As a result, teachers will rely on those errors to be able to design lessons and take appropriate measures to improve learners' competence.

In nations where English is widely recognized as a foreign language and in Vietnam in particular, mastering English writing skills is a challenging and complex task. In fact, learners' writing abilities will improve if they spend more time practicing (Tuan, 2010; Purnamasari et al., 2021). However, despite making long-term efforts to learn English, Vietnamese students' English proficiency, especially writing skills, are still significantly below expectations (Tran, 2021). Furthermore, regardless of the importance of writing skills, Vietnamese students tend to focus on developing their other skills rather than on them (Tran, 2001). As a consequence, various errors are frequently found in learners' writing, which partially reflects their ineffectiveness in mastering their writing skills. In the study by Dang et al. (2020), it is indicated that the biggest difficulty faced by learners in their essays involves linguistic competence, including aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, and coherence.

It is undeniable that many previous studies have been undertaken to explore errors in learners' writing skills (Emmaryana, 2010; Karahan, 2011; Hamzah, 2012; Ho et al., 2015; Singh, 2017; Nasser, 2018; Khatter, 2019). However, there is a noticeable absence of studies focusing specifically on syntactic errors in written English by these learners. Therefore, it is necessary for the researcher to fill this gap by examining common syntactic errors in students' writing skills to be able to identify their main difficulties in this area.

Furthermore, this study is limited to third-year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University. They were selected as subjects in this study because the majority of them have completed previous basic writing courses before enrolling in Academic Writing. Therefore, their writing abilities would be assessed more objectively as they had accumulated sufficient knowledge by that time. Additionally, effective writing is crucial for third-year students as it is a useful tool for the thorough preparation of their graduation thesis.

Based on the above background, the researcher finds that it is very essential to conduct a study on syntax errors in the writing pieces of juniors at VLU.

This research is expected to make a significant contribution to the field of English teaching and learning. This result can be utilized as a useful resource for learners who encounter difficulties with syntax in their writing skills. Based on the study's findings, they can be aware of these errors and better understand how to correct them. Besides, the findings can be beneficial for teachers and syllabus designers in identifying learners' problems so that teaching methods and materials can be adjusted accordingly.

Literature Review

Previous studies on written error analysis in other countries

Much previous research on syntax errors has been undertaken in Arab countries. For instance, Zughoul (2002) conducted a study in seven different Arab countries to find interlanguage syntax errors at the noun phrase level. The sample of this study was 25 learners from different Arab countries learning English. She discovered that noun phrase errors (32.8%) were the second most frequent errors ranked after verb phrase errors in the total number of errors made by learners. Particularly, errors in the use of articles accounted for 38% at the noun phrase level and 12.5% of the total syntax errors found.

Another investigation was conducted by Khan & Khan (2016) to discover common errors produced in students' paragraphs at Jazan University. A total of 120 Saudi student passages (60 male and 60 female) were used for the analysis. According to the research findings, it was observed that the most prevalent errors were spelling errors. However, the results also showed that subject-verb agreement errors produced by male students occurred the most frequently of the total number of errors they made (26.32%). Moreover, the study also indicated that intralingual transfer was the main source of most errors found, followed by interlingual transfer.

Similarly, Hafiz et al. (2018) also conducted a case study of pre-university students at Jazan University to explore the syntax errors that students made. The results showed that the common errors made were subject-verb agreement, tense, sentence structure, article, etc. Likewise, they believed that these errors were caused by the first language transfer as well as the learners' lack of practice.

In a recent study, Khatter (2019) examined written errors made by female third-year students at Majmaah University. The results showed that punctuation, spelling, articles, tenses, etc. errors were common in students' writing. In addition, punctuation errors were the most frequently made by female students in their writing, accounting for 29.69% of the total errors. They were more likely to use commas incorrectly to join two independent sentences together instead of using conjunctions or punctuation marks. The production of run-on sentences resulted from

confusion in the use of periods and commas at the end of sentences.

Tati (2016) conducted a study in Malaysia to detect and analyze errors made by 50 ESL students in their descriptive essays. One year later, another study was carried out by Singh (2017) to analyze errors in 140 essays written by 140 tertiary students aged 18 to 20 from random schools in Malaysia. Although both studies were aimed at Malaysian learners, there was a difference in error classification between them. Particularly, Tati (2016) separated errors into three major levels: words, phrases, and sentences, based on Ngangbam's (2016) model. Singh (2017), on the other hand, only classified errors at the word level. Despite with two distinct approaches to error classification, both studies found that learners struggled most frequently with tenses and subject-verb agreement in their writing abilities. However, the two researchers had slightly different explanations for the reasons behind these errors. Specifically, Tati (2016) concluded that learners' errors stem from both interference from their first language and inadequate command of knowledge. In contrast, the weak mastery of the English language of learners was the primary cause drawn from the conclusion of Singh (2017).

In the context of Indonesia, many previous studies have been carried out using various approaches to explore errors made by learners in their writing skills. For example, an investigation was conducted by Emmaryana (2010) of the SMA Negeri 1 Cigudeg first-year students to identify their common errors. Errors were categorized into five types: sentence pattern, tenses, pronouns, prepositions, and spelling and punctuation. The results showed that tenses were the most frequent errors, with 88 errors out of a total of 199 errors in the students' writing. In contrast, only seven errors in pronoun usage were detected, which accounted for the lowest error rate.

In another study, Jumriana (2014) adopted another method designed by Politzer & Ramirez (1973) to investigate syntax errors in essays written by students at Alauddin Islamic State University of Makassar. Based on this model, errors were categorized into four main types including noun phrases, verbs, verb construction, and transformation. The study's findings showed that the predominant errors in students' essays were related to aspects at the noun phrase level, including pronouns, numbers, determiners, and prepositions. While the above two studies utilized two different methods of error classification, they both stemmed from the linguistic category taxonomy that examined errors based on word functions.

On the other hand, Mamun (2016) employed the surface strategy taxonomy developed by Dulay et al. (1982) in a recent study to categorize errors based on the surface of words. This method classified errors into four types: omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. The study found that errors of misinformation accounted for the highest percentage (43%) of the total errors identified. While this method allows for detailed error analysis through word surface examination, it may be challenging for lecturers to implement appropriate lesson plans to help learners address these specific errors.

A study was conducted at Srinakharinwirot University, Thailand by Iamsiu (2014) to discover the grammatical errors in students' writing pieces. A total of 20 sophomore English minor students participating in Basic Writing were used as a sample for this survey. The results of the study indicated that word choice was the error with the highest rate (41.13%). Then, the sentence structure was the second most common error, with a frequency of 102 times (36.17%), while the error with the lowest rate was the word order error (0.35%).

Similarly, Sermsook et al. (2017) also investigated to identify the writing errors of English-majored sophomores at a university in Thailand. 104 texts from 24 females and 2 males were collected as instruments for this study. A total of 17 types of errors were detected based on word

and sentence-level classification. The results indicated that punctuation errors were the most frequent errors (14.19%), followed by article errors (13.18%), concord errors (11.82%) and spelling errors (9.8%), respectively. Interlingual transfer, intralingual interference, insufficient knowledge, and carelessness were the main causes of errors in students' writing pieces.

Previous studies on written error analysis in Vietnam

Not many previous studies have been conducted to find Vietnamese students' errors in writing skills. Ho et al. (2015) conducted a study at HCMC Open University to explore common errors of students majoring in English in writing journals. The findings revealed that first-year English majors frequently made both syntactic and lexical errors. In particular, tense errors were the most frequent type of error, with a total of 6587 tense errors made, corresponding to approximately 57 errors in each student's writing. His findings also indicated that students tended to compose their journal articles by translating their Vietnamese thoughts into English. As a result, this was the reason why they often committed errors in using tenses corresponding to different timelines.

Another study conducted by Chi (2020) also investigated errors in the compositions and paragraphs of Vietnamese students. The results showed that the most prevalent types of errors produced by students were spelling (25.6%), concord (21.4%), and verb tense and form (17%). It is clear that this finding's study was in line with the findings of Ho et al. (2015). However, in Chi's (2020) study, the frequency of occurrence between the three types of errors is not significantly different, which shows that learners faced with the most difficulties in writing skills are similar. In contrast, tenses are an urgent issue for students in Ho et al.'s study as their frequency is more than twice that of the second most common error, spelling.

In the same year, Nguyen (2020) conducted a study to investigate errors in writing paragraphs made by 2nd-year IT students at Hanoi University of Industry. For the purpose of the study, a total of 125 student paragraphs were randomly selected as samples. The findings indicated that the four most prevalent types of errors in students' paragraphs related to verb tense, sentence structures, verb form, and subject-verb agreement. Furthermore, the results from two survey questionnaires from 7 teachers and 667 students indicated that interference from the first language was the primary source of errors in writing paragraphs.

Summary

Overall, the above studies were conducted in different national contexts to explore the problems faced by students in writing. Based on the results of previous studies, it could be concluded that the main errors in previous studies were related to tenses, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, etc. However, most of the research tended to focus on common errors or grammatical errors in countries where English has been used as a second language. Besides, research on syntax errors, especially at the sentence level, has not been widely explored in nations where English has been considered a foreign language or a lingua franca, except for Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, the majority of the research targeted freshmen, sophomores, and pre-university students. Therefore, this study will focus on analyzing the syntax errors of third-year English majors. Furthermore, the study will not divide students into female or male groups as the main purpose of this study is to examine common syntactic errors in their essays, not to compare errors between these two groups.

Research Questions

The researcher fulfills the objectives of the study by answering two research questions:

1. What are the common syntactic errors in the argumentative essays committed by the 3rd-year English majored students at VLU?
2. How many types of sentence structures do students normally use in their essays?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This research was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at VLU in District 1, HCMC. The Faculty of Foreign Languages currently includes two majors: English Language and Chinese Language. The population of this study consists of 37 argumentative essays produced by 37 3rd-year English-majored students attending Writing 5 in the academic years 2021-2022, at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University.

Design of the Study

The study included a group of third-year English majors at Van Lang University who submitted their assignments for Writing 5-Academic Writing. Participants in the study were asked to write an argumentative essay of 400-500 words in length and use at least 5 different resources to support their writing on one of the following topics in their assignments: "Adults should be required to pass a test before they can become parents.", "All students should complete at least one course abroad.", or "The consequences of co-habitation".

Out of a total of 131 available essays, 37 original essays from students were randomly selected. After collecting the essays, the research data would be collected by classifying sentence structures, checking for syntax errors, classifying, quantifying, and then correcting them. Each element in the essay that does not follow the syntax rules of English will be marked as an error. Furthermore, the collection and analysis of errors and sentence structure would be done in Microsoft Word, while Microsoft Excel was used to count the frequency, calculate the percentage, and rank each type of error.

The researcher adopted quantitative and qualitative methods to obtain data related to the research problem. The quantitative analysis was used to explore syntactic errors and sentence structures found in learners' essays. The results were presented in tables with numerical data, including each identified type's frequency, percentage, and ranking. By employing the quantitative method design, the results would be presented in numbers so that readers could have a general overview of common syntactic errors found. However, explaining each type of error through numbers is abstract and confusing for readers to have a comprehensive picture of errors detected. Therefore, the qualitative method was employed to analyze and explain errors in detail in terms of content. Each type of error will be designed with specific examples, explanations of why errors are formed, and how to correct them.

Data collection & analysis

The instrument employed in this study was argumentative essays written by 37 3rd-year students majoring in English Language at VLU. Also, the data would be analyzed by using the theory of Gass et al. (2008). This method involves six steps, including collecting data, identifying, classifying, quantifying, analyzing, and remediating errors. This theory includes specific steps in error analysis that can assist researchers in identifying each detailed task to be performed and avoiding confusion in processing detected errors. However, there would be some changes in the steps that would be appropriate to the objectives of the current research. The classification of sentence structures would be added after the data collection step to detect the categories of sentence structures used in the students' argumentative essays. Furthermore, this study would focus on correcting errors instead of investigating the sources behind them in the last step.

Collecting data: Based on the error analysis theory of Gass et al. (2008), the first step to be taken is to collect samples. Her supervisor provided the researcher with essays from 131 students attending his Writing 5 course in the academic years 2021-2022. The researcher selected at random 37 essays to use as data for analysis without any consideration of the identities of the participants or the contents of their essays. They were required to submit 2 versions of the essays including the original version and the revised version after receiving feedback from group members. Therefore, the researcher just collected the original versions for analysis and omitted references to make it easier to summarize the samples. Next, she downloaded 37 essays, gathered them into a Word Document, and copied one version to analyze the sentence structures. Each type of sentence structure would be analyzed using different highlighters in Microsoft Word. To secure the personal information of the participants, their essays were coded as S1 to S37.

Classifying sentence structures: After obtaining data for analysis, the researcher would use the version copy to classify the sentence structures into four basic types: simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences. Besides, global errors in sentence construction, including run-on sentences and sentence fragments, will also be examined in this step to answer the second research question. She used different highlighters to highlight each type of sentence structure. It should be noted that each type would be marked with a different color and not duplicated. Highlighting different sentence structures in different colors would help the researcher avoid confusion and make the summary easier during analysis.

Example: However, I completely agree with the above point because studying abroad will bring some benefits to students.

The above sentence is a complex sentence because it includes one dependent clause or subordinating clause which cannot stand alone (*because studying abroad will bring some benefits to students*) and one main clause/independent clause (*I completely agree with the above point*).

The table of the coding schemes in Appendix A was used to analyze errors of the students (see Appendix A).

Identifying errors: Then, the researcher read and observed each sentence in detail and carefully

to find syntax errors. The researcher observed and compared each sentence produced by the participants against the standard rules of English syntax. If there was one syntactic element in the student's writing that was not in accordance with the standard syntax rules in the target language, it was marked as one error. In this step, the researcher would use the text highlighter to mark errors.

Example: Secondly, participating a class before becoming parents will help to communicate with their children effectively.

In the above example, a total of two syntax errors were found. The first error was in the use of prepositions, and the other error was in using pronouns.

Classifying errors: The researcher observed highlighted parts and began to classify these errors. If the errors could be subdivided, she would divide them into subcategories based on the theory of Ellis (1997) to be able to have a profound insight into the syntax errors found. These subcategories include omission, addition, misinformation, and misordering. For example, if a student made an error relating to using the incorrect preposition, the researcher would use the comment feature and note it as Preposition - misinformation.

Example: Secondly, participating a class before becoming parents will help to communicate with their children effectively.

The first error was related to the use of prepositions, namely the omission of the necessary preposition "in". The other error was related to pronoun error, namely the omission of the personal pronoun "them". Then, the researcher would use the comment feature and note them as Preposition - omission and Pronoun - omission respectively.

Quantifying errors: After collecting and classifying, the researcher would aggregate the occurrence frequency of each error type by inputting the number of errors detected for each essay into the pre-designed Excel worksheet. Next, after recording the errors in all 37 writing samples, the researcher would calculate the percentage of each category of error based on the following formula:

$$\% \text{ of each type of error} = \frac{\text{frequency of each type of error}}{\text{Total number of errors found}} \times 100\%$$

Example: Secondly, participating a class before becoming parents will help to communicate with their children effectively.

In the above example, there were two syntactic errors, including Preposition - omission and Pronoun - omission. Therefore, the researcher would record the number of errors by entering the number 1 in the Preposition - omission section and the number 1 in the Pronoun - omission field in the Excel worksheet.

Correcting errors: In the last step, the researcher would correct the types of errors found previously. This was done in order to give the research's findings a more in-depth look at frequent errors and remedies, allowing us to comprehend why these errors are incorrect and why they need to be fixed.

Example: Secondly, participating a class before becoming parents will help to communicate

with their children effectively.

Correct: Secondly, *participating in a class* before becoming parents will *help them to communicate* with their children effectively.

Inter-rater

In order to ensure the reliability of the study's findings, the researcher provided original writing samples to seven peers and one English teacher. Along with the samples, a blank Excel sheet for error classification and examples of error classification were given to them. Their task was to read the essays and record the number of errors in the provided Excel spreadsheet. After receiving their error statistics, the researcher would compare them with her results. If there were any errors or differences in the results obtained, the researcher would consult her supervisor for explanations and correct answers.

Results/Findings

What are the common syntactic errors in the argumentative essays committed by the 3rd- year English majored students at VLU?

A total of 37 essays were collected as data to answer this question. After analysis, it was discovered that there were 12 different categories of syntactic errors. The coding schemes for these errors were included in Appendix A. For error items of negligible number, the researcher would classify them as "Other". Table 1 provides a summary of each error type's name, frequency, percentage, and rank. However, in order to identify the most prevalent problematic issues, the researcher would focus on evaluating the five most frequent categories of syntactic errors.

Table 1

Syntactic errors were made by 37 students in their argumentative essays: A summary of types, frequency, and rank

No.	Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Run-on sentences	92	20.58%	1
2	Sentence fragments	48	10.74%	4
3	Preposition	64	14.32%	2
4	Article	57	12.75%	3
5	Tense	26	5.82%	9
6	Infinitive/Gerund	27	6.04%	8
7	S-V agreement	35	7.83%	6
8	Pronoun	37	8.28%	5
9	Voice	6	1.34%	12
10	Word order	14	3.13%	10
11	Sentence-Initial coordinating conjunction	29	6.49%	7
12	Other	12	2.68%	11
TOTAL		447	100.00%	

As shown in Table 1, there were 447 syntactic errors produced by 37 third-year students in their argumentative essays. These errors were divided into 11 main categories, and “other section” was for errors of negligible number. Particularly, the five most common syntactic types identified in students' argumentative essays were run-on sentences, preposition errors, article errors, sentence fragments, and pronoun errors, while errors in the use of voice were identified at least. To have more detailed information, Appendix B would provide specific data regarding twelve errors. For the 5 most common types of error, the error name, frequency, and rank would be presented separately in Table 2 for analysis.

Table 2

A summary of types, frequency, and rank of the five most common types of syntactic error

No.	Types of errors	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
1	Run-on sentences	92	20.58%	1
2	Preposition	64	14.32%	2
3	Article	57	12.75%	3
4	Sentence fragments	48	10.74%	4
5	Pronoun	37	8.28%	5
TOTAL		298	66.67%	

As presented in Table 2, run-on sentences were detected to be the most prevalent type of error, with a frequency of 92 times (20.58%). The second most frequent syntactic error found was in using prepositions, which occurred 64 times (14.32% of all errors). Then, article errors were the third most common category of error, with a frequency of 57 times (12.75%). Then, it was followed by 48 errors in sentence fragments (10.74%) and 37 pronoun errors (8.28%), respectively. In order to obtain an in-depth examination of such errors at the phrase level, the researcher would analyse them by categorizing them into sub-types of errors based on Ellis's theory (1997). Furthermore, in terms of incorrect sentence structures, they would be discussed, given examples, and explained more intensively in research question 2.

Run-on sentences

As indicated in Table 2, run-on sentences were detected to be the most frequent type of error in students' essays. They accounted for 20.58% of the total and ranked first in the total number of errors detected. There were three main errors related to run-on sentences, including comma splices, fused sentences, and polysyndetons. As these errors were at the sentence level, they would be further discussed through detailed examples in research question 2.

Sub-categories of errors in prepositions

The second highest rate of syntactic error type identified was in the use of prepositions, which accounted for 14.32% of all errors found. Specifically, Table 4 would present the frequency, percentage, and rank of sub-categories of errors in the use of prepositions that students encountered.

Table 3
Types, frequency, and rank of sub-categories of errors in prepositions

No.	Sub-categories of errors	Omission	Addition	Misinformation	Misordering
1	Frequency	24	9	31	0
2	Percentage (%)	37.50%	14.06%	48.44%	0%
3	Rank	2	3	1	4

As shown in Table 3, there were a total of 3 sub-categories related to errors in prepositional usage. Preposition misinformation was the biggest problem faced by students, with a frequency of 31 times (48.48%). Then, it was followed by 24 errors in preposition omission (37.50%), and 9 in preposition addition (14.06%) respectively. There were no errors relating to misordering in the prepositional errors. Some examples related to these sub-types of errors will be shown below.

Sub-category: Preposition misinformation

Example: The data are... *for* 1970 to 2015. (S20)

The above example shows that the writer made a syntactic error regarding the use of prepositions. According to the rules of English, to indicate two dates, people will use "from...to..." to express instead of "for...to". In this example, it can be seen that the writer was influenced by the mother tongue when translating word-by-word, leading to the wrong use of prepositions for the above sentence. In Vietnam, people have various ways of expressing distance; for example, people can say "từ 5 đến 7 ngày" to show certainty in a statement, or they can also say "khoảng 5 đến 7 ngày" to indicate conjecture, not certainty.

Correct: The data... *from* 1970 *to* 2015. (S20)

Sub-category: Preposition omission

Example: Secondly, participating a class before becoming parents will help to communicate with their children effectively. (S2)

As shown in the above example, an error in the preposition usage was found. Specifically, the writer omitted necessary preposition "in" after "participating".

Correct: Secondly, *participating in* a class before becoming parents will help *them* to communicate with their children effectively.

Sub-category: Preposition addition

Example: But there are also cases of getting married *about* quarrels, adultery and leading to this divorce. (S21)

In the example above, the writer made a syntax error regarding the use of prepositions. Particularly, the writer added the preposition unnecessarily because he or she tended to think in Vietnamese and then translated that thought into English. In Vietnamese, the writer translated from the sentence " *Nhưng cũng có một số trường hợp lấy nhau về (getting married about) rồi cãi vã, ngoại tình và dẫn đến ly hôn.*". The word-by-word translation from "rồi" to "about" makes it difficult for readers to clearly understand the message the writer would like to express.

Correct: *However*, there are also cases of people *getting married and then having quarrels or adultery*, leading to this divorce.

Sub-categories of errors in articles

As aforementioned, article errors ranked the third most common category of syntactic error, with a frequency of 57 times (12.75%). Particularly, more detailed information will be presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Types, frequency, and rank of sub-categories of errors in articles

No.	Sub-categories of errors	Omission	Addition	Misinformation	Misordering
1	Frequency	29	23	5	0
2	Percentage (%)	50.88%	40.35%	8.77%	0%
3	Rank	1	2	3	4

There were a total of 3 sub-categories related to errors in using articles found, as shown in Table 4. The highest proportion of errors in articles committed by students was article omission, with 29 times (50.88%). Then, it was followed by 23 errors in article addition (40.35%), and 5 errors in preposition addition (8.77%), respectively.

Sub-category: Article omission

Example: There are variety of disadvantage people live together. (S27)

In the above example, the writer omitted the article "a", leading to the syntax error related to the article usage. The article "a" is required in the above sentence to create the phrase "a variety of...".

Correct: There are *a* variety of *disadvantages to* people *living* together. (S27)

Sub-category: Article addition

Example: If you take the advantage of this opportunity, you could even establish lasting friendships with people in many different countries. (S6)

In the above example, the writer used the phrase "take advantage of" to mean make use of something well; however, the noun "advantage" here is neither defined nor mentioned in the previous sentences, so the article "the" cannot be used for the above phrase.

Correct: If you *take advantage* of this opportunity, you could even establish lasting friendships with people in many different countries. (S6)

Sub-category: Article misinformation

Example 3: Completing at least one course of study abroad is a most beneficial experience for all students. (S30)

In the above example, the writer used the superlative comparison with the article "a" instead of "the". He or she seems to have made a mistake in using the article in the example sentence above. Therefore, it does not correspond to the syntactic rule regarding the use of articles in the superlative structure.

Correct: Completing at least one course of study abroad is *the* most beneficial experience for all students. (S30)

Errors are related to the construction of fragment sentences

Out of all the errors identified, fragment sentences accounted for the third highest percentage (10.74%). There were various cases related to this type of error; therefore, the researcher would provide some of the detailed instances to have more deep insights in the research question 2 relating to sentence structures.

Sub-categories of errors in the use of pronouns

Pronoun errors, with 37 errors, or 8.28%, were discovered to be the fifth most frequent errors committed by the students. Table 6 presents the detailed data on the sub-categories of pronoun errors faced by students.

Table 5

A summary of types, frequency, and rank of sub-categories of errors in pronouns

No.	Sub-categories of errors	Omission	Addition	Misinformation	Misordering
1	Frequency	17	4	16	0
2	Percentage (%)	45.95%	10.81%	43.24%	0%
3	Rank	1	3	2	4

As presented in Table 5, a total of three sub-categories related to errors in the use of pronouns were identified. Pronoun omission accounted for the highest rate, with 17 times (49.95%). Then, it was followed by 16 errors in the misuse of pronouns (43.24%) and 4 errors in pronoun addition (10.81%), respectively.

Sub-category: Pronoun omission

Example: First and foremost, cohabitation will cause couples to have many conflicts in daily life. (S36)

In the above example, since the writer mentioned "*couples*", the noun phrase "*daily life*" is for "*couples*". Therefore, possessive pronouns are necessary to show the complete meaning of the sentence.

Correct: First and foremost, cohabitation will cause couples to have many conflicts in *their* daily lives. (S36)

Sub-category: Pronoun misinformation

Example 3: Even some students who live in their relative's house, independence is a must in your every action, challenging you to be your own individuals. (S6)

In the example sentence above, the clause "*even some...relative's house*" is an dependent clause; therefore, the following clause is the independent clause to complete the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, the main clause must have a connection with the meaning of the subordinate clause. However, the confusion in using personal and possessive pronouns made the two clauses of the above sentence not identical in meaning.

Correct: Even *for* some students who live in their relatives' houses, independence is a must in *their* every action, challenging *them* to be *their* own individuals. (S6)

Sub-category: Pronoun addition

Example 2: However, studying abroad is an optimal solution to help students step out of their comfort zone and mingle themselves in a new environment.

In the above example, the writer unnecessarily inserted the reflexive pronoun "themselves" into the sentence. In fact, he or she tended to translate word-by-word from "hòa mình vào một môi trường mới" to "mingle themselves in a new environment". However, the verb "mingle" itself means "hòa mình" and does not need a reflexive pronoun to accompany it.

Correct: However, studying abroad is an optimal solution to help students step out of their comfort zone and mingle in a new environment.

Research question 2: How many types of sentence structures do students normally use in their essays?

In order to respond this research question, the researcher divided the types of sentences used in 37 argumentative essays by 37 third-year English majors at Van Lang University. As described in the Methodology section, the researcher would classify sentence types into four basic categories to obtain the results. Furthermore, run-on sentences and sentence fragments would also be included in this research question to be analyzed. The purpose was to be able to draw conclusions about the number of students who succeed and fail in producing sentences. However, in terms of ranking, the researcher would separate four basic types of sentences and two types of errors in sentence construction to analyze. Table 6 shows the frequencies, percentages, and ranks of the four types of structures used and the errors in their production. To have more detailed statistics, they were included in Appendix C.

Table 6

Types of sentence structures in students' argumentative essays

COMPLETE SENTENCES					Run-on sentences	Sentence fragments	Total
Type	Simple sentences	Compound sentences	Complex sentences	Compound-complex sentences			
Frequency	377	54	353	34	92	48	958
Percentage	39.35%	5.64%	36.85%	3.55%	9.60%	5.01%	100.00%
Rank	1	3	2	4	1	2	
Total	818 (85.39%)				140 (14.61%)		

As seen in Table 6, the majority of students correctly produced English sentence structures (85.39%). A total of 818 sentence structures, including simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences, were correctly produced by 37 students in their argumentative essays.

Particularly, simple sentences were the most prevalent ones made by learners, with 377 times,

or 39.35%. Students might prefer simple sentences as they are considered to be the least complicated sentences, allowing them to produce these structures readily.

Complex sentences were the second most commonly used sentence structure in students' essays, with a frequency of 353 times and accounting for 36.85% of the total sentence structures found. Students seemed to be fairly proficient at using various subordinating conjunctions (because, since, although, in order that, if,...), relative clauses, etc. to produce complex sentences.

Compound sentences, which represented an insignificant percentage of writing pieces (5.64%), were ranked third in sentence structure frequency used. In fact, students made efforts to produce compound sentences; however, combining sentences without linking words or commas "," caused students to fail in completing compound sentences.

Compound-complex sentences were the least common of all the structures found, with 34 times, or 3.55%. These are considered the most complicated types of sentences because they require learners to master the rules of all three remaining types of sentences when producing them.

Table 7

Two types of incorrect sentence structures in students' argumentative essays

Types	Run-on sentences	Sentence fragments	Total
Frequency	92	48	140
Percentage (%)	9.60%	5.01%	14.61%
Rank	1	2	

As indicated in Table 7, a total of 140 sentences, or 14.61% were incorrectly produced by students. Run-on sentences, with a frequency of 92 times, or 9.06% were considered the most frequent errors at the sentence level while sentence fragments were the second most common errors. Several cases and examples related to these two types of errors would be discussed in detail below.

Run-on sentences: consist of at least two main or independent clauses that are not combined by a conjunction or divided by a punctuation mark (Zheng et al., 2018).

Comma splices

A comma splice is the use of a comma without a conjunction between two or more separate sentences (Lunsford, 2016, as cited in Sullivan, 2021).

Example: Raising children is difficult, raising children skillfully is even more difficult. (S32)

It can be seen that in the above example, the writer produced a run-on sentence. According to the rules of English, two independent clauses should have coordinating conjunctions or a semicolon ";" in some cases when combined. However, he or she combined two simple sentences by placing a comma between them without any coordinating conjunction, which made the above sentence syntactically incorrect.

There are several ways to correct the syntax error in the above sentence. Instead of using comma "s", the writer should use the semicolon ";" to combine two simple sentences to make a compound sentence, using the conjunction "but" or the linking word "however" to combine

these clauses.

Correct: Raising children is difficult, *but* raising children skillfully is even more difficult.

Fused sentences: occur when two sentences are combined together without using any punctuation (Lamb, 1977).

Example: Furthermore is Khorshidi's research has backed up the idea that studying abroad helps students improve their foreign language skills while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)

In the example above, the writer tended to be negatively influenced by his or her first language when translating his or her thoughts from “*Hơn nữa là cuộc nghiên cứu của Khoshidi đã ủng hộ...*” into English. In Vietnamese, the word “*là*” is often used to separate the adverbial part from the main part in spoken text. Therefore, this led to a redundancy of the copula verb “*is*” making the sentence a run-on sentence. The way to fix this error is to separate “*furthermore*” as a connecting word and cross out the copula verb “*is*”.

Correct: *Furthermore*, Khorshidi's research has backed up the idea that studying abroad helps students improve their foreign language skills while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)

Polysyndetons

According to Sebesta and Haynes (2010, as cited in Hamzaa et al., 2020), polysyndeton occurs when writers use a lot of conjunctions to connect various words in a sentence. Particularly, polysyndeton is the use of conjunctions when they are not grammatically required (Fisk, 1844, as cited in Hamzaa et al., 2020).

Example: First, cohabitation will affect the girl's reputation, ..., there are a lot... be intact, if that girl chooses to live together but as a result can't marry that man, it will be very difficult for her to marry someone else, because if she meets someone who doesn't care about virginity, it is okay, but if she accidentally meets a patriarch who values virginity, this girl will probably not be happy. (S21)

The above example shows that the writer produced a very lengthy sentence by combining coordinating and subordinating conjunctions between sentences. Too-long sentences are not only syntactically inaccurate, but readers also find them tough to comprehend what the writer was attempting to convey.

Correct: First, cohabitation will affect the girl's reputation. In fact, there are a lot of men who want their wives to be intact. Therefore, if that girl chooses to live with a man without getting married, it will be very difficult for her to marry someone else. The reason is that if she meets someone who doesn't care about virginity, it is okay. However, if she accidentally meets a patriarch who values virginity, this girl will probably not be happy. (S21)

Sentence fragments: incomplete sentences, phrases, or dependent clauses related to the preceding sentence are considered sentence fragments (Jean, 2002, cited in Sriyatni, 2019). They are considered incomplete sentences regardless of whether they start with a capital letter and stop with punctuation (Sriyatni, 2019).

No separation between the adverbial part and the main clause of the sentence

Example: Especially students who live far from home or really love someone, they will live together. (S15)

In the sentence above, the student constructed an incomplete sentence, namely the sentence fragment. Putting a comma (,) in the wrong place made this sentence syntactically incorrect in English. Students tended to separate them into two separate sections; however, the first clause before the comma is a dependent clause. However, a dependent clause cannot stand alone; a main clause is needed to build a complete meaning for the sentence. Therefore, it is necessary to have a main verb to complete the meaning of the sentence and not stand alone.

The method to correct this sentence is to separate "*especially*" as an adverb part of the sentence and place a comma directly after this part. Then, the researcher will remove the remaining comma and omit the pronoun "*they*" which functions as the subject of the sentence.

Correct: *Especially*, students who live far from home or really love someone *will live* together.

Use phrases instead of sentences

Example: In the event of an unplanned pregnancy. (S21)

In the above example, the writer produced a prepositional phrase with "in" as the preposition and the noun phrase "the event of an unplanned pregnancy". In this sentence, there is no main subject or verb to form the sentence. The way to correct this example is to separate this prepositional phrase as an adverbial component and add a main clause to form a complete sentence.

Correct: In the event of unplanned pregnancies, *most young people often feel anxious, which leads to making some wrong decisions*. (S21)

Subject omission

Example: According to Allyn Fives (2017), examines the legality of parental licenses as well as parental supervision and training. (S8)

In the above example, it can be seen that the comma (,) is the sign of division between the adverbial element and the main clause in the sentence. In the main clause, the form of "*examines*" is a verb and is in the singular verb form. Therefore, in this case, the writer omitted the necessary subject of the sentence, making the above sentence an incomplete sentence.

Correct: According to Allyn Fives (2017), *the local authority should examine* the legality of parental licenses as well as parental supervision and training. (S8)

Main verb omission

Example: This problem due to the decreasing of economic effect following some studies.

In the above example, it can be seen that "*this problem*" is a noun phrase that functions as the subject of the sentence, and "due" here is an adjective. Therefore, it is necessary to insert a copula verb "*is*" before the adjective to make the sentence complete.

Correct: This problem *is* due to the decreasing economic effect following some studies.

Summary

Overall, the results showed that there were a total of 5 most common syntactic error types out of 12 error types found. These errors included the use of run-on sentences (20.58%), prepositions (14.32%), articles (12.75%), sentence fragments (10.74%), and pronouns (8.28%), respectively. In addition, the findings also revealed that the majority of learners effectively produced various types of sentence patterns (85.39%). However, it can be inferred that errors at the sentence level and noun phrase level are the most challenging aspects for learners in terms of their writing abilities.

Discussion

Based on the findings, errors involving the use of prepositions, articles, and pronouns do not significantly affect the quality of writing. However, errors at the sentence level, such as run-on sentences and sentence fragments, profoundly negatively impact on the overall quality of argumentative essays. In this type of writing, the writers are required to persuade readers to agree with their points of view by providing reasons and arguments. Therefore, it is essential for writers to effectively construct sentences that convey their ideas logically and rigorously. Moreover, readers may be confused by the messages the writers attempt to convey if run-on sentences are present. Additionally, disorganized ideas due to sentence fragments can make it difficult for readers to comprehend the writers' intended messages fully.

The findings of the present study are in agreement with those of Jumriana (2014), who found that the most frequent types of syntactic errors were at the noun phrase level. These errors included the use of determiners, pronouns, prepositions, etc. These findings, however, are contradictory to most of the previous studies undertaken in the context of Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam (Tati, 2016; Suwangard, 2014; Phoocharoensil et al., 2016; Ho et al., 2015; Chi, 2020; Nguyen, 2020; Le, 2023). The majority of these studies concluded that errors related to verbs are the most problematic areas for learners to master writing skills. For instance, Le (2023) found that pre-intermediate students mainly committed errors with verb forms and subject-verb agreement, with fewer errors in tense usage. Additionally, both Le's study and the current study identified similar types of errors in sentence structures, but there was a notable difference in the findings. In Le's study, students struggled the most with sentence fragments, followed by run-on sentences, whereas the current study showed the opposite result.

Furthermore, the current result is also consistent with those detected by Currie et al. (2019), who found that errors with the use of prepositions were the second difficulty faced by students. However, this present study's findings contradict those of Mireku-Gyimah, who determined that the majority of final-year students at the University of Mines and Technology were proficient in using articles. He found that the figure for these errors was negligible, at 1.39% of all errors identified.

Furthermore, the results of the present study are similar to those of Nasser (2018), who identified challenges encountered by students in the English department at the University of Baghdad, Iraq. The researcher concluded that learners primarily struggle with constructing sentence structures. Similarly, Sattayatham and Ratanapinyowong (2008) in the Thai context

also found that run-on sentences were also considered one of the problematic areas for students, with 69.40% of them committing these errors in their paragraphs.

More specifically, these findings are also in line with previous studies by Yu (2009) and Promsupa et al. (2017), which identified that the two most problematic issues for students at the sentence level were the production of run-on sentences and sentence fragments. Similarly, the present study's findings are also consistent with those of Sultan (2015), who examined the writing of 88 first-year students enrolling in Academic Writing. The taxonomy of syntactic errors was used to categorize errors into two levels: phrase and clause. The analysis found that the most prevalent errors at the clause level were run-on errors. These results, however, are in contrast to Krismanti's study (2014), in which he revealed that sentence fragments were the most problematic issues, followed by run-on sentences.

However, the results of this study are in contrast with those of Izzo (2000), who examined issues related to sentence structure in the writings of 172 Japanese students from three different universities. The findings revealed that beginning sentences with coordinating conjunctions was the most frequent error while run-on sentences were the least prevalent of the errors found. In contrast, the results of this study suggest that run-on sentences are the most common errors while sentence-initial coordinating conjunctions have the lowest rate of sentence structures, ranking the eighth total of the twelve categories of errors detected (see Table 1).

Overall, the results of this study discovered that there were five common types of syntactic errors. They included run-on sentences (20.58%), prepositional errors (14.32%), article errors (12.75%), sentence fragments (10.74%) and pronoun errors (8.28%), respectively. Specifically, there were two common errors at the sentence level, run-on sentences and sentence fragments. The remaining three common types of errors at the noun phrase level included preposition errors, article errors and pronoun errors, respectively. Moreover, through the process of analysis, the researcher found that the influence of the mother tongue primarily caused these errors. Furthermore, these errors also originated from the literal translation when learners attempted to translate their Vietnamese thoughts into English.

Conclusion

The present study provided a general overview of the syntactic errors that thirty-seven students made in their argumentative essays. Furthermore, different types of sentence structures were also performed to measure how proficient students were in the production of sentence structures.

The results showed that there were a total of 12 types of syntax errors made by students. Particularly, the five most frequent types of errors in their essays were at the noun phrase level and the sentence level. Particularly, they included run-on sentences, preposition errors, article errors, sentence fragments, and pronoun errors, respectively. Furthermore, it was indicated that the majority of students effectively produced various types of sentence patterns. However, there were still several sentences that were not precisely created. Through the examples analyzed in the Result section, it can be seen that the errors committed by learners were mainly influenced by their mother tongue when students applied the rules of Vietnamese to English. In addition,

the literal translation was also a significant contributor to the syntactic errors detected.

Through the errors presented by the students, it can be inferred that the majority of students effectively produced different types of sentences in their essays. However, the syntactic errors they made accounted for a significant proportion of the essays. No matter how many sentences there were, run-on sentences and sentence fragments significantly negatively affected students' writing quality. In fact, students must employ arguments in their essays in order to bolster and defend their points of view. However, it would be tough for the readers to comprehend the complete message the writer would like to express if the sentences produced were run-on sentences or sentence fragments. Therefore, although the syntactic component is not the most important factor determining the quality of the article, it will be the element that helps writers convey their messages more effectively.

The findings are expected to be beneficial for learning and teaching English. By providing detailed explanations and corrections for errors, learners would be aware of why these errors are formed and how to correct them. As a result, they can take advantage of this resource to compare their writings, which enables them to minimize the same ones committed in subsequent writings and ultimately improve their writing skills. Furthermore, these findings could be utilized as valuable resources to assist lecturers in detecting the main difficulties in learners' writing abilities. This enables lecturers and syllabus designers to create appropriate lessons and teaching methods, enhancing learners' performance. In addition, integrating syntax instruction into writing skills should be taken into consideration to assist learners in effectively using syntactic elements in their writing. Namely, teachers can design more exercises that focus on identifying errors and rewriting correct sentences or rewriting sentences without changing their meaning. This can enhance students' understanding of common syntactic errors and structural differences between English and Vietnamese.

However, there are still several limitations in this research. The scope of this study is limited to a small scale as it is accessible to major students enrolling in Writing 5 at the VLU Foreign Language Faculty. Therefore, it is recommended that the prospective researchers expand the scale to apply to a wider area and more participants to enhance the reliability of the results obtained. Moreover, to ensure accuracy in assessing students' abilities, future researchers need to collect samples under standardized conditions, such as supervision and within a set time frame. Additionally, it is advised that future studies should consider exploring different genres of writing beyond argumentative essays to uncover new insights.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Coding schemes of each type of syntactic error

	Example	Correct	Categories
1	Raising children is difficult, raising children skillfully is even more difficult. (S32)	Raising children is difficult, but raising children skillfully is even more difficult. (S32)	Run-on sentence - comma splice (1)
	Furthermore is Khorshidi's research has backed up...while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)	Furthermore, Khorshidi's research has backed up...while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)	Run-on sentence - fused sentence (1)
	First, cohabitation will affect the girl's reputation,... there are a lot of men who want their wife to be intact, <i>if</i> that girl ... <i>but</i> as a result can't marry that man..else. (S21)	First, cohabitation will affect the girl's reputation. There are a lot of men who want their wives to be intact. If that girl chooses to live with a man without getting married, it will be very difficult for her to marry someone else. (S21)	Run-on sentences - Polysyndetons(1)
	Furthermore <i>is</i> Khorshidi's research has backed up...while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)	Furthermore, Khorshidi's research has backed up...while also improving their pragmatic mindset. (S14)	Run-on sentence - fused sentence (1)
2	Especially students who live far from home or really love someone, they will live together. (S15)	Especially, students who live far from home or really love someone will decide to cohabit. (S15)	Sentence fragment -no separation between SC and MC (1)
	In the event of an unplanned pregnancy. (S21)	In the event of unplanned pregnancies, most young people often feel anxious, which leads to making some wrong decisions. (S21)	Sentence fragment - Using phrases instead of sentences
	According to Allyn Fives (2017), examines the legality of parental licenses as well as parental supervision and training. (S8)	According to Allyn Fives (2017), the local authority should examine the legality of parental licenses as well as parental supervision and training. (S8)	Sentence fragment - Subject omission (1)
	This problem due to the decreasing of economic effect following some studies.	This problem is due to the decreasing economic effect following some studies.	Sentence fragment - Main verb omission
3	Secondly, <i>participating a class</i> before becoming parents <i>will help to communicate</i> with their children effectively. (S2)	Secondly, participating in a class before becoming parents will help them to communicate with their children effectively. (S2)	Preposition - omission + Pronoun (2)
3	<i>But</i> there are also cases of getting married <i>about</i> quarrels, adultery and leading to this divorce. (S21)	However , there are also cases of people getting married and then having quarrels , adultery, and leading to this divorce. (S21)	Preposition - addition
	The data are... <i>for</i> 1970 to 2015. (S20)	The data are... from 1970 to 2015. (S20)	Preposition - mis-information
	There are <i>variety</i> of disadvantage people live together. (S27)	There are a variety of disadvantages to people living together. (S27)	Article - omission (1)

4	If you <i>take the advantage of</i> this opportunity, you could even establish lasting friendships with people in many different countries. (S6)	If you <i>take advantage of</i> this opportunity, you could even establish lasting friendships with people in many different countries. (S6)	Article - addition (1)
	Completing at least one course of <i>study</i> abroad is <i>a</i> most beneficial experience for all students. (S30)	Completing at least one course of <i>studying</i> abroad is <i>the</i> most beneficial experience for all students. (S30)	Article - misinformation
5	However, <i>researches shown</i> that cohabitation has a negative impact on the quality and durability of marriages (Bennett et al., 1987). (S4)	However, <i>research has shown</i> that cohabitation has a negative impact on the quality and durability of marriages (Bennett et al., 1987). (S4)	Tenses (1)
6	Firstly, <i>study</i> abroad can improve your language skill and social skill. (S6)	Firstly, <i>studying</i> abroad can improve your language skill and social skill. (S6)	Gerund/Infinitive
6	On the contrary, there are many controversial ideas that every students should complete at least one course abroad before <i>they can officially graduated</i> due to some obstacles. (S16)	On the contrary, there are many controversial ideas that every student should complete at least one course abroad before <i>they can officially graduate</i> due to some obstacles. (S16)	Gerund/ Infinitive
	This is due to the fact that studying overseas is the shortest route <i>to enhancing</i> knowledge of the major that students tend to pursue (Dwyer, et al., 2004). (S35)	This is due to the fact that studying overseas is the shortest route <i>to enhance</i> knowledge of the major that students tend to pursue (Dwyer, et al., 2004). (S35)	Gerund/ Infinitive
7	Today, <i>life skills</i> is a term that is no longer unfamiliar to Vietnamese people...(S31)	Today, <i>“life skills”</i> is a term that is no longer unfamiliar to Vietnamese people...(S31)	Subject - Verb agreement (1)
8	First and foremost, cohabitation will cause couples to have many conflicts <i>in daily life</i> . (S36)	First and foremost, cohabitation will cause couples to have many conflicts <i>in their daily life</i> . (S36)	Pronoun - omission (1)
	However, studying abroad is an optimal solution to help students step out of their comfort zone and mingle <i>themselves</i> in a new environment.	However, studying abroad is an optimal solution to help students step out of their comfort zone and <i>mingle</i> in a new environment.	Pronoun - addition (1)
	Even <i>some students</i> who live in <i>their</i> relative’s house, independence is a must in <i>your</i> every action, challenging <i>you</i> to be <i>your</i> own individuals. (S6)	Even <i>for</i> some students who live in <i>their</i> relative’s houses, independence is a must in <i>their</i> every action, challenging them to be <i>their</i> own individuals. (S6)	Pronoun - misinformation + fragment sentence (2)
9	<i>The study</i> is notable because <i>they</i> followed a large data set for nearly 40 years, longer than many studies <i>have ever conducted</i> . (S20)	<i>The study</i> is notable because <i>it</i> followed a large data set for nearly 40 years which is longer than many studies <i>had ever been conducted before</i> . (S20)	Pronoun - misinformation + tense + voice (3)
10	<i>But</i> some people adore being neat, <i>who</i> slightly see clothing lying about disorderly everywhere, feel uncomfortable. (S23)	<i>However</i> , some people <i>who</i> adore being neat feel uncomfortable when slightly seeing clothing lying about disorderly everywhere. (S23)	Initial- Coordinating conjunction + Word order (2)
11	In conclusion, <i>even though</i> many people think that living together before marriage is good, <i>but</i> it has a number of drawbacks. (S5)	In conclusion, <i>even though</i> many people think that living together before marriage is good, it has a number of drawbacks. (S5)	Conjunction redundancy (1- Other)

12	<i>But</i> there has raised some several serious questions about the mental health of student who studies abroad. (S14)	However, there have been raised some several serious questions about the mental health of student who studies abroad. (S14)	Initial- Coordinating conjunction (1)
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Improving Learners' English-Speaking Accuracy by Using Interrogative Constructions

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: teaching English speaking skills, interrogative constructions, Business English

English speaking accuracy is one of the most important aspects of Business English. While most studies are conducted to improve English speaking accuracy, they neglect phrasal semantics. This present study involves 30 participants from Phu Em Company. The study employs a mixed-methods design in which the quantitative approach helps quantify the speaking accuracy scores made by learners while the qualitative approach explores how learners perceive the use of interrogative constructions. The instruments are a questionnaire and an interview. Data analysis procedures include a theme analysis of the interview data, a statistical analysis of the test and survey data, and integrated findings. The findings from this research provide evidence that using interrogative constructions does not improve grammatical or phonological accuracy but improves expressing accuracy. The study also reveals that 58% of EG learners provide positive feedback on the use of interrogative constructions in learning English speaking skills. Based on the findings, several suggestions are offered to teachers and learners.

Introduction

Many studies show that speaking accuracy plays an important role in Business English. Unlike writing accuracy (Le, 2022), speaking accuracy in Business English refers to the appropriation of lexical semantics, comprehensibility of sentence semantics, the equivalence between what speakers thought and expressed, the intelligibility of phonology, and acceptability of grammar (University of Cambridge ESOL Examination, 2012; Lambert & Kormos, 2014, p.3; Pica, T. et al, 1989, p.64; Kramersch, 1994). In a Business Environment, the accuracy of the speaker's information plays an important role in communication (Locke, 2009, p.391). Furthermore, how accurately you communicate at work is more vital than the speed (Schein, 2010, p. 57). Furthermore, grammatical accuracy is vital for learners to acquire English (Dawood, 2014, p.37). Although speaking accuracy is important, 70% of learners at Phu Em company have

trouble expressing the interrogative sentences they would like to convey/ ask partners. They already have the ideas in mind, but do not know how to express them using English. Therefore, many solutions have been put forward to improve speaking accuracy such as corrective feedback (Chu, 2011), different types of tasks (Skehan & Foster, 2008), and planning (Ellis, 2009). However, they seem unsatisfactory in Business English because they neglect phrasal semantics or express precisely what they mean.

The term “Interrogative constructions”, which are sub-branch of construction grammar (Goldberg, 2006), are generally understood as integrating syntactic, semantic, and contextual dimensions of interrogatives (Ginzburg, 2001, p.450). Interrogative constructions chosen among other types of construction grammar are because the learners in this context suffer from expressing interrogative sentences. One advantage of constructions is to reconstruct earlier stages of a language to better understand the mechanisms of language change, and the possible developmental paths of certain synchronic structures. (Ferraresi & Goldbach, 2008). Another advantage is that constructions provide learners with a better way of structuring information than traditional grammar (Littlemore, 2009, p.168). Hence, construction appears to be more suitable with Business English because grammar is not itself but also connects with phrasal semantics.

Using interrogative constructions in teaching and learning English speaking skills is proposed to improve speaking accuracy (Nakamura, 2008; Baicchi, 2016). However, it has not proven to be able to improve all aspects of speaking accuracy in Business English. As a result, this study is undertaken with the expectation of seeking the application of interrogative constructions in learning English speaking skills to improve learners’ English-speaking accuracy.

Aims of the study

The study aims first to investigate whether using interrogative construction can improve learners’ English-speaking accuracy in teaching and learning English speaking skills or not. The study also aims to collect the learners’ relevant feedback on using interrogative construction.

The significance of the study

On a practical level, there are two benefits for both learners and teachers. First, this study can allow learners who lack a background in English to express their own interrogative sentences whenever they come up with an idea in their head. In other words, interrogative construction might be the foundation for those who would like to speak English at a higher level and become more fluent in English later. Second, the results of the study are to carry potential implications for teachers who want to use interrogative construction in teaching English speaking skills.

On a theoretical level, the research extends the way to improve speaking accuracy, especially the semantic aspect of speaking accuracy by interrogative construction. In fact, the result might be widely generalizable to other similar contexts.

The scope of the study

This research just focuses on “speaking accuracy of interrogative sentences” rather than “speaking accuracy in general” due to the fact that only interrogative construction is used in the

treatment. Hence, even if the transcription on pretest and posttest is full, only interrogative sentences are taken to analyze and proceed to the next step. In addition, the interrogative construction in this research shows only some of the generalization of interrogative sentences, as there might be other special cases of interrogative sentences that the construction cannot cover, such as in non-conventionalized situations.

Literature Review

Speaking accuracy

English speaking accuracy is defined slightly differently according to its' dimensions: phrasal semantics (Kramersch, 1994) or vocabulary, grammar (Tawfik, 2022), and phonology (Brown, 2001, p.268). According to Riemer (2010, p.2), vocabulary and phrasal semantics are sub-elements of semantics. In short, speaking accuracy has three main elements: grammar, semantics, and phonology. In other words, theoretically, speaking accuracy is the ability to produce error-free sentences in speaking English in grammar, semantics, and phonology. Practically speaking, accuracy is evaluated within a construct called CAF (complexity, accuracy, and fluency). Speaking accuracy refers to “the ability to avoid performance error” (Skehan & Foster, 2008).

As learners in this study are adult workers who have worked with various people in various cultures and countries, the hard-to-get accuracy, such as speaking like native speakers, is not the priority. What the speaking accuracy here actually means to them is somehow related to the speaking message: whether they can express exactly the message they want in L2 according to what they thought and whether the listeners understand their message. For that reason, instead of referring to accuracy as “error-free” as above, it should be changed into something more practical and achievable to this study’s target learners. In short, speaking accuracy in this study means the appropriation of lexical semantics (University of Cambridge ESOL Examination, 2012), comprehensibility of sentence semantics (Pica, T. et al (1989, p.64), the equivalence between what speakers thought and expressed (the expression criteria) (Kramersch, 1994), intelligibility of phonology (University of Cambridge ESOL Examination, 2012), acceptability of grammar (Lambert & Kormos (2014, p.3).

There are two ways to measure the speaking accuracy of phrasal semantics: the idea unit (Kroll, 1977, p.85) and C-unit (Pica et al., 1989, p.72). Regarding speaking accuracy of grammar and lexical semantics, there exist five main ways: the percentage of error-free clauses (Skehan & Foster, 2008, p.8), the proportion of error-free T units per T units (Lambert & Kormos (2014, p.3), the ratio of error-free AS units (Chu, 2011, p.456), percentage of correct verbs (Yuan & Ellis (2003, p.13), and proportion of error per 100 words (Polat & Kim (2014, p. 193). Concerning phonological features, many researchers use the software named Praat (Yan & Kim, 2018). In this study, it would be exhausting and difficult for the researcher to take into consideration measuring each element with each tool. Accordingly, only one tool should be chosen, which is the proportion of error-free AS units per AS units proposed by Foster et al. (2000, p.361) to measure elements in speaking skills. This tool is the most suitable because it mainly measures syntactic units, covers the weakness of the semantics unit, and covers the

intonation unit (Foster et al., 2000, p.365).

Speaking skills in general and speaking accuracy in specific seem both include the speaker's meaning, the sentence meaning and the language. However, grammar only focuses mainly on the rules of language: on syntax alone (Carter & McCarthy, 2006, p.425), on contrastive analysis (Bùi, 2008), on the communicative grammar of English (Leech, 2008) - grammar in a specific context, or on the form-function relationship (Aarts, 2011). As mentioned in Section 1, adult learners in this study do not know how to link their meaning with grammar rules, form, and function. This means that speaking accuracy might require more than just grammar and rules, which refer to the relationship between form-meaning, or interrogative constructions.

The use of interrogative constructions

Interrogative constructions are a sub-branch of the construction grammar (form and meaning) (Traugott & Trousdale, 2013, p.8). Ginzburg (2001, p.450) defines interrogative constructions as “rigorously integrating syntactic, semantic, and contextual dimensions of interrogatives”. Comparing the elements between interrogative constructions and the umbrella term “construction grammar”, morphology and phonology are missing. These root from construction grammar include a wide range of constructions: word construction, phrase construction and sentence construction. In short, interrogative constructions is to integrate syntactic, semantic, and contextual dimensions of interrogatives (Ginzburg, 2001, p.450).

Practically, some researchers use construction grammar in learning speaking skills by memorizing words (Nakamura, 2008), remembering the type of construction grammar (Holme, 2010) and priming (Baicchi, 2016). These studies mostly emphasize the memorization of construction. However, it is obvious that speaking is not only knowledge (stored construction) but also a skill to use what the learners know (stored construction) to convey their ideas in various contexts (Bygate, 2016, p.50). This skill includes conceptualizer, formulator, and articulator (Bock & Levelt, 1994) and other terms such as concept, selection, and production (Bygate, 2016, p. 50). In short, the use of interrogative constructions in learning speaking skills goes through the first stage is to memorize the interrogative constructions, and the second stage is to sharpen the basic skill of using the stored interrogative constructions (Bygate, 2016).

The relationship between the use of constructions and speaking accuracy is shown through the following studies. Nakamura (2008) shows that learners who can memorize and verbalize the rules for appearance constructions get higher scores on grammatical accuracy. Baicchi (2016, p.189) uses priming constructions and confirms that explicit and frequent focus-on-form increases native-like accuracy. These above studies illustrate that using constructions might improve native-like and grammatical accuracy. It provides learners with the link between meaning and form (Traugott & Trousdale, 2013, p.8) as well. Thus, it seems that constructions are able to improve another aspect of speaking accuracy: the expression criteria. However, in the Vietnamese context, currently grammar is mainly taught as rules as mentioned above. Whether the use of interrogative constructions can improve speaking accuracy seems unknown. That is the reason why this study should be carried out to investigate whether the use of interrogative constructions might improve speaking accuracy or not.

Research Questions

In short, the present study aims to address the following questions:

1. Can using interrogative constructions improve learners' speaking accuracy in learning English speaking skills?
2. What is the learners' feedback on the use of interrogative constructions?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study involved 30 participants out of the population of 60 sales employees from Phu Em Co., LTD. Phu Em company's employees were chosen because of their current need to learn English and the convenience of the researcher.

In an attempt to keep the reliability of the research, stratified sampling, which means that "each group contains subjects with similar characteristics" (Creswell, 2013), was the best match for this research. Stratified sampling was based on the learners' placement test results to allocate 15 participants into each group (CG and EG) based on learners' level.

Design of the Study

The research employed a mixed method, which combined "pretest-posttest-true-experiment" (Larsen-Freeman & Hlong, 2014, p.67) and qualitative data analysis. The reason for this choice was that the mixed method "provides a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself" (Creswell, 2012, p.535).

Data collection & analysis

The data collection procedure was divided into three main stages: the collection of pretest and pre-questionnaire; the collection from posttest, post-questionnaire, and survey; and the collection from the interview.

The data analysis procedure included analyzing the quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-method data. First, the proportion of error-free AS units per AS units from the pretest - posttest and 5-point Likert scale from the questionnaire were analyzed through SPSS 20 Independent Samples T-test and Pair Sample T-test. Second, the quantitative data from survey was analyzed through SPSS 20 descriptive statistics. Third, qualitative statistics from the survey interview was done through thematic analysis. Then mixed methods were conducted to compare and contrast quantitative with qualitative results.

Results/Findings

Results on whether there exists effects on learners' interrogative speaking accuracy

As the difference in mean scores in Pretest between 2 groups might affect the conclusions on the actual effects of interrogative construction on speaking accuracy, the Independent Samples T-test was carried out to check the Pretest score between two groups (Table 1).

The sig (2-tailed) in Independent Samples T-test was $0.954 > 0.05$ (Table 1), which indicated that there was no difference in the mean scores in Pretest between both groups. In other words, the two groups CG and EG were somehow at the same level before the treatment.

Table 1

Group Statistic of the CG and EG's Pre-test Scores (part 4).

Group Statistics					
	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pretest	CG	15	.471587	.1335472	.0344817
	EG	15	.468889	.1183088	.0305472

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
pretest	Equal variances assumed	.004	.947	.059	28	.954	.0026984	.0460665	-.0916645	.0970613
	Equal variances not assumed			.059	27.599	.954	.0026984	.0460665	-.0917263	.0971232

The results on whether there existed effects on learners' interrogative speaking accuracy were deeper investigated on its elements: semantics, grammar and phonology.

Regarding speaking accuracy of grammar, both groups experienced modest rise in mean scores (the change in mean score of CG=0.02, and in EG=0.01) (Table 2). This indicated that the CG learners improved more than EG learners regarding the acceptability of grammar. However, the treatment in both groups did not stress any significant difference on speaking accuracy of grammar (sig 2-tailed of CG=0.082, and of EG=0.504). The effect size of CG was 0.25 while the effect size in EG was 0.041. In short, the treatment did not bring about any important effect on acceptability of grammar of both groups; however, CG reflected noticeable improvement (25%) while EG constituted a modest improvement (4.1%).

Table 2

Comparison of the CG and EG's scores on the Pre-test and Post-test (part 1-acceptability of grammar)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
CG	pretest	.171875	-.0156250	.0282667	.0081599	-.0335848	.0023348	1.915	.082
	posttest	.187500							
EG	pretest	.177083	-.0104167	.0521779	.0150625	-.0435690	.0227356	-.692	.504
	posttest	.187500							

In the matter of the intelligibility of phonology, both groups did not bring about any significant effects after the treatment (sig 2-tailed in CG=0.72>0.05, in EG=0.55>0.05) (Table 3). The effect size of CG was 0.0119 while the effect size in EG was 0.0333. In short, the use of interrogative construction and the use of interrogatives produced no effects on speaking accuracy of phonology after 10 weeks of treatment, but slight improvement in CG (1.19%) and EG (3.33%).

Table 3

Comparison of the CG and EG's scores on the Pre-test and Post-test (part 2-intelligibility of phonology)

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
CG	pretest	.277778	-.0138889	.1321602	.0381514	-.0978595	.0700817	-.364	.723
	posttest	.291667							
EG	pretest	.291667	-.0277778	.1562395	.0451025	-.1270476	.0714921	-.616	.551
	posttest	.319444							

Regarding speaking accuracy of semantics, both groups reflected improvement in the mean score, which the mean score changed in CG is 0.03 and that in EG was 0.02 (Table 4). Moreover, CG reflected more considerable change in mean score than EG (0.03-0.02=0.01). However, there were no significant differences between pretest and posttest in both groups (sig 2 tailed in CG=0.52>0.05, sig 2 tailed in EG=0.65>0.05). The effect size of CG was 0.0386 while the effect size of EG was 0.0193. In other words, the treatment appeared not to bring

about any substantial change on the speaking accuracy of semantics in both CG and EG groups. Nevertheless, the result yielded marginal improvement after the treatment, particularly the CG experienced the minimal effect of 3.86% while the EG produced negligible effect of 1.93%.

Table 4

Comparison of the CG and EG’s scores on the Pre-test and Post-test (part 3-speaking accuracy of semantics)

		Paired Samples Test					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Paired Differences								
	Mean	Mean difference	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
CG	pretest	.323413	-.0259590	.1352424	.0390411	-.1118879	.0599699	-.665	11	.520
	posttest	.349372								
EG	pretest	.311508	-.0200728	.1496128	.0431895	-.1151322	.0749867	-.465	11	.651
	posttest	.331581								

Regarding the speaking accuracy in general between Pretest and Posttest, there was a modest rise in the mean scores in both groups, which suggested that the students in both groups did perform better in their Posttest (Table 5). The mean difference between its Pre-test and Post-test in CG was -0.07 while that of the EG was -0.079. However, the sig (2-tailed) in the CG ($p=0.16 > 0.05$) and the EG ($p=0.08 > 0.05$) conveyed that there were no significant differences in the mean scores of the Pretest and Posttest in both CG and EG group. The effect size of CG was 0.1719 and that of EG was 0.2789. In other words, the speaking accuracy of learners in CG improved 17.19% while that in EG improved 27.89% after the treatment; however, no considerable variations were found between these pairs.

Table 5

Comparison of the CG and EG’s scores on the Pretest and Posttest (part 4-speaking accuracy in general)

		Paired Samples Statistics		
		Mean	N	Sig. (2-tailed)
CG	pretest	.481151	12	.159
	posttest	.551587	12	
EG	pretest	.438889	12	.075
	posttest	.517692	12	

Regarding the general perception of learners (first 4 questions) towards the interrogative’s expression criteria, changes in perception occurred in both groups (Table 6) through questionnaire. Specifically, CG reflected a minor change from disagree (M=2.37) to neutral (M=3.19). EG produced an overall change from “disagree” (M=2.44) to “agree” (M=3.73). This indicated that after the treatment, the CG learners might lack confidence while most EG learners thought that in general, they could express the questions they thought of.

Towards the other four questions of their substitution of expression (Table 6), CG remained neutral ($M=3.19$, $M=2.75$). Changes took place in EG from “agree” ($M=3.5$) to “disagree” ($M=2.54$). This showed that after the treatment, the CG learners still felt “neutral” about their use of these substitutions. On the contrary, EG learners thought they did not use these substitutions (body languages, interpreters, etc.) as frequently as before the treatment.

Table 6

Comparison of the CG and EG’s mean scores on the Pre-questionnaire and Post-questionnaire (part 2- in general)

Paired Samples Statistics			
Item 1-4		Mean	N
CG	pretest	2.3750	12
	posttest	3.1875	12
EG	pretest	2.4375	12
	posttest	3.7292	12
Item 5-8			
CG	pretest	3.1875	12
	posttest	2.7500	12
EG	pretest	3.5000	12
	posttest	2.5417	12

Taken as a whole, these results offered evidence for the fact that the use of interrogative constructions improved the interrogative speaking accuracy in terms of interrogative expression criteria.

Results on EG learners’ feedback on the use of interrogative constructions

According to the survey, when the subjects were questioned on the benefits of using interrogative construction, the majority commented that it resulted in a noticeable improvement in their grammar ($M=3.92>3.4$) and semantics ($M=3.67>3.4$) (Table 7). However, learners witnessed no improvements in their phonology ($M=2.75$). In other words, learners using interrogative construction felt unsure about its effects on the intelligibility of phonology. Interestingly, for the highest values of the benefits, grammar was found ($M=3.92$), which meant that learners mostly agreed that the use interrogative construction could improve their acceptability of grammar in context. This was a very contrasting result to the test score, which shows that learners in EG improved little after the treatment (4.1%) and also improved less than the CG group.

Table 7

Learners’ feedback on the benefits and drawbacks of using interrogative construction

<i>Benefits</i>	<i>Mean</i>
q.8a (semantics)	3.67
q.8b (grammar)	3.92
q.8c (phonology)	2.75
<i>Drawbacks</i>	<i>Mean</i>
q.9a (find pattern)	3.4167
q.9b (memorize pattern)	3.0000
q.9c (apply in context)	3.5833

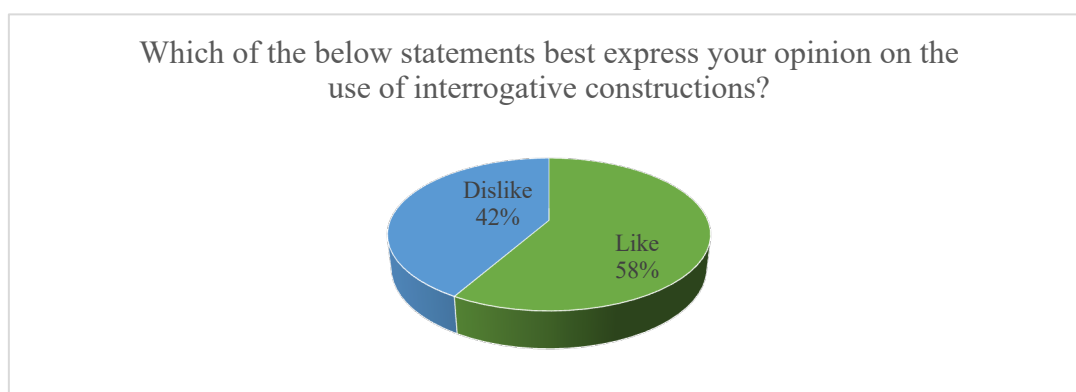
The overall response to the difficulties of using interrogative constructions was quite negative (Table 7). Learners found difficulty in finding pattern of construction q.9a ($M=3.42$), and could

not apply in speaking context q.9c ($M=3.58$). The majority of respondents showed a neutral opinion ($M =3.00$) towards the difficulty in memorizing the patterns of interrogative constructions.

However, their final opinion towards the use of interrogative constructions was nearly in between. Fifty-eight percent of those surveyed (58%) reported that they liked the use of interrogative constructions (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Responses regarding learners' opinions towards the use of interrogative constructions



Pertaining to the benefits and drawbacks of using interrogative constructions, the interview showed similar codes as questionnaire but deeper understanding.

Furthermore, the open-ended questions of the questionnaire and interview also formulated 4 emerging codes in benefits of using interrogative constructions: self-reflect, thinking and speaking faster once the learner had a question in mind, more confidence in speaking, and guessing listeners' thoughts after learning interrogative constructions. The interview drew up 3 emerging codes towards the drawback of using interrogative constructions: difficulty in thinking and matching, memory issue and boredom.

In terms of the effect on learners, learner 29 and learner 30, who was EG immediate-level learners, reported that using interrogative constructions seemed to have no effects on them. They explained that they thought the language was more diverse while interrogative constructions were kind of fixed.

Discussion

The result (no effect size on grammar) supported Goldberg (2006), who indicated the overgeneralization of syntax from learners. However, it conflicted with the obvious conclusion of Nakamura (2008), which pointed to the fact that the use of construction grammar could improve grammatical accuracy.

The second major goal of this study was to collect learners' feedback on the use of interrogative constructions. Although the EG learners' feedback were that they achieved considerable

improvements in their grammar and semantics, the actual results of their pretest and posttest did not reflect any important difference. This might be because learners appeared to be reasonably confident and because of the overgeneralization mentioned above. On the one hand, they might be able to recognize that their questions fitted in similar semantics or similar patterns of interrogative constructions, which led them to become entirely confident. On the other hand, because of that increasing confidence, they applied the structure of interrogative constructions in all situations despite the listeners and other elements.

Concerning the drawback of the use of interrogative constructions, the fact that learners encountered considerable difficulties in finding patterns of interrogative constructions was consistent with two general properties of language learners – conservative and attentive (Goldberg, 2006, p.64). The conservative learners would be better at learning examples. As a result, they somehow suffer from real trouble with finding construction patterns.

Conclusion

Although the study was able to answer the research questions, the findings might not be generalized to a larger context due to shortcomings below. First, the measuring speaking accuracy (AS unit) tool was not perfectly reliable. In order to minimize this weakness, the researcher used a questionnaire and interview to survey the learners' attitudes beside the statistical data. Besides, the questionnaire was carefully piloted to ensure its reliability. Second, another drawback of the research was the sample size. Although the learners were collected through stratified sampling, a weak form of true experimental design, which included 30 learners, was not valid enough to generalize the results for the whole population.

Third, the reliability of the research appeared to be influenced by one outside factor, which was Covid 19. It caused some lessons to be taught online. This did not only affect the learners' concentration on the lesson, but also influence the presence of learners in each section. Finally, as this was the first time the researcher handled teaching online without previous preparation, the quality of the lesson was also affected.

In short, the use of interrogative constructions does not bring about effects on grammatical elements, phonological elements, lexicons, and comprehension of speaking accuracy but only exerted effect on interrogatives expression on low level learners who were attentive. Moreover, the study reveals that half EG learners provide positive feedback on the use of interrogative constructions in learning English speaking skills. This indicates that interrogative constructions might not be suitable for all learners. The teachers should depend on learners' level and characteristics to decide whether using interrogative constructions is appropriate for them in learning English speaking skills.

This study focused only on the relationship between interrogative construction and interrogative speaking accuracy. In future research, another study should be conducted under different conditions, such as offline rather than online. Moreover, it would be better to carry out a study with larger population to cross-check the validity and reliability of the results. Another future direction might be the effects of using interrogative constructions on low-level adult learners' English interrogative expression to consider making generalization on the subject.

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Exploring Student's Perspectives and Practices: Using TikTok in the Context of Sophomore EFL Speaking 4 Learning at Van Lang University

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: TikTok, perceptions, speaking skills, benefits, drawbacks

Nowadays, TikTok is one of the most popular online applications. TikTok has recently been a helpful tool in facilitating teaching speaking skills. More researchers are exploring the teaching application of TikTok in speaking classes. This study is designed as mixed-method research that explores VLU second-year English-major students' perceptions of using TikTok to learn speaking skills. With the help of two research instruments: interviews and questionnaires, the results showed that students agree that TikTok positively impacts speaking skills. Furthermore, TikTok can be implemented in Speaking 4 classes as an additional tool to facilitate students' speaking skills outside the classroom.

Introduction

Background of the study

Speaking skills are highly important in today's sophisticated society. Speaking is the key to socialization, professional success, and business (Bygate, 2020). In other words, effective communication is critical for career success (Rao, 2019). English speaking also has a significant impact in academic success. Speaking English is the most critical ability for EFL students in terms of their school performance as it promotes efficient interaction and language learning (Komariyah et al., 2022).

However, most EFL students have difficulty speaking English. Research at Van Lang University (Pham et al., 2022) indicated that Speaking-4 provides a challenge, especially for second-year English majors who are speaking to the class for the first time. They acknowledge that they were quite nervous during their first public speeches. Moreover, the Speaking-4 course requires the linguistic performance of students as well as careful preparation and confidence to present ideas successfully. If students lack knowledge, they can face a great number of struggles regarding confusion and embarrassment (Pham et al., 2022). As a result, this causes a bad

experience for them. Moreover, students often feel anxious and stumble during their first presentation in front of a large audience (Muhamad, 2022). According to Sompakdee et al. (2021), 84% of students prefer online English presentations due to feeling more confident, less worried, and having more practice opportunities. Harina (2020) notes that students struggle to speak clearly, feel uneasy, and lack vocabulary, often avoiding speaking in front of friends and fearing mistakes.

Thankfully, TikTok becomes a useful educational tool for helping students overcome speech-related challenges (Herlisya and Wiratno, 2022). Learning media appeared to provide students with a first small step before they give a presentation in front of the class. Students may minimize their apprehension and shyness when making their first presentations. (Jung and C, 2019). Moreover, TikTok is an English language learning strategy to help enhance literacy and speaking skills (Pratiwi et al., (2021).

Learning speaking skills through a media application at first sounds questionable and innovative. However, many researchers have applied media applications in their teaching. Particularly, Herlisya & Alfiawati (2019) applied Instagram in their writing teaching course; Nurmy (2017) utilized Facebook as a language learning tool; Sah (2015) used Twitter as a learning tool in an English learning course, and Pratiwi et al. (2021) chose TikTok to support their pronunciation learning. Mahdi (2022) studied the correlation between speaking competency and multimedia environment and concluded that multimedia environment positively impacted students' presentation and speaking skills. Multimedia can act as a supportive means in the classroom (Miller, 2018).

But prior research on the integration of TikTok into speaking instructions, like those by Fadda (2020), Herlisya and Wiranto (2022), Herwanto (2022), Komariyah et al. (2022), Muhammad (2022), and others, have not dived deeply into the perspectives and habits of students when it comes to using the app for speaking practice. Besides, the limitation of some previous studies is that their sample is not large enough and the experiments are insufficient to verify the effects of TikTok. Therefore, an in-depth investigation into students' perspectives and practices in utilizing TikTok to enhance speaking skills becomes essential. In response to this research gap, this paper explores students' perspectives on using TikTok to improve speaking learning and outlines the specific practices students have to improve their speaking ability through TikTok.

Significance of the study

Learning through media, particularly TikTok, is helpful for English learners. For EFL self-directed learners, academic advisers, and teachers instructing Speaking-4, it is critical to investigate students' Tiktok application and their perspectives on speaking performance improvement. The study contributes to existing research in this field and is an asset for future researchers interested in TikTok's educational value.

Scope of the study

The main aim of this study is to determine how students utilize TikTok to learn speaking skills. Specifically, the paper aims to investigate the views and TikTok usage habits of sophomores in the Speaking-4 course at Van Lang University. The scope of the study was narrowed down to

eighty second-year English majors who were randomly selected from Speaking-4 classes on campus 1 located at 45 Nguyen Khac Nhu Street, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

Literature Review

EFL speaking skills

According to Herwanto (2022), “speaking skills are the ability students have to be able to communicate effectively by delivering the right message and not causing misunderstanding.” According to Qureshi (2007), Muhammad (2022), speaking is the numerous circumstances in which linguistic and nonlinguistic symbols are used. According to Lestari (2019), speaking abilities are defined as the ability to produce, receive, and comprehend information in English. Additionally, Nunan (2001) states that speaking is typically a skill that needs to be learned and developed.

In comparison, they all highlight the importance of effective communication and emphasize various elements such as clarity, comprehension, and development over time. However, they offer different perspectives on the nature and components of effective spoken communication. Herwanto (2022) focuses on the practical aspect of speaking skills. Otherwise, Qureshi (2007) and Muhammad (2022) emphasizes speaking using symbols. Lestari (2019) characterizes speaking abilities as multifaceted. Nunan (2001) views speaking as a skill that requires learning and development over time.

Concerning this study, both Nunan (2001) and Lestari (2019) offer the best viewpoints and relate to this research, focusing on various elements contributing to speaking improvements and developing speaking skills over time through practice. Although they do not go into the detail needed for the study's TikTok focus, these definitions highlight the importance of practice and improvement. Herwanto (2022) defines communication as the capacity to convey ideas concisely and effectively. This objective is consistent with TikTok's ability to improve speaking abilities. It still has to be modified, though, in order to handle issues specific to TikTok. According to Qureshi (2007) and Muhammad (2022), speaking involves the use of oral utterances to deliver meaning. It's crucial to include details relevant to TikTok's digital and visual traits while adjusting these elements for the research.

The significance of EFL speaking skills

Regarding academic performance, speaking English is the most important skill in terms of their academic success for EFL learners as it facilitates effective communication and language acquisition (Komariyah et al., 2022). According to Rao (2019), with good speaking skills, EFL learners can participate in pair or group activities in class, give impressive speeches, debate in group discussions, develop critical thinking, and pursue higher studies.

Sharing the same ideas with Bygate (2002) states that the ability to communicate English effectively is crucial today, and success in a person's chosen field depends on the ability to do so. EFL learners can get better employment opportunities all over the world. (Rao, 2019) Moreover, Namaziandost and Nasri (2019) state that speaking is critical in teaching and learning a second or foreign language. It has had a significant and prominent position

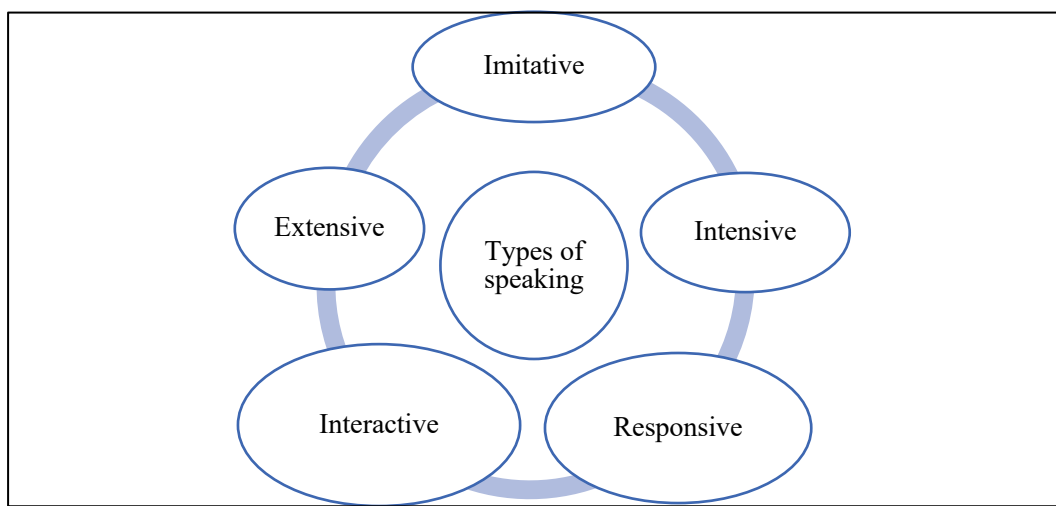
throughout the history of language teaching. Similarly, Qureshi (2007) said that EFL learners can acquire more knowledge, learn about different cultures around the world, and travel to foreign countries.

Types of Speaking

There are 5 main types of speaking, according to Brown (2004), namely imitative, intensive, responsive, interactive, and extensive as follows.

Figure 1

Five types of speaking skills (Adapted from Brown, 2004)



Based on Brown's (2004) approach, this study presents an approachable categorization of spoken language competency levels, dividing language learning into five distinct stages: (1) imitative, (2) intensive, (3) responsive, (4) interactive, and (5) extensive. (1) Imitative speaking and focuses on word repetition. For instance, "repeat after me" in the classroom. (2) Intensive speaking which involves oral tasks to demonstrate grammar, vocabulary, and intonation. Examples include tasks involving a directed response or reading aloud. (3) Responsive speaking, which is a brief conversation and request (Brown, 2004). (4) Interactive speaking which is a complicated conversation that involves many participants and/or multiple exchanges (Brown, 2004). At this level, speakers must be aware of slang, comedy, etc. (5) Extensive speaking is any type of monologue. For instance, speeches, oral presentations, and storytelling (Brown, 2004).

Although Brown's (2004) concept describes many kinds of speaking, this study is the first to focus specifically on extended speaking, particularly speeches, presentations, and narratives.

Barrier when speaking

Students frequently fear criticism from their teachers and peers when studying a foreign language because they are the only speakers in the classroom. Moreover, Horwitz (2017) said that "language anxiety as an individual set of self-awareness, beliefs, emotions, and behaviors associated with classroom language learning stems from the uniqueness of the language learning process". Students face palpitations, get distracted, feel nervous or even feel dreadful.

They show avoidance by delaying their schoolwork and missing class, particularly when it comes to speaking and listening work, leading to confusion in role-play tasks.

According to Muhamad (2022), students admitted that they get quite anxious and stumble over their words when they make their first presentation in front of a large audience. Additionally, the speaking course evaluates students' proficiency in language and demands careful planning and self-assurance for a successful presentation. Lack of information causes students to suffer mentally, which can lead to confusion and embarrassment while they stand onstage. They, therefore, have a bad experience. Students often find themselves in a less interactive or unengaged presentations. Anxiety and uneasiness might occur while speaking in front of large crowds.

Students do not often have opportunities to interact and practice their English when taking classes. Students eventually become hesitant to speak English in class and pay less attention to the teacher. Moreover, students are distracted by several factors (John, 2020). In addition, students' barriers to speaking include the program and curriculum, teaching strategies, and students' motivation and reticence (Alhmadi, 2014). According to Sompakdee et al. (2021), 84% of students prefer online English presentations to in-class English presentations due to various reasons such as more confidence, less worry, more opportunities to practice, more natural speech, convenience, interest in learning, self-assessment, assertion, new experience, and self-perseverance.

According to Al-Khotaba et al. (2020), there are many types of anxieties such as personal and interpersonal anxiety, and classroom anxiety. In terms of personal anxiety, students feel shy and nervous, afraid of being laughed at, which results in making more mistakes. Besides, regarding foreign language classroom testing anxiety, students are afraid of being asked to speak English in class. Furthermore, there are learners' beliefs about language learning anxiety, such as they perceive that they are not good at English and make mistakes. As a result, they stop trying to learn difficult things.

Using TikTok as a means of self-study app

Fortunately, learning media appeared to offer students an initial opportunity to prepare before they give a presentation in front of the class. Students may minimize their apprehension and shyness when making their first presentations. TikTok is one of the learning media that can help students with this issue.

With the ownership and development of the ByteDance company, TikTok has recently become one of the most popular social media apps. It promotes creativity in ideas, increases speaking engagement, provides a comfortable speaking experience, and encourages interaction with viewers. According to Luke (2022), its key utilities lie in its main design to create lip-sync, dance, and comedy shorts, but users can create a variety of speaking videos. Unlike other social media, this app saves time when it only allows users to make and edit short speaking videos (three to fifteen seconds) and longer (up to sixty seconds). According to Griffin (2021), the simple and appealing videos on TikTok can be utilized by teachers to inspire students to finish their speaking assignments and motivate them to learn speaking ideas. Sharing the same ideas, Luke (2022) says that students can use the app to create videos as part of presentation tasks.

According to Pratiwi et al. (2021), TikTok is an English language learning strategy to help enhance literacy and speaking skills. In the same year, Yolanda (2021) also indicated that many students get better scores in speaking using the TikTok application. Herlisya and Wiratno (2022) said that using TikTok improves students' speaking skills. TikTok can be used to foster interest in English speaking, improve speaking skills, increase creativity in speaking, and provide speaking ideas. Besides, TikTok makes it easier to absorb vocabulary, helps students become interactive, and creates a fun learning environment where EFL learners can feel free to give their speech.

According to Jung and C (2019), the implementation of videos in speaking practice helps students perceive English speaking as a positive experience. Firstly, videos make the speaking experience appealing and comfortable. Secondly, video is the best way for students to learn body language in speaking based on the gestures and actions in the video (Rahmawati et al., 2023). Thirdly, posting a public speaking video encourages students to give their best speech.

Drawbacks of using TikTok in language learning

According to Pham et al. (2023), learners were easily distracted using the app. TikTok displays videos posted from other users so if students do not focus, it will distract students from practicing their speaking skills (Putri, 2022). Moreover, in a research study about the benefits and drawbacks of TikTok in learning to speak, Herwanto (2022) stated that students lack feedback as TikTok does not have a feature to check speaking elements such as pronunciation, fluency, ideas, etc. so students do not have efficient feedback for their practice (Putri, 2022).

In addition, EFL learners also have technical problems while using TikTok for their speaking (Herwanto, 2022). It could make the speaking video did not appear well as expected. According to Mango and Wungow (2022), since the presentation of the video is quite short, not all subject matter is appropriate for the video format. Additionally, not all students find the concept of combining short videos with speaking to be comfortable. In conclusion, some drawbacks of TikTok that students face are the distracting tendency, lack of speaking feedback, technical problems during speaking and the short endure of speaking video.

Related research

Much previous research related to the topic of this research has been found. Specifically, using TikTok to improve speaking skills is a new interest to many researchers and educators such as Yang (2020), Putri (2022), Manggo et al. (2022), etc.

In the study titled "Secondary-school Students' Perspectives of Utilizing TikTok for English Learning in and Beyond the EFL Classroom", Yang (2020) conducted a study with the aim of exploring students' perspectives on using TikTok in learning English in and beyond the EFL classroom. Using a quantitative survey, the study was conducted on 187 secondary school students from China. The findings reported that TikTok provided a great amount of English content material, positively engaged students in learning, offered many exposures to English, helped them get access to authentic video materials, made words practical and pragmatic, and developed autonomous learning. Moreover, students agreed that TikTok and EFL textbooks could complement and support one another.

According to the research in Ecuador carried out by Bastidas Silva and Valarezo Gaspar (2022), the research aimed to study the importance of the use of TikTok in speech production as well as how TikTok contributes to helping students in their oral communication. The research used a mixed method including a survey and interview. The study was conducted on 42 participants who were 9th grade A2 level students and one teacher. The findings claimed that students tended to use TikTok for entertainment purposes rather than learning. However, students recognized that TikTok was available for education due to its learning features and factors. In terms of linguistic aspects, students lacked vocabulary, coherence, cohesion of ideas, and even confidence to make oral content. Therefore, they agreed that the modernity and entertainment of TikTok help enhance their speech skills. Besides, the study reported that teachers were aware that digital tools such as websites, online platforms, and social media could be really helpful in supporting students' speech production.

In a study titled "Vietnamese Students' Perceptions of Utilizing Social Media to Enhance English Vocabulary: A Case Study at Van Lang University", Pham et al. (2023) explored students' attitudes toward using social media to improve vocabulary acquisition. The study used a mixed method, including surveys for 154 students and semi-interviews for 15 students. The results revealed that students were aware of the benefits of social media such as active learning environments, increasing English practices, vocabulary knowledge expansion, word memory, learning engagement, freedom to express, learning autonomy, and global interaction. Moreover, the study gave a deep insight into students' perspectives on using social media to teach vocabulary. The study showed that students recognized the benefits regarding more opportunities to practice, creative learning, convenience, vocabulary development as well and role models. However, learners were easily distracted and felt unmotivated to learn.

According to the research in Indonesia conducted by Herwanto (2022), the study aimed to study the benefits and difficulties students faced while using TikTok as a learning medium. The study used a qualitative method which included interviews and questionnaires to be conducted on ten ESL students from grade 10 in a secondary school. The findings indicated that students agreed that TikTok could increase the opportunities to practice speaking, develop vocabulary and pronoun knowledge, improve confidence, and enhance word usage as well. However, students encountered problems such as doubts, lack of confidence, confusion, technical matters, inappropriate content, and video quality.

With the same purpose of finding out students' perspectives on using TikTok as a teaching tool, Manggo et al. (2022) had the same finding result as Yang (2020) in investigating the use of TikTok by eighteen grade eight students in Indonesia. The research implemented the quantitative descriptive methodology. The findings showed that students liked the use of TikTok as a medium for speaking learning. The students agreed that TikTok could affect a person's self-confidence, help students learn how to speak, compose sentences, learn new slang words, make learning interesting, develop students' creativity, and help them express themselves by making videos. Particularly, 83% of participants agreed and strongly agreed that they liked to explore or watch videos on TikTok as material for them to study.

According to Putri (2022), the study aimed to explore the enhancement of students' speaking skills by utilizing TikTok. The finding reported that TikTok helped students learn how to speak

English, motivated them to develop their speaking ability, helped students choose what kind of speaking style they wanted, provided a comfortable learning environment without restraint, and promoted confidence. Moreover, TikTok made learning enjoyable and engaging, motivated the students to participate in speaking English, facilitated easy access to materials, and helped students easily relate to their daily lives.

As far as previous research is concerned, TikTok enhances speaking skills by providing a great amount of English content material, positively engaging students in learning, offering many exposures to English, helping them get access to authentic video materials, making words practical and pragmatic, and developing autonomous learning. However, the drawbacks of TikTok are the fragmented knowledge framework, lack of systematic, learning distractions, and difficulty distinguishing qualified videos. Besides, the limitation of some previous studies is the sample data is not large enough and lacks experiments to verify the effects of TikTok. Based on the description above, this research adopts a model from Yang's (2020) and expands the number of participants by surveying them at Van Lang University.

Research gaps

Previous research, such as Yang (2020), focused on the perceptions of Chinese students about TikTok as a resource for learning English. However, research conducted in Ecuador (Bastidas Silva & Valarezo Gaspar, 2022) highlighted the challenges associated with utilizing social media for education. Studies carried out in Indonesia (Herwanto, 2022; Manggo et al., 2022; Putri, 2022) studied the benefits and challenges of TikTok and found negative and positive results. Although previous studies focused on students' general viewpoints and habits, a more thorough investigation is needed to find the elements influencing TikTok's success or failure in the Vietnamese context. This includes a thorough examination of the perspectives and approaches used by EFL sophomores to improve their English-speaking skills on TikTok. Our research seeks to offer focused and useful insights for enhancing speaking abilities using TikTok in a local context by focusing on these specific aspects.

Methods

Purposes of the study

This research is conducted with two main aims: (1) to investigate EFL university students' perspectives on the use of TikTok to learn Speaking-4 and (2) to explore how they apply TikTok to improve their speaking ability.

Research questions

To obtain the above purposes, the research addresses the following research questions:

1. What are EFL university students' perspectives on using TikTok to learn the Speaking-4 module?
2. What are EFL university students' practices on using TikTok to learn the Speaking-4 module?

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The main goal of the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University is to train qualified sources of linguistic students. Among the mandatory subjects, the Speaking-4 course is the advanced speaking course for second-year English majors. This module is compulsory for sophomores in the second semester. In Speaking-4 courses, students study a book called *Speaking 4. Selected and Compiled. For Internal Use Only. 2019*. This course has 2 parts which combine 20 theory sessions and 25 practice sessions. The general requirement consists of 20% of joining class and participating in activities (contributing in class, giving presentations, doing teamwork, finishing homework), 30% of the midterm test and 50% of the final test. On the final test, the students are expected to give a speech fluently using PowerPoint slides within 5 minutes. This study studied homework session and self-study time in which students can use TikTok to make speaking videos.

The research participants were 80 VLU second-year English majors who had studied Speaking-4 in the second semester of the school year 2022-2023. They were selected from 2 classes taught by 1 lecturer, based on their availability and willingness to participate in the survey. Regardless of gender, their age ranged from the age of 19 to 21. The main target of this study is to find out students' perspectives and practices on using TikTok to enhance their speaking skills. Therefore, the second-year English majors were obviously the subjects.

Design of the Study

The paper was designed as descriptive qualitative research. Therefore, mixed methods were used, including quantitative and qualitative research instruments. Questionnaires were administered to investigate students' perspectives on TikTok usage to improve speaking skills, and interviews were conducted to gather the practices used on TikTok to improve speaking skills. These are effective instruments for gathering information about attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs in second-language classroom research (Cresswell, 2007).

Data collection

Questionnaires were designed through Google Forms. The questionnaire was first delivered to participants via the official Fanpage Facebook such as the Students' Association of Van Lang University. After 2 weeks, the online survey only had 20 participants responded. Since the online survey did not reach enough participants, the researcher decided to conduct the survey offline in 2 classes with 60 sophomores who already finished the Speaking-4 course in the previous semester. The participants were given paper and assigned to complete the questionnaires in 10 minutes. Each student averagely marked their answers in 6-7 minutes. Meanwhile, the researcher observed the situation carefully and explained it if necessary. In sum, the researcher gathered a total of 80 quantitative data after one month of conducting online and offline surveys. For the interview, the researcher contacted 11 participants from the online survey and invited them to interview through Ms Teams. The interviewees openly engaged in five-to-ten-minute interviews.

The questionnaire

Following the five-point Likert scale, the answer part of the questionnaire was designed to five degrees of affirmation from the lowest degree “strongly disagree” to the highest degree “strongly agree” (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree). In addition, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section referred to the individual’s attitudes towards the benefits of using TikTok in facilitating their speaking ability. The second section is related to the downside of TikTok's use in improving their speaking outcomes. The questionnaire included 15 items.

The researchers used Cronbach's Alpha, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), KMO, and Bartlett's Test on the data from the questionnaire to determine the validity of the data. Table 3.4.1 shows that the questionnaire's Cronbach's Alpha score is 0.990. In Table 3.4.2, the KMO value is .934 (>0.5). The significant level of Bartlett’s test is .000. The data in Tables 3 and 4 were regarded as being valid for the research.

Table 1

Cronbach’s Alpha (N=80)

Cronbach’s Alpha (N=80)	N of items
0.990	15

Table 2

KMO and Bartlett’s Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.934
Barlett’s Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2906.849
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

The interview

Together with the questionnaires, the interview was conducted online through Microsoft Team for the sake of the interviewees’ convenience. Specifically, 11 random students who took the Speaking-4 course were asked questions relating to their practices of using TikTok in their speaking learning.

The students were asked to answer two following questions:

- 1) *In what ways does TikTok help you improve your speaking ability? (Or what problems of yours has TikTok improved?)*
- 2) *How can you use TikTok as a means of self-study tool to enhance your speaking skills?*

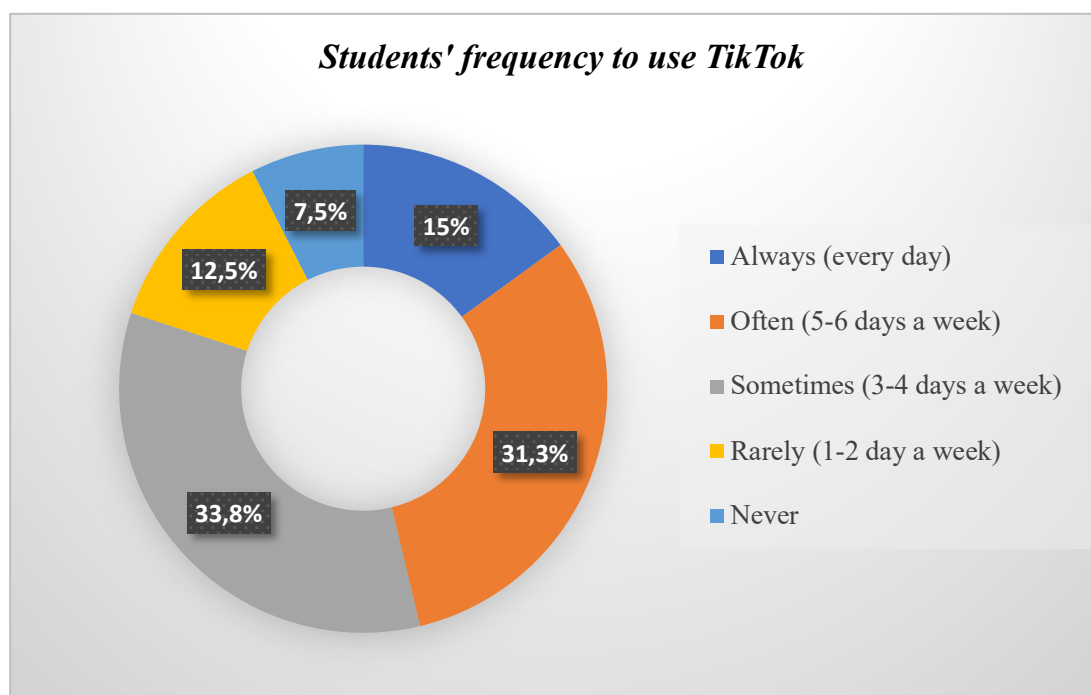
Results/Findings

Research question 1: What are EFL university students' perspectives on using TikTok to learn Speaking-4?

Students' frequency of using TikTok

Figure 2

Students' frequency of using TikTok



As can be seen in Figure 2, almost all of the participants are regular TikTok users, with students using the app in the range of 3 to 6 days per week. To be more precise, 33.8% of students used TikTok three to four days a week, compared to 31.3% who used it five to six days a week.

Students' perceptions toward the use of TikTok

Table 3 showed TikTok's impact on students' speaking skills. One perceived benefit of TikTok is improving speaking proficiency, with 85% acknowledging its positive effect on speaking, 78.8% on vocabulary expansion, and 90% on speaking ideas. The next perceived benefit is providing an engaging environment, with 80% feeling free to make errors, 71,3% felt inspired to improve their speaking skills, while 70% have their language confidence increased by TikTok.

The positive attitudes towards TikTok are highlighted in three out of ten items. The mean score of item 1 (M=4.0500) indicates TikTok as a favored platform for speaking skill enhancement. Similarly, item 3 (M=4.0250) showed TikTok provides students comfort with making mistakes, while item 7 (M=4.2000) demonstrated how TikTok makes it easier to update popular subjects, improving ideas in speaking context.

Table 3

Student's perspective on the effectiveness of TikTok

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
1	TikTok helps me improve my speaking skills.	2.5%	3.8%	8.7%	56.3%	28.7%	4.0500
2	TikTok motivates me to enhance my communication skills.	7.5%	10%	11.2%	43.75%	27.5%	3.7375
3	TikTok is just for fun, so I don't worry about making mistakes there.	2.5%	5%	12.5%	47.5%	32.5%	4.0250
5	I believe using TikTok helps me speak more confidently.	6.3%	10%	13.7%	48.8%	21.2%	3.6875
6	I can do a duet (sing, debate, discuss, role-play) in English on TikTok.	5%	6.2%	12.5%	46.3%	30%	3.9000
7	TikTok's exposure to popular subjects helps create an environment in which to practice speaking English.	1.2%	2.5%	6.2%	55%	35%	4.2000
8	My vocabulary has improved thanks to TikTok.	3.7%	6.2%	11.3%	52.5%	26.3%	3.9125

(Notes: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; N: Neutral; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree)

Table 4

Student's perspective on the drawbacks of TikTok

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
14	I waste time on TikTok and neglect to complete other tasks.	3.7%	6.3%	8.7%	53.8%	27.5%	3.950
15	I have difficulty distinguishing between educational and entertaining content creators to follow.	3.7%	8.7%	16.3%	45%	26.3%	1.0445

(Notes: SD: Strongly Disagree; D: Disagree; N: Neutral; A: Agree; SA: Strongly Agree)

Table 4 shows the perceptive drawbacks of TikTok on speaking practice. With 81.3%, the most prevalent problem was students used TikTok regularly and postponed doing other assignments. Additionally, 71.3% of students find it difficult to decide between educational videos on TikTok and entertained content. The significant mean score on item 14 (M=3.9500) indicated students to be addicted to TikTok and neglecting other work.

Research question 2: What are EFL university students' practices on using TikTok to learn Speaking-4?

To answer research question 2: “*What are EFL university students' practices on using TikTok to learn Speaking-4?*”, this study conducted semi-structured interviews with 11 participants. Then, the researcher presented the data with encoded keywords based on student's perspectives.

Interview question 1: In what ways does TikTok help you improve your speaking ability?

When asked about TikTok's role in improving speaking skills, most students confirmed TikTok's positive impact, addressed as (1) promoting interactivity, (2) enhancing English knowledge, (3) developing ideas for communication. Firstly, TikTok greatly improved EFL students' speaking by exposing them to English videos. Secondly, TikTok fosters interactive engagement. Lastly, TikTok provides creative content to enrich speaking ideas.

Promoting interactivity

It has a duet feature that helps me practice with other users. (Student 2, interview extract)

TikTok has a duet mode with others. (Student 6, interview extract)

Funny videos help motivate me to improve my speaking ability. Owners of TikTok accounts created many inspiring and creative things, making me love studying and practicing. (Student 3, interview extract)

There are times when I use TikTok to both study and have fun by listening to them, pronouncing everyday words, or communicating with foreigners. (Student 4, interview extract)

When asked about the way TikTok improved their speaking skills, 2 interviewees stated that the duet mode in TikTok allowed them to pair with other people's videos to answer, discuss, debate, argue, or even react. The mode allowed users to interact and create creative content, which they enjoyed using to practice speaking skills. Moreover, students felt relaxed speaking on TikTok. Students gained motivation by following creative, funny content about English. As a result, they were keen on watching and practicing English speaking.

Enhancing English knowledge

It makes my speaking skills become more natural when using phrases, slang in native and some tricks to speak smoothly. (Student 1, interview extract)

TikTok has many accounts containing funny videos regarding English education. (Student 3, interview extract)

TikTok has a lot of videos of creators talking about pronunciation, and new phrases. (Student 5, interview extract)

Since then, I have improved my speaking ability from pronunciation as well as common sayings in life that native speakers often use. (Student 6, interview extract)

TikTok helps improve my speaking by showing English videos (I follow a lot of TikTokers about English and use English in their videos). I can learn new things. context, situations that they apply to life to learn more. (Student 7, interview extract)

I overcome mistakes in grammar or the use of tenses. (Student 8, interview extract)

Some teachers from TikTok gave me a lot of knowledge, such as daily vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation, and they are foreigners or Vietnamese. (Student 9, interview extract)

Some ways that TikTok can help me improve speaking skills or know more about idioms, slang, synonyms, antonyms, intonation, pronunciation, and basic communication, etc. (Student 10, interview extract)

I can learn a lot of new vocabulary on many topics, which helps me have a variety of words to express myself and things around me... I've been more confident in terms of speaking and pronunciation. TikTok helps me to know more about slang in English, which makes my utterances/ words/ speeches more natural. (Student 11, interview extract)

When asked about the way TikTok improved their speaking skills, four interviewees reported that they get benefited from being exposure frequently to English videos on TikTok, encountering a variety of content creators, teachers, and native speakers who share language tips and funny educational content. This constant exposure to linguistic knowledge facilitated their speaking improvement. Additionally, half of the interviewees noted TikTok's role in enhancing vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, idioms, slang, and common phrases.

Providing ideas for communication.

TikTok provides phrases and vocabulary that help me develop ideas when communicating. (Student 2, interview extract)

TikTok has helped me improve my speaking and communication. (Student 5, interview extract)

I have more ideas in communication. (Student 8, interview extract)

I've got so many new ideas for talking about particular issues, which helps me speak more fluently and smoothly. (Student 11, interview extract)

Regarding how TikTok improved EFL learners' speaking skills, four interviewees suggested that TikTok helped them develop their speaking ability by offering them a variety of ideas and topics for communication. Students could get updated or attain various ideas from TikTok. As a result, TikTok contributed to developing EFL learners' communication and speaking skills.

Interview question 2: How can you use TikTok as a means of self-study tool to enhance your speaking skills?

To suggest a reference for lecturers to create a new instructional model, the researcher examined students' TikTok practices for self-study in speaking. Participants shared some practical ways

to improve their speaking ability, including (1) managing the content, (2) establishing study and rest schedule, (3) engaging in varied interactive practices.

Managing the content

We must be selective when using TikTok as a self-study tool; if it's not, then you're going to be distracted by other content that is not suitable for learning. (Student 1, interview extracted)

I follow many accounts about English content to make my newsfeed contain as many videos about English as possible. Thanks to this, I can watch videos about English every day. (Student 3, interview extracted)

I search for keywords in English on TikTok and watch videos in English to improve my listening and speaking skills. I tend to watch videos of common and advanced vocabulary shared by reputable TikTokers. (Student 4, interview extracted)

I follow the teachers on TikTok. (Student 5, interview extracted)

To use TikTok as a tool to help us learn, we must follow reputable people, foreign TikTokers to learn. In addition, we must unfollow entertainment channels from the watch list so as not to be distracted. (Student 7, interview extracted)

If there is something attractive [about English] I will follow it to study English. (Student 9, interview extracted)

I followed many English teacher accounts on TikTok and learned new words, ideas, and pronunciations from them. (Student 11, interview extracted)

Regarding how students use TikTok to improve speaking, most students intentionally increased exposure to English videos, searching for keywords or skills to fill their newsfeed. They followed accounts of experienced teachers, foreigners, or content creators for advanced knowledge. Two students advised unfollowing unnecessary accounts to avoid distraction. Being selective in video choices is crucial, as TikTok offers numerous entertaining but potentially irrelevant videos.

Establish study and rest schedule

Pronunciation training clips help me practice every day without being boring. (Student 2, interview extracted)

I can watch videos about English every day. (Student 3, interview extracted)

Watch videos on a topic you are interested in today and practice speaking along, taking notes of vocabulary words to learn more. (Student 7, interview extracted)

I will ... set up a specific time to balance the time of relaxing and learning. (Student 10, interview extracted)

I've been using TikTok for an hour per day. (Student 11, interview extracted)

Regarding how TikTok helped EFL students enhance their speaking skills, some students said that they practiced speaking on TikTok on a daily level. They claimed that they practiced their

English-speaking skills for about one hour per day on the online platform. Besides, one interviewee also emphasizes the importance of balancing time for study and rest.

Engage in varied interactive practices

I will open a chat with people on TikTok to improve my speaking skills. (Student 4, interview extracted)

TikTok has interactive games in English such as answering quick questions and guessing words. Or duet with other creators. In addition, there are livestreams and many friends, teachers, and siblings who share a lot of good tips on how to improve their speaking skills. (Student 6, interview extracted)

Watch videos on a topic you are interested in today and practice speaking along, taking notes of vocabulary words to learn more. (Student 7, interview extracted)

Duet the conversations uploaded by TikToker (continuous reading, swallowing...). (Student 8, interview extracted)

I will search and watch the skills that I want to practice and improve, repeat and imitate what I hear or what I see. (Student 10, interview extracted)

My effective way of improving my speaking skills is to mimic what the native English speakers say – the shadowing method. (Student 11, interview extracted)

In terms of which practices EFL students applied on TikTok to improve their speaking skills, students utilized a variety of TikTok activities to develop speaking learning, including duets and interactive games. They engaged in answering quick questions, doing activities such as guessing games, chatting, reading continuously, or swallowing. Additionally, they practiced speaking alongside or mimicking native speakers, while also noting down new words for further speaking improvement.

Discussion

According to Figure 4.1, the student's frequency use of TikTok was consistent with Yaqub's (2023) study, which provided data on the average amount of time spent on TikTok in 2023. Accordingly, 60% of users used the app for more than 10 hours a week, with an average TikTok user logging in for 10.85 minutes each time. TikTok consequently gained a lot of popularity among students.

The research investigated the attitudes of EFL students toward using TikTok to improve Speaking-4 learning. The results showed that the students' perspectives on TikTok were quite positive regarding improving speaking proficiency. Students recognized that their speaking skills and vocabulary had been enhanced by using TikTok.

The results above were similar to those of previous studies in the literature review such as Herwanto (2022), and Yang (2020). To be more specific, the TikTok algorithm would offer users constant exposure related to their interests, which include English speaking skills. The study also revealed that TikTok made words practical and pragmatic so learners could easily

learn new slang words. Students can gain new presentation knowledge by using TikTok to learn the material for the Speaking-4 course. Additionally, TikTok allows students to study at their own speed by giving them opportunities to practice speaking in front of online audiences when they fall behind in class. Students learn from both their teachers and the huge amount of linguistic knowledge available on the platform.

In terms of providing an engaging environment, the results showed that students did not worry about making mistakes in their speaking as they perceived TikTok merely as a platform for entertainment. This finding was compatible with the study of Putri (2022). Particularly, TikTok provided a comfortable learning environment without any restraint for learners. Students can use TikTok outside the Speaking-4 class as an open platform to practice speaking in front of an audience and responding to questions. Moreover, EFL students could duet with other people, as supported by Pratiwi et al. (2021). The duet mode made it easier to practice speaking and become interactive (Herwanto, 2022). Additionally, students could access various popular topics and were likely to share them with others. In this way, students could increase their interaction with other people, as supported by the research of Pratiwi et al. (2021). Students can use online modes including chatting, live streaming, and dueting to complete assignments when utilizing TikTok to master the Speaking-4 course (Luke, 2022).

However, when it came to TikTok's drawbacks, students experienced one problem, i.e. spending a lot of time on TikTok and forgetting to do other tasks, as supported by Putri (2022). Specifically, young adults or students were addicted to dynamic visuals and audio, so they were prone to keep watching and procrastinating on other tasks. TikTok constantly provided videos that were in the interest of users, and it caused them to keep watching.

Conclusion

In conclusion, using the qualitative method, the study investigated students' perspectives and their practices to improve their speaking skills by using TikTok. Regarding students' perspectives, the findings of students' perspectives were divided into three aspects, including the benefits and drawbacks of TikTok, the way TikTok improves speaking skills, and the practices applied to use TikTok as a self-study tool. The first one was related to students' attitudes toward the benefits and drawbacks of TikTok, supported by the following findings, namely (1) improving speaking proficiency, (2) providing engaging environment, (3) neglecting to do other tasks, (4) recognizing qualified content. The second one was about the way TikTok improves speaking skills, which was supported by the findings, including (1) Promoting interactivity, (2) Enhancing English knowledge, (3) Providing ideas for communication. The last one was linked with students' perspectives towards the practices they use on TikTok as a self-study tool to improve speaking learning. The results showed that students shared some practices, including (1) Managing the content, (2) Establishing study and rest schedules, (3) Engaging in varied interactive practices. Based on the results, the researcher suggested that English lecturers could gain a deep insight into EFL students' perceptions and practices and consider how to implement TikTok as a supportive learning medium to teach speaking skills or English knowledge.

Recommendations

After devoting considerable effort and time, the researcher, to some degree, accumulates relevant expertise in the use of TikTok for speaking learning. The researcher therefore is willing to offer some useful advice for specific kinds of aspects with the desire of building up a better foundation for learning and teaching speaking skills through TikTok in years to come.

To the lecturers

Recommendations for lecturers are shaped by linguistic sophomores and researchers' conception as a seniors who accomplished the Speaking-4 course at Van Lang University. Overall, students expect to feel confident and fully prepared before giving their official presentation in front of the class. Students often end up standing still and panicking when being assessed by a sizeable group during their presentation. They desire a learning media tool to provide them with a first small step before giving their main presentation. This learning media is not only an assessing learning tool for learning outcomes but also a learning tool outside class to motivate them.

To the students

Speaking-4 course is compulsory for all English majors and it is the highest-level speaking course. Perhaps second-year English majors should keep themselves in strong determination and practice utilizing online mediums to assist in their speaking skills whether they are good at speaking or not. Therefore, crucial steps need to be carried out by students' efforts. The first approach is to follow the desired content creators. It is also important to set up a specific time for learning and relaxing. Being constantly exposed to English is one of the best ways to improve English learning. Students should simultaneously remove irrelevant videos from sight by unfollowing distracted content, which could attract learners outside of their learning goal. According to the results, students should consider these practices when using TikTok as a self-regulated tool. Firstly, follow English content that they are interested in as much as possible to have an English environment. Secondly, set a specific time to practice the desired skills. They should build a habit of practicing speaking daily and regularly. They must be disciplined to maintain the habit consistently to enhance their skill. Finally, it is suggested that students should utilize different interactive activities on TikTok. This also varies from imitating to duetting, livestreaming, and playing interactive games.

Limitations

As far as limitations are concerned, shortcomings found in this paper are unavoidable since this is the first time the researcher has conducted such a paramount study herself. As a senior from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University, the researcher acknowledges that the social media and speaking field is new for her to gather deep insight into it. Therefore, statements from questionnaires and explanations are not actually sufficient or professional. For adequate argument, the thesis should have been strengthened by a larger size of participants, the researcher's sufficient practical experience, a specialized design for the questionnaire, better design for interview questions. Furthermore, these assessments intend to reinforce the researcher's ability to execute other studies flawlessly in the upcoming years.

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