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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear beloved TESOLers & Educators,

The International Journal of TESOL & Education is pleased to announce the completion and publication of Volume 6, Number 1 (2026). This issue brings together timely research and scholarship that speaks to the rapidly evolving landscape of language education—particularly the intersections of digital assessment, social media-mediated learning, translingual pedagogy, and AI-informed writing assessment.

Volume 6, Number 1 (2026) of the International Journal of TESOL & Education brings together timely studies and syntheses that illuminate how language teaching, learning, and assessment are being reshaped by digital platforms and emerging pedagogies. The issue examines large-scale Moodle-based e-assessment in Vietnamese higher education, the washback of EOP speaking tests on learners' self-regulated learning, and students' perceived English development through TikTok use. It also reports classroom-based evidence on translingual writing via code-meshing in Nepal and offers a systematic review of AI in L2 writing assessment, highlighting opportunities alongside integrity and design challenges.

In this issue, Chau and Vo (2026) report evidence from a large-scale evaluation of Moodle-based e-assessment for final exams at HUFLIT (Vietnam), with survey data from 1,558 students and interviews with 89 volunteers. The study indicates strong perceived effectiveness across reliability, validity, practicality, and affective factors, while also highlighting persistent concerns such as academic dishonesty and technical disruptions.

Nguyen and Nguyen (2026) investigate how English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) speaking tests influence learners' self-regulated learning at Hanoi University of Industry (Vietnam). Using mixed methods (survey $n=265$; interviews $n=45$), the study shows meaningful washback on attitudes, approaches, and habits—enhancing motivation and metacognitive strategy use while also increasing anxiety, rote learning, and test-driven practice.

Do and Huynh (2026) examine students' attitudes toward TikTok and their perceived language gains through a cross-sectional survey of 105 university students across Vietnam. Students generally view TikTok as beneficial, reporting the greatest perceived improvement in speaking and listening, as well as increased motivation and confidence in communication.

Limbu (2026) offers a classroom-based inquiry into code-meshing (translingual writing pedagogy) in a Nepali multicultural EFL context shaped by English-only expectations. Over six weeks, data from observations, journals, and focus groups with 10 Grade-8 students and a teacher indicate that code-meshing can increase confidence, engagement, and task completion, while supporting bilingual identities and reducing anxiety around English-only writing tasks.

Dau and Lam (2026) synthesize 20 studies (2023–2025) using PRISMA 2020 and CASP to map how AI is affecting L2 writing assessment. The review notes that AI can support writing quality and accelerate feedback, but raises serious challenges related to academic integrity, detection limits, and the need for redesigned process-oriented assessments and AI literacy.

Taken together, the contributions in Vol. 6, No. 1 (2026) point to a central argument: innovation in tools and platforms is outpacing innovation in assessment design and pedagogical safeguards. This issue suggests several urgent directions for future research:

1. Validity, fairness, and integrity in digital assessment ecosystems: Beyond perceived effectiveness, more studies should triangulate platform analytics, performance outcomes, and proctoring/design variables to clarify what “effective” e-assessment means under real constraints (e.g., connectivity inequities, device differences, and security threats).
2. Balanced washback and sustainable self-regulation: Research should move toward identifying test designs and instructional supports that strengthen self-regulated learning without intensifying anxiety or narrowing learning to test rehearsal—especially in speaking assessment.
3. Social media and language learning: from perceptions to causal evidence: TikTok-related findings invite classroom-aligned experimental or longitudinal studies that track measurable language development, task engagement patterns, and discourse features—not only self-reported gains.
4. Translingual pedagogy across contexts and proficiency levels: More comparative research is needed on when code-meshing increases participation and writing quality, how it interacts with policy pressures, and how teachers can assess translingual writing fairly and transparently.
5. AI-aware assessment redesign: The systematic review underscores a growing consensus that assessment must evolve toward process evidence, transparency, and AI literacy—requiring both technical understanding and principled pedagogy. Future work should test concrete models (e.g., staged drafting, oral defenses, version histories, reflective commentaries, and rubric redesign) and examine feasibility at scale.
6. We extend our sincere thanks to all authors who entrusted their scholarship to the journal and contributed to the intellectual depth and practical relevance of this issue. We are equally grateful to our peer reviewers, whose careful, constructive, and often unseen labor safeguards scholarly rigor and strengthens each manuscript.

Our appreciation also goes to the Editorial Board for their guidance, quality assurance, and continued commitment to advancing research and practice in TESOL and education.

Last but not least, we warmly invite submissions for the upcoming issue, scheduled for publication in May 2026. We welcome high-quality empirical studies, systematic reviews, theoretical papers, and well-argued pedagogical innovations—especially work addressing:

- AI and language education (assessment, feedback, integrity, teacher/learner AI literacy)
- Technology-enhanced language learning and evaluation
- Speaking, writing, and classroom interaction research
- Teacher development and educational policy in language education
- Equity, multilingualism, translanguaging, and inclusive pedagogy

We look forward to receiving your manuscripts and to continuing our shared work to strengthen research-informed practice in TESOL and education.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Warm regards,



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

A Study on the Effectiveness of Moodle E-Assessment at a Private University in Ho Chi Minh City

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ABSTRACT

Moodle-based assessment, a widely used form of e-assessment, offers a comprehensive list of assessment tools and features that support student-centered teaching and has been increasingly adopted in Vietnam, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed at examining the effectiveness of Moodle-based assessment in final exams within the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HCMC University of Foreign Languages – Information Technology (HUFLIT). The study involved the participation of 1558 students from the Faculty of Foreign Languages. A mixed-methods approach, incorporating a 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire and focus group interviews, was employed to collect the data. The results revealed a high level of effectiveness of Moodle-based assessment in final exams across four aspects: reliability, validity, practicality, and acceptability. Alongside its benefits, one of the most common challenges students face is the risk of academic dishonesty and technical difficulties with Moodle-based final exams. From the findings, some pedagogical conclusions were drawn to increase the overall effectiveness of Moodle-based final exams while simultaneously addressing and minimizing their inherent constraints.

Keywords: Moodle-based assessment, final exams, effectiveness

Introduction

Assessment has always been associated with teaching and learning processes in higher education. It serves not only as an indicator of academic success but also supports and shapes learning, providing feedback. According to Gaba et al. (2021), advances in educational technology and the rise of flexible learning in higher education have significantly increased the use of digital platforms for assessment. E-assessment is defined as using digital technologies to create, distribute, and assess an evaluation. E-assessment is associated with greater efficiency, improved student engagement, and real-time feedback for educators (Gikandi et al., 2011). As higher education institutions seek to replace traditional paper-based assessments with more

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flexible and student-centered approaches, understanding how systems like Moodle perform in final examinations becomes essential. This growing reliance on digital assessment systems highlights the need to examine their effectiveness, reliability, and the challenges they pose in real educational contexts.

Among the many e-assessment tools available, Moodle, an open-source learning management system (LMS), has become one of the most widely adopted platforms because it offers a variety of assessment features including quizzes, assignments, rubrics, and feedback modules (Wang & Wang, 2024). These assessment tools and features enable teachers to design structured evaluation processes while giving students greater autonomy in how they engage with coursework. Rather than its individual tools, what makes Moodle pedagogically significant is its ability to facilitate flexible, feedback-rich, and student-centered assessment. Previous studies on Moodle-based assessment have linked its use to greater flexibility, better feedback, and greater learner control (Rashid & Asghar, 2016; Bälter et al., 2013; Divjak et al., 2024). For these reasons, many universities have preferred Moodle as a platform that supports both effective teaching and meaningful student learning (Ortiz-Lopez et al., 2024).

As with most institutions, Moodle has been used as the LMS for Ho Chi Minh City University of Foreign Languages – Information Technology (HUFLIT). It serves as the backbone of the infrastructure for course materials, blended learning, and various assessment activities. In particular, the Faculty of Foreign Languages, the platform supports a range of assessment formats designed to address students' diverse requirements while fostering a learning environment that fully promotes the development of knowledge and language skills. However, while formative assessments such as practice quizzes and weekly assignments are easily automated with Moodle, applying the same methodology to summative assessments, particularly high-stakes final exams, raises concerns about their pedagogical soundness and trustworthiness. The reason is that most current final exams are in multiple-choice format. The level of accountability for comprehensive assessment has raised the question of whether multiple-choice tests alone meet the assessment requirements. Multiple-choice tests are fast to administer and easier to mark, but they have demonstrated inadequacies in assessing critical thinking, creativity, and the applied use of language knowledge in real-world situations (Wahas & Syed, 2024). Therefore, it is important to explore alternative combined assessment formats on the Moodle platform to offer a wider range of assessments of students' language competencies and to ensure assessment integrity.

This study aims to investigate the effectiveness of Moodle-based e-assessment in final exams at HUFLIT from students' perspectives in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. This study also seeks to identify the benefits and challenges of Moodle in final exams through user experience and to offer suggestions based on its advantages and challenges in the learning and teaching process.

The questions were developed to capture students' experiences – both positive and negative – when using Moodle for final assessment. The study sought to provide an overall picture of the Moodle LMS's effectiveness in final assessments from students' perspectives and to offer recommendations to improve the system's quality and suitability. A deeper understanding of the benefits and challenges of using Moodle for assessment would also increase students' understanding of the role of technology-enhanced assessment in higher education, enhance student engagement and digital literacy, and, most importantly, provide students with opportunities for learner autonomy and lifelong learning.

Literature Review

The use of Moodle in education

Moodle, short for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment, is a leading open-source learning management system (LMS) that supports online, blended, and hybrid learning. It was produced by Martin Dougiamas, an educational researcher, in the early 2000s. Moodle has since gained prominence in education worldwide, especially in developing contexts. Recently, its use for digital course delivery and assessment has been adopted widely across many universities in Vietnam. Moodle is an LMS that supports integrated learning tools, such as online quizzes, discussion forums, wikis, rubrics, and assignment submissions, as well as real-time feedback (Ellaway & Masters, 2008; Koneru, 2017; Gamage et al., 2022). All these tools are easily modified to accommodate various pedagogical models, allowing instructors to design collaborative learning activities, support interaction, scaffold students' understanding, and build assessment tasks with intended learning outcomes.

Moodle's design principles are grounded in social constructivist learning theory, which promotes learning through engagement, collaboration, reflection, and knowledge co-construction within learning communities (Dougiamas & Taylor, 2003). This theoretical foundation is also inherent in Moodle's interaction tools, intended to support dialogue and engagement rather than simply the delivery of content within learning communities. In addition to flexibility, Moodle's open-source nature and ongoing development by the global developer and educational communities enable unique customization and improvements that can accommodate institutions with varying levels of technological support.

In Vietnam, Moodle is one of the most widely used LMS platforms, especially in public and applied universities, thanks to its low cost, ease of use, and compatibility with e-learning and flipped classroom environments (Vuong, 2023; Tran, 2024). Moodle also provides built-in assessment tools that allow institutions to facilitate digital assessments such as final assessments in a way that is consistent with the current changes associated with educational reform policies embracing digitalization in higher education in Vietnam. In this respect, Moodle is not simply a technological tool, but rather a pedagogical environment that fits in with broader changes in the perception of learning and assessment in modern higher education.

Assessment tools and features of Moodle

Regarding e-assessment tools on Moodle, there are many academic and practical advantages which make Moodle an attractive e-assessment tool in higher education (Ellaway & Masters, 2008; Nicol, 2007; Maier et al., 2016; Al-Qdah & Ababneh, 2017; Yonker, 2011).

Firstly, Moodle empowers instructors with assessment formats that can accommodate many objective items such as multiple choice, matching, and true/false, as well as subjective formats including essays, and open-ended questions, and instructors can plan with those assessments to help meet intended learning outcomes and cognitive demands, while engaging students at a deeper level of understanding and less at rote memorization. In addition, the incorporation of rubrics, question banks, and randomizing items adds another layer of validity, security, and scalability to the assessments (Yonker, 2011).

Secondly, Moodle also improves the effectiveness and accuracy of the assessment process through features such as randomized questions and automated grading, which mitigate the potential for human error and bias (Nicol, 2007; Maier et al., 2016; Bälter et al., 2013; Ellaway & Masters, 2008). Moreover, the platform includes interactive elements such as item shuffling, and immediate feedback which support learner engagement and active learning (Al-Qdah &

Ababneh, 2017). Immediate feedback helps students quickly identify knowledge gaps and motivates them to adjust their learning strategies, thereby enhancing performance. Consequently, it is unsurprising that even simple diagnostic quizzes with e-assessment feedback yield measurable improvements in retention, exam skills, and self-regulation (Bälter et al., 2013).

Taken together, these features provide a flexible, student-centered, scalable approach to Moodle-based assessment for universities, while continuously improving their assessment systems to meet the demands of a changing higher education system.

Challenges of e-assessment via Moodle

Although there are many benefits to using Moodle for e-assessment, there can also be substantial challenges that limit its success and credibility for higher education practitioners. Among them, a major issue concerns technical constraints, such as limited internet access, device incompatibility, as well as users' limited technical competence and inadequate training in e-learning pedagogy (Cao, 2023). These challenges can significantly disrupt the assessment process, increase student stress, and yield unsatisfactory or even inequitable results. The broader digital divide also poses challenges. For instance, students with limited access to appropriate devices, or more generally, low levels of digital literacy, may not be able to fully utilize Moodle's capabilities, which actually reduces the equity of the assessment experience (Xu & Mahenthiran, 2016).

In addition, the issue of academic integrity in Moodle-based assessment is ongoing. The online setting offers opportunities to cheat and engage in corresponding misconduct, all of which compromise the validity of the results. Research has demonstrated that students often believe e-assessments are more likely to be dishonest than traditional face-to-face examinations, raising concerns regarding fairness and reliability (Dermo, 2009). Even though Moodle includes question randomization, time limits, and restricted access periods, potential issues of academic dishonesty may remain (Farrell & Rushby, 2016). Crawford et al. (2020) found that additional security measures, such as two-factor authentication and AI-assisted remote proctoring, are necessary to ensure the integrity of online assessments. If sufficient safeguards are not in place, the cost of a lack of academic integrity undermines the assessment process and trust in digital evaluation within higher education institutions.

Another issue concerns the pedagogical design and validity of Moodle assessments. While Moodle provides a variety of tools, its success largely depends on instructors' ability to design assessments that align with the desired learning outcomes, foster higher-order thinking, and be valid and reliable. In practice, many instructors lack sufficient experience or training in designing digital assessments, resulting in poorly designed quizzes that fail to assess students' true understanding or higher-order thinking skills (Sorensen, 2013; Öz, 2014; Farrell & Rushby, 2016). Because of the lack of targeted professional development, Moodle's potential to enable deep, authentic learning has not been fully realized.

In summary, while Moodle-based e-assessment offers enormous opportunities, it currently faces challenges due to structural barriers, disparities in student preparedness, vulnerabilities to academic integrity violations, and a lack of pedagogical knowledge. The first step towards improving the legitimacy, equity, and educational value of digital assessment in higher education is to understand and address these challenges.

Previous studies on Moodle-based assessment in Vietnam

A collective body of Vietnamese research on e-assessment and Moodle consistently highlights its benefits and limitations in local educational contexts. Many studies have confirmed that e-

assessments using Moodle have positive effects on student learning outcomes and overall satisfaction or experience. For example, Huynh-Cam et al. (2021) reported a significant increase in English listening and reading performance among university students, while Vuong (2023) found strong acceptance of Moodle in a flipped grammar classroom and concluded that perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use had the greatest impact. Vuong's findings are consistent with the international literature on Moodle's advantages in promoting engagement, flexibility, and personalized feedback. Like Huynh-Cam et al. (2021), Vo (2023) noted that Vietnamese students reported high levels of digital self-efficacy and positive attitudes toward e-exams, with the expectation of being able to address technical difficulties and issues of academic integrity.

On the other hand, Moodle-based assessment challenges have now been widely studied. Tu and Luong (2021) identified decreased motivation and increased frustration due to technical disruptions, limited opportunities for peer interaction, and limited teacher support in a fully online context. Additionally, Tang et al. (2022) found that, in Moodle e-assessment, an instructor's adoption and use of this tool are influenced by participants' computer self-efficacy and perceived ease of use. Their research suggests that competence in technology and organizational-level training remain key components in the successful integration of Moodle-based assessments.

Conceptual framework

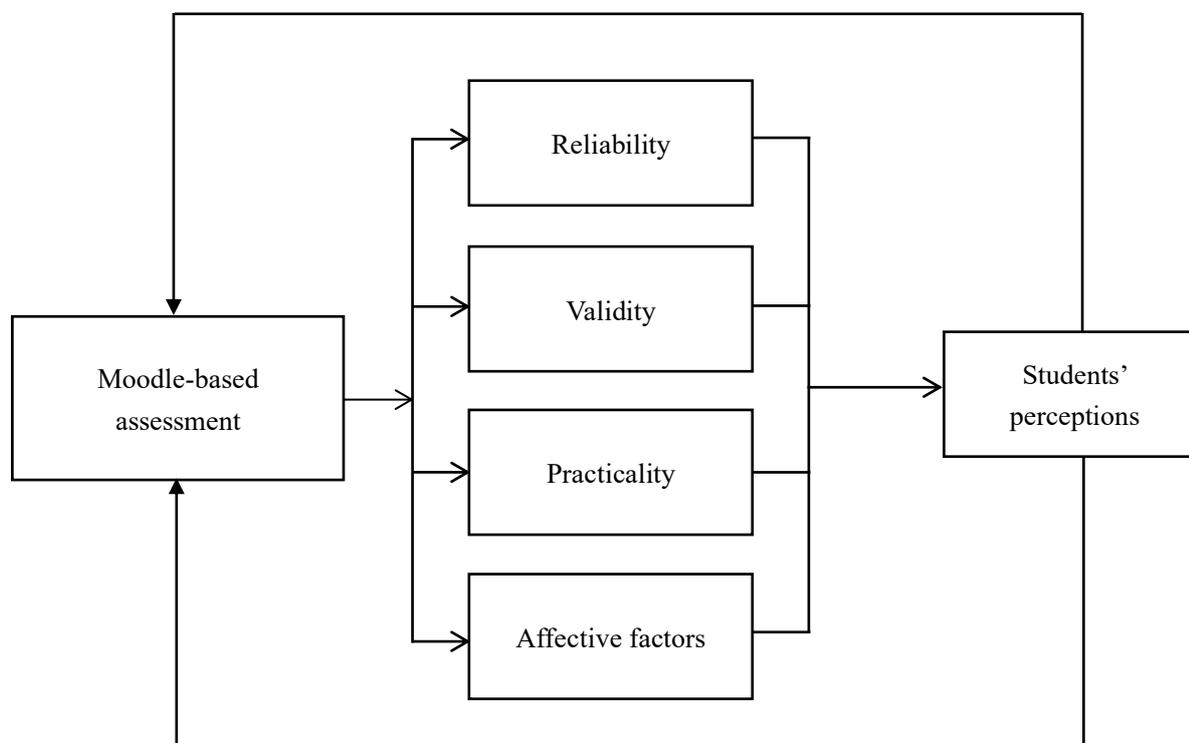
Research shows that when interface design is improved, instructions are clear, and ongoing support is available, users are more satisfied with their computer-based assessment experience. The benefits of adaptive, scenario-based assessment and feedback opportunities can also better serve learners' needs, helping them feel confident and independent in their learning (Crawford et al., 2020).

This research is based on the theoretical framework proposed by Alhazmi et al. (2015), as shown in Figure 1. However, there have been some changes and additions to reflect the context of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at HUFLIT, in order to gather indications from both lecturers and students on topics, including:

- **Reliability:** Assesses Moodle's consistency as an assessment tool, ensuring stable performance and dependable functionality across test sessions.
- **Validity:** Assesses the accuracy with which Moodle measures students' knowledge and competencies, ensuring that the assessment aligns with intended learning outcomes.
- **Practicality:** Assesses the usability and operational effectiveness of Moodle in managing assessment activities, including test creation, administration, grading, and feedback delivery.
- **Affective factors:** Explores participants' emotional responses and overall satisfaction with Moodle's implementation in assessment contexts, including anxiety, motivation, and perceived fairness.

Figure 1:

Conceptual Framework for Moodle-based Assessment (Adapted from: Alhazmi et al., 2015)



Accordingly, issues related to assessment activities on the Moodle platform will be discussed and refined for future course implementations.

To sum up, the inclusion of computer-based assessment into Moodle can offer considerable benefits and also specific problems. While e-assessment can save time, reduce costs, and provide instant feedback, it can create a range of potential issues that affect academic integrity, accessibility, and the development of powerful critical thinking skills.

Going forward, research and development in digital assessment should consider a variety of assessment methods that can balance the efficiency of deep learning, optimize security and pedagogy, and ensure usability for all types of learners. Given that a small number of studies have systematically investigated students' perceptions of Moodle-based assessment, this study focuses on how Moodle-based e-assessment affects students during final exams, specifically in the context of organizations such as HUFLIT. It aims to investigate the effectiveness of Moodle e-assessment, thereby adding further literature on the pedagogical validity and strategic application of online assessment in Vietnamese higher education.

Research Questions

The current study seeks to address the following research problems:

1. What is the level of students' satisfaction with Moodle-based final exams at HUFLIT?
2. What practical measures can be implemented to improve the quality of Moodle-based assessment?
3. What practical measures can be implemented to improve the quality of Moodle-based assessment?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was implemented at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFLIT. Moodle-based final exams have been held for selected courses offered by both the English and Chinese Language Departments since the third semester of the 2023-2024 academic year. Final exams using Moodle are delivered in computer labs under strict invigilation. Students are required to sit at assigned computer rooms, log in with institutional credentials, and complete the exam within a fixed time frame while being monitored by invigilators to ensure academic integrity. To achieve the purpose of the current study, convenience sampling was employed to recruit first-, second-, and third-year students who had previously experienced final assessments on the Moodle LMS system within the Department, with demographic information as described in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Students' demographic information

Variables		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	327	21%
	Female	1231	79%
Year at university	1 st	431	27.7%
	2 nd	567	35.9%
	3 rd	560	34.2%
Major	English Studies	860	55.2%
	Chinese Language	698	44.8%
GPA	Excellent	150	9.6%
	Good	319	20.5%
	Fair	864	55.5%
	Poor	225	14.4%

Design of the Study

To explore students' perceptions of Moodle-based final exams, this study used a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. Quantitative data were collected using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The questionnaire was adapted from Dermo (2009), Almuhanha (2023), and Adanir et al. (2020), with 25 total items for students. It was structured into four dimensions: Reliability (4 items), Validity (7 items), Practicality (7 items), and the Affective Dimension (7 items). Cronbach's Alpha was subsequently calculated for each questionnaire dimension to assess internal consistency. A summary of the reliability scores for each questionnaire dimension was presented in Table 2.

Table 2

The reliability scores of the questionnaire

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Reliability (R1-R4)	.690	4
Validity (V1-V7)	.796	7
Practicality (P1-P7)	.761	7
Affective factors (A1-A7)	.705	7

In addition, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted with 89 students who volunteered to explore in detail participants' experiences with the final assessment on the LMS. The qualitative findings in this study served as a supplement tool to clarify the results obtained

from quantitative surveys.

Data collection & analysis

An online questionnaire via Google Forms was administered to 1558 first-, second-, and third-year students in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFLIT. Later, 89 students who volunteered to participate in semi-structured interviews were invited. The quantitative data collected via questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS version 26.0. Descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, percentages, independent sample T-test, and ANOVA, were employed. In addition, thematic analysis was used to interpret interview data.

Results/Findings

Students' perceptions of Moodle – based final exams

Table 3

Students' perceptions of LMS Moodle's reliability in final exams (n = 1558)

Statements	Mean	Stand. Dev.
R1. Marking is more accurate, because computers don't suffer from human error.	3.89	1.019
R2. Grades for online assessments are secure.	4.06	0.886
R3. It is easier to cheat on online exams than with paper-based exams.	3.23	1.336
R4. Username-and-password login provides adequate security for online exams.	4.04	0.908
Reliability	3.80	0.815

Table 3 showed students' perceptions of LMS Moodle's reliability for final exams. Overall, students reported positive viewpoints on the system's accuracy and security, with a high mean score (M = 3.80, SD = .0815). Particularly, students agreed that computer-calculated scores were more accurate because of the absence of human error (R1, M = 3.89, SD= 1.019, their scores were secured (R2, M = 4.06, SD = 0.886), and the login process with personal username and password was safe (R4, M = 4.04. SD = 0.908).

However, students' viewpoints for online cheating (R3, M = 3.23, SD = 1.336) were divergent. The students remain neutral about whether it's easier to cheat on Moodle during final exams. Although LMS Moodle was generally trusted by students for its accuracy and security, anti-cheating measures were emphasized to enhance the reliability of online final assessments.

Qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews suggest concerns in their friends' dishonest behaviors during the test when "some students might open other tabs or applications to cheat". Students described other cases of cheating: "If I don't know the answer, I can just turn to the person next to me and I only need to glance slightly to see the entire question and answer on the bright, large computer screen. Unlike on paper, you'd have to lean over completely or wouldn't even be able to read the question clearly."

Table 4

Students' perceptions of LMS Moodle's validity in final exams (n = 1558)

Statements	Mean	Stand. Dev.
V1. Online assessment is appropriate for my subject area.	3.82	1.006
V2. My subject area is too complex to be dealt with by online multiple-choice questions.	3.47	1.134
V3. Online exams have an important role to play at tertiary level.	3.99	0.903
V4. Computerized exams align with contemporary university learning approaches.	4.01	0.910
V5. Computerized exams need to include a variety of question types to fully test knowledge.	3.80	1.009
V6. The types of questions align with the course's learning objectives.	3.91	0.913
V7. The duration of the electronic test is sufficient in relation to the number and nature of questions.	3.78	1.025
Validity	3.82	0.795

Table 4 presents students' perceptions of the validity of Moodle-based final exams. The results revealed an overall positive evaluation, with $M = 3.82$ and $SD = 0.795$. Notably, the highest number of agreements was observed in the consistency between computer-based assessments and modern university learning methods (V4, $M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.910$) and the important role of computer-based assessments in the current era of technology-integrated education (V3, $M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.903$). Although the concern about the complexity of course knowledge was expressed as not fully captured by multiple-choice questions (V2, $M = 3.47$, $SD = 1.134$), the students agreed that Moodle-based assessment practices were appropriate for the specific requirements of the courses (V1, $M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.006$). Moreover, strong agreement was expressed regarding the alignment between exam question types and course learning objectives (V6, $M = 3.91$, $SD = 0.913$), the appropriateness of the allocated exam time (V7, $M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.025$), the knowledge evaluation through various question formats (V5, $M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.009$).

Table 5

Students' perceptions of LMS Moodle's practicality in final exams (n = 1558)

Statements	Mean	Stand. Dev.
P1. Online assessments use less paper, which is important to me.	3.93	1.034
P2. Technical problems make online exams impractical.	3.72	1.064
P3. The system provides clear instructions, including the number of questions, how to answer them, and the test duration.	3.99	0.930
P4. The system saves the answers automatically, in the event of an Internet failure.	4.04	0.972
P5. The system allows the student to skip some questions and return to them again to answer.	4.22	0.851
P6. It is easy to contact the technical team if there are any technical problems.	3.92	0.990
P7. Doing exams in the campus computer labs is practical and convenient.	3.97	0.953
Practicality	3.97	0.763

Table 5 explored students' perceptions of Moodle's practicality for final exams. The results indicated that students' overall perceptions were positive with an average score of 3.97 ($SD = 0.763$), showing a high level of agreement. Particularly, students expressed their appreciation for taking final exams on computers for paper savings (P1, $M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.034$), user-friendly

interface (P3, $M = 3.99$, $SD = 0.930$), and the idea of conducting final exams on computers (P7, $M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.953$). Additionally, students highly valued several technical features, including the automatic saving of responses during internet connection disruptions (P4, $M = 4.04$, $SD = 0.972$) and the ability to skip and return to questions later (P5, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 0.851$). However, some technical difficulties during the exam and the need for accessible technical support were also mentioned here (P2, $M = 3.72$, $SD = 1.064$) and (P6, $M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.990$), respectively.

Furthermore, some concerns regarding technical difficulties were also mentioned by several students during the interview, such as:

“There were times when I couldn’t turn on the computer, or the screen went completely black during the test.”

“While doing the test, the system froze, lagged, or I got logged out in the middle of the exam.”

“Sometimes the system lagged so badly I couldn’t log in and had to switch to another computer while taking the test.”

Despite easy access to technical support teams during the exams, some students also expressed concerns about the stability of the schools’ internet connection and computer infrastructure, and the worry that they may have to retake the test if the problems cannot be resolved immediately.

Table 6

Students’ perceptions of LMS Moodle’s affective factors in final exams ($n = 1558$)

Statements	Mean	Stand. Dev.
A1. I feel more comfortable using electronic tests.	3.96	0.977
A2. I find it easy to concentrate on the questions when doing an online exam.	3.76	1.055
A3. Online exams are more readable.	3.69	1.104
A4. Online exams save marking time.	4.35	0.816
A5. I feel motivated when I get instant scores after the test.	3.98	1.016
A6. The use of electronic tests suits our passion for technology.	3.54	1.126
A7. I prefer typing rather than handwriting essay answers.	3.81	1.138
Affective factors	3.87	0.848

Students’ perceptions of the affective dimension associated with using the Moodle LMS for final exams are illustrated in Table 6, with a generally positive expression ($M = 3.87$, $SD = 0.848$). Students reported feeling comfortable taking final exams on computers (A1, $M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.977$), better concentration during the exam (A2, $M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.055$), and receiving immediate scores after test completion (A4, $M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.104$). Moreover, many students reported increased motivation due to instant grading (A5, $M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.016$) and a preference for typing over handwriting (A7, $M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.138$). However, lower agreement levels were observed in the reading of computer-based tests (A3, $M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.104$), especially in the alignment between the final online tests and students’ personal interest in technology (A6, $M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.126$).

Based on students’ insights and both quantitative and qualitative findings, the Department's Moodle-based final assessment should be improved to make it more robust and equitable in the near future.

*Differences in students' perspectives***Table 7**

Differences among students' gender, academic year, GPAs (n = 1558)

Variables	Test	N	Reliability		Validity		Practicality		Affective factors		Overall effectiveness	
Gender	Independent Sample T-Test		T	Sig.	T	Sig.	T	Sig.	T	Sig.	T	Sig.
	Male	327	.785	.013	1.126	.002	5.607	.090	.785	.000	1.895	.005
	Female	1231										
Year	One-way ANOVA (F)		F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.	F	Sig.
	1st	431	17.24	.000	14.256	.000	10.419	.000	16.29	.000	16.933	.000
	2 nd	567	1					6				
	3 rd	560										
GPA	Excellent	150	3.293	.020	4.130	.006	3.568	.014	7.84	.000	5.015	.002
	Good	319						6				
	Fair	864										
	Poor	225										

Table 7 compared differences in students' perceptions of Moodle-based final assessment practices by gender, academic year, and GPA. Specifically, the T-test revealed a statistically significant difference in perceived awareness between male and female students (Sig. = 0.005), indicating that gender influenced how students experienced the Moodle-based final assessment. These general perceptual differences are rooted in variations among students' learning styles, technological familiarity, and differences in expectations between the genders. Notably, no significant differences were observed in reliability or practicality (Sig. > 0.05), indicating that both male and female students perceived the Moodle LMS's technical aspects similarly.

Results from ANOVA analysis uncovered significant differences across all measured dimensions among first-, second- and third-year students (Sig. = 0.000). The numbers indicated that students at different academic levels held divergent perceptions of Moodle-based final assessment practices. Second- and third-year students were more likely to focus on practicality, technical efficiency, and user issues than first-year students, who had only initial impressions.

Additionally, ANOVA findings demonstrated that students' GPAs had a significant impact on students' perceptions of overall effectiveness, validity, and affection (Sig. = 0.000 - 0.002). Students with excellent and good GPA tended to rate positively in terms of reliability, validity, and overall effectiveness. Such findings reflected students' strong ability to adapt to the Moodle-based final assessment and their better self-regulated learning skills compared to students with average and low GPAs. Students with lower GPAs usually encountered difficulties during the tests, leading to a higher level of anxiety, technical difficulties, and emotional aspects. The general findings from this section highlighted the need for technical support, usage training, and instructional guidance for lower-achieving students to ensure the equity in LMS Moodle-based final assessment experience.

Discussion

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effectiveness of Moodle in final exams at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFLIT. Based on quantitative and qualitative data analysis, the following major findings were identified.

Firstly, the results indicated that students expressed a high level of satisfaction with Moodle-based final exams across four dimensions: reliability, validity, practicality, and affective factors. Specifically, the reliability of Moodle-based exams was reported to be consistent, particularly in automatic grading and login security, ensuring stable performance and dependable functionality across different test sessions. This finding aligns with Alhazmi et al. (2015), who stated that students' positive perceptions of system accuracy and secure login procedures support its reliability, demonstrating that Moodle can consistently deliver assessments under monitored exam conditions. In addition, the participants hold positive views on the validity of Moodle-based final exams, particularly their consistency with modern learning approaches at university and their important role in higher education. This reflects the fact that Moodle-based final exams accurately assess students' knowledge and competence. This finding aligns with the conclusions of Rashid & Asghar (2016), Bälter et al. (2013), and Divjak et al. (2024) regarding Moodle's ability to support flexibility, enhanced feedback, and learner autonomy. Considering the practicality of Moodle-based final exams, the positive results suggest that Moodle is useful and effective across all assessment-related procedures, including test creation, administration, grading, and feedback delivery. Notably, students rated affective factors related to Moodle-based exams highest, feeling more comfortable and motivated when receiving instant scores. This increase in motivation resulting from immediate grading reinforces the findings of Bälter et al. (2013), who found that instant feedback from e-assessment can significantly enhance retention, test-taking skills, and learners' self-regulation. Moreover, in the context of higher education in Vietnam, this study aligns with the findings of Vo (2023) and Tang, Nguyen, and Tran (2022), who reported positive attitudes among students towards the effectiveness of Moodle LMS as a channel for assessments. In short, the results suggest that Moodle-based exams are an effective alternative to traditional paper-based exams.

Secondly, despite overall satisfaction, two key challenges emerged: academic integrity and technical reliability. Regarding reliability, students are neutral or unsure about whether online cheating is easier than cheating on paper-based examinations. Although they expressed trust in login security, qualitative concerns about opening other tabs or applications to cheat, or about the ease of looking at a peer's screen, were noted. This reflects the view in the literature that online exam environments create opportunities for misconduct, which leads to undermined validity of exam results. This finding is also similar to Dermo's (2009) results, which showed that students were more skeptical about cheating in e-assessments than traditional exams. In terms of practicality, technical barriers such as computers going black, system freezes, or unexpected logouts were reported as persistent issues in Moodle-based exams, often beyond students' control. These problems are consistent with the challenges identified by Tu and Luong (2021), who stated that technical disruptions, such as unstable internet connections or device limitations, can cause stress, lost time, and performance disadvantages. However, an important contrasting finding in the current study is that although technical problems were present, they didn't reduce students' satisfaction with the system. This differs from the findings of Tu and Luong (2021) and Vuong (2023) who reported the generally negative attitudes towards many aspects of Moodle-based assessments as well as challenges related to technical problems. Moreover, the user interface and exam navigation were additional challenges in Moodle-based exams. Some students found scrolling through long reading passages difficult, suggesting that unnecessary switching between text and questions may disrupt students' concentration and

memory retention. This result highlights the need for technical design features, such as double-scrolled screens that support long reading text, to improve Moodle's user-friendliness in final exams. In addition, the findings also show performance-related inequalities. The students with lower GPAs experienced more stress and anxiety in Moodle-based exams, reflected through their low overall satisfaction with the system. This result suggests that students with stronger academic performance may find Moodle empowering and convenient, while those with weaker academic performance may feel disadvantaged, leading to heightened anxiety during exams. This result underscores the need for pedagogical measures, such as practice tests and orientation sessions, to reduce the achievement gap among students.

Conclusion

The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effectiveness of Moodle-based final exams at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFLIT. The findings highlight high student satisfaction and key challenges related to academic integrity and technical reliability. Based on the findings, the following pedagogical suggestions are drawn.

Firstly, to improve the effectiveness of Moodle-based final exams, it is essential to organize training and provide students with detailed guidance on using Moodle, submitting exams, checking results, and handling technical issues. Additionally, offering supporting materials such as instructional videos, infographics, or manuals in advance can help students reduce stress and operational errors during the online exams. The user interface should also be improved for better visual clarity and usability. Some features to consider include a larger font size, a soft yellowish screen tone, and simplified layouts to reduce eye strain. The display of reading and writing online exams should also be revised to the split-screen format. In particular, the left panel could display the reading passage or writing instructions, such as charts or essay-writing topics, while the right panel should show the list of questions or answer boxes. Distinguished scroll bars should be added to each panel so students can easily control the workflow. Automated data backup mechanisms should also be implemented to minimize the risk of data loss. Routine system checks should be conducted to ensure stable operation, particularly during peak examination periods when online exams are run consecutively.

Secondly, the study found that 1st-year students faced greater challenges during online exams than 2nd- and 3rd-year students. More experienced students were often better prepared, more effective in test completion, and more capable of managing technical issues. Based on these findings, differentiated support strategies should be provided for students in the distinguished school-year. In particular, 1st-year students should receive detailed instruction and supplementary guidance for online exams from lecturers and mentors. Meanwhile, 2nd and 3rd-year students may benefit from being reminded of better practices.

This study provided an in-depth examination of the Moodle LMS integration for final exams across courses in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, HUFLIT, with students reporting positive perceptions across the dimensions of reliability, validity, practicality, and affective factors. Students' experiences and challenges were identified and addressed through practical suggestions that target the overall effectiveness and consistency of Moodle-based final exams in the near future. Despite these strengths, concerns regarding academic integrity and technical stability remain significant challenges that must be addressed to ensure fairness and consistency during final examinations. The findings also highlight the need for stronger institutional support – particularly targeted training for first-year students, improved user interface design, and enhanced IT infrastructure – to optimize Moodle-based final exam implementation and promote equitable assessment experiences for all learners.

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The washback effect of EOP speaking tests on students' self-regulated learning

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ABSTRACT

In English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) contexts, speaking assessments play a crucial role in shaping not only language proficiency but also learner behavior. While test washback has been extensively studied in academic exams like IELTS or TOEFL, little attention has been given to its impact on self-regulated learning (SRL) within EOP programs. This study investigates the washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' SRL at a public university in Vietnam. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study collected 265 valid questionnaires from 700 second-year students and conducted semi-structured interviews with 45 of them. The findings revealed that EOP speaking tests exerted significant washback effects on SRL across three core areas: learning attitude, approach, and habit. While many students reported increased motivation, greater metacognitive awareness, and improved study behaviors, others experienced test anxiety, relied on rote memorization, and narrowly focused on predicted test content. These findings support prior research on the dual nature of washback and extend it to the underexplored context of EOP speaking. They also highlight the importance of learner perceptions and contextual factors in mediating assessment impact. The study contributes new insights into how speaking tests can both enhance and limit learner autonomy in EOP programs.

Keywords: washback effect, self-regulated learning, EOP speaking tests, assessments

Introduction

Language testing has a significant impact on both teaching and learning practices, particularly in English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), where the primary focus is on real-world communication. At Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI), EOP speaking tests simulate workplace interactions and serve as key components of the curriculum. Beyond measuring proficiency, these tests may exert washback effects—both positive and negative—on how students regulate their own learning. Self-regulated learning (SRL), which involves goal-setting, planning, monitoring, and strategy adjustment, is critical for academic and lifelong success and is especially vital in EOP because learners must independently develop adaptable

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communication strategies for unpredictable workplace situations. Yet, how EOP speaking tests at HaUI influence SRL remains underexplored. Existing washback research largely centers on high-stakes exams like IELTS or TOEFL, with limited attention to occupational English tests and their impact on SRL. While some studies report beneficial washback, such as enhanced speaking skills or increased motivation, others reveal drawbacks like anxiety and surface learning. Moreover, previous studies show that washback is shaped not only by test design but also by contextual and stakeholder factors (Alderson & Wall, 1993; Spratt, 2005), suggesting that its effects on SRL may vary across institutional settings. Research has also noted that assessments can either promote autonomy through meaningful feedback (Bailey, 1996) or constrain learners through test-driven practices (Shohamy et al., 1996), yet little is known about how these dynamics unfold in EOP environments. This lack of empirical attention to learner-focused outcomes highlights a gap in understanding the mechanisms through which speaking tests influence SRL in EOP contexts. Given HaUI's diverse student population and the professional demands of EOP, understanding these effects is essential for aligning assessment with authentic workplace communication needs. This study, therefore, investigates the washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' SRL at HaUI. It aims to (1) assess the impact of these tests on SRL, and (2) identify key factors contributing to either positive or negative effects. By clarifying these relationships, the findings will guide assessment design that more effectively fosters learner autonomy and transferable workplace communication skills in EOP contexts.

Literature Review

Washback Effects

Definitions of Washback

Washback, or backwash, refers to the influence of testing on teaching, learning, and curriculum design (Wen & Chano, 2024; Beikmahdavi, 2016). Thu (2020) conceptualizes washback specifically as the classroom impact of tests on teachers' perceptions and practices, highlighting its mediating role between assessment and learning. Initially framed negatively in high-stakes contexts, washback is now recognized as having both positive and negative pedagogical effects (Rathnayake, 2025). Positive washback aligns instruction with curriculum goals, while negative washback risks narrowing learning to test preparation (Wen & Chano, 2024). Foundational studies (Hughes, 1989; Alderson & Wall, 1993; Messick, 1996) highlight behavioral changes induced by assessments, yet their influence on actual learning outcomes remains underexplored (Qi, 2011). Debates persist over its scope: some view washback as a micro-level classroom phenomenon (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Alderson & Hamp-Lyons, 1996), whereas others distinguish it from broader institutional or societal impacts (Weir, 2005). Empirical evidence suggests that external assessments influence both teaching practices and curriculum design (Shohamy, 1992; Shohamy et al., 1996), but the mechanisms and conditions determining positive versus negative washback require further scrutiny. Current research emphasizes aligning assessments with instructional objectives and enhancing teacher assessment literacy to optimize washback effects (Rathnayake, 2025).

Factors Affecting Washback

Washback emerges from the interaction between test design, stakeholder beliefs, and institutional context. The content, structure, and cognitive demands of the test are often cited as primary drivers: Wall and Alderson (1993) note that tasks requiring higher-order thinking foster deeper learning, whereas tests focused on recall encourage superficial instruction. Alignment

with curriculum goals similarly shapes the extent and direction of washback (Alderson & Wall, 1993). Yet test features alone do not determine outcomes. Spratt (2005) argues that teachers who perceive tests as instruments for supporting learning are more likely to embed them into purposeful instructional activities, whereas those who view tests as punitive constraints often resort to mechanical, test-driven teaching. Similarly, Shohamy et al. (1996) note that the stakes attached to an assessment can amplify its washback effects; however, this amplification is not inherently positive, as high-stakes contexts may increase pressure and lead to narrower instructional practices. Specific test factors such as difficulty, stakes, and utility strongly affect washback. Nguyen (2025) reports that test utility is most influential, followed by stakes and difficulty, shaping student engagement and preparation. In Vietnamese universities, high-stakes tests like IELTS are highly valued but often not formally recorded, suggesting that perceived utility and stakes may drive washback more than official recognition. Contextual and institutional conditions mediate these effects. Cheng (2005) highlights that autonomy, resources, and professional development affect teacher responses, with restrictive settings more likely to generate negative washback. Student perceptions also matter; Alderson and Wall (1993) suggest that meaningful tests promote engagement. Policy emphasis on standardized testing can narrow curricula and heighten pressure (Shohamy et al., 1996). Collectively, these findings show that washback is neither predetermined by test design nor purely a product of external mandates. While Wall and Alderson (1993) foreground test features, others, such as Cheng (2005) and Spratt (2005), stress the agency of teachers and learners within specific contexts. This interplay offers a theoretical basis for examining how different stakeholders interpret and respond to test-based instruction, and whether the resulting washback supports or undermines educational aims.

Positive washback effects

Positive washback arises when assessments actively reinforce effective teaching and meaningful learning. Shohamy (1992) observes that tests can foster improvement when they provide actionable insights for refining pedagogy and tracking student progress. Bailey (1996) extends this, noting that preparation activities promoting language development, learner autonomy, and self-assessment transform assessment into a tool for reflective and independent learning. Messick (1996) emphasizes that such benefits are more likely when test preparation aligns closely with classroom learning and reflects authentic language use. Similarly, Davies (1999) links positive washback to assessments that encourage sound teaching practices, while Yi-Ching (2009) shows that comprehensive test planning motivates teachers to cover full course content, generating positive student attitudes and stronger results.

The influence of positive washback can extend beyond individual classrooms. Shohamy (1992) and Cheng (2005) highlight that high-stakes tests can drive the adoption of new textbooks and teaching materials, catalyzing pedagogical innovation and policy reform. Pan and Newfields (2012) further argue that well-designed assessments strengthen instruction, support educational growth, and enhance accountability. Taken together, these perspectives suggest that positive washback is not an automatic outcome of testing but depends on thoughtful design, curricular alignment, and the purposeful integration of assessment into broader educational goals.

Negative washback effects

Negative washback emerges when tests misalign with intended learning objectives, shifting attention from broader educational aims to narrow test content. Davies (1999) argues that such misalignment undermines communicative language teaching by forcing teachers to prioritize test preparation over language development. Pan and Newfields (2012) note that this occurs at both micro and macro levels, often leading to mechanical drilling, curriculum narrowing, and

reduced focus on critical thinking.

Critiques also target systemic practices. Shohamy (1992) warns that standardized tests imposed without teacher involvement and focused on scores rather than learning can erode authentic educational practices. Without meaningful feedback or diagnostic value, such assessments restrict student learning and teacher professional growth. Shohamy (1992) and Shohamy et al. (1996) further contend that these conditions produce superficial learning and diminish teacher agency, reducing instruction to rote delivery of test-oriented material.

At the classroom level, Yi-Ching (2009) shows how “teaching to the test” narrows curricula, encourages rote memorization, and limits creative and reflective learning opportunities. Shohamy et al. (1996) add that high-stakes environments heighten anxiety among teachers and students, promoting short-term cramming over sustained learning. From a learner perspective, Vernon (2014) finds that overemphasis on test preparation decreases motivation and fosters negative attitudes toward assessment, which can undermine long-term engagement. Institutional perspectives from Yi-Ching (2009) and Fish (1988) reveal that tests used for political purposes intensify pressure on stakeholders, diverting focus from holistic educational goals. Collectively, these studies depict negative washback as a multifaceted threat—affecting pedagogy, learner experience, and policy, when assessment becomes an end in itself rather than a means to support genuine learning.

Self-regulated learning

Self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to learners’ active control over their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral processes to achieve academic goals. Zimmerman (1986, 2002) conceptualizes SRL as a cyclical process involving self-observation, strategic planning, purposeful action, and reflective adjustment, while Schunk (2013) frames it as deliberate regulation of thoughts, emotions, and actions. Winne (1995) supports this view, emphasizing SRL as a framework for self-directed learning in which strategies adapt to feedback and contextual demands. SRL integrates cognitive and metacognitive regulation with motivational and behavioral dimensions (Pintrich, 2000; Koo et al., 2019). Goal-setting, self-monitoring, and strategic planning form its cognitive–metacognitive core (Garcia & Pintrich, 2023; Paris & Winograd, 2003), while behavioral regulation includes time management, peer assistance, and self-control (Chang, 2005; Koo et al., 2019). Motivation underpins these processes, sustaining effort and managing emotional responses (Boekaerts, 1999; Schunk, 2013). Students lacking SRL skills often show reduced motivation and poor performance, whereas those applying SRL strategies tend to achieve higher outcomes and engagement (Newman, 1994; Schunk, 2023). Social and contextual factors also shape SRL. Drawing on Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, Hadwin and Oshige (2011) argue that external scaffolding from teachers, peers, and learning environments fosters internal regulation. SRL aligns closely with self-directed learning, which combines autonomy, self-motivation, metacognitive regulation, and supportive contexts (Ghyasi et al., 2013). Tran (2021) further highlights that SRL enhances students’ confidence, awareness of learning strengths and limitations, goal-setting, and sense of belonging, while enabling teachers to provide varied academic tasks. Despite differences in theoretical models, researchers agree that SRL is critical for academic success (Zimmerman, 1989; Chang, 2005). It does not emerge automatically but develops through explicit instruction and practice (Schunk, 2013). Pedagogical strategies such as active learning, cooperative tasks, guided reflection, and formative feedback can enhance SRL, promoting autonomy, strategic thinking, and resilience—key attributes for lifelong learning (Lindner & Harris, 1993; Zimmerman, 1990).

Formative and summative assessments

Understanding washback requires differentiating formative and summative assessments, as both can shape teaching, learning, and student self-regulated learning (SRL) strategies. Formative assessments, including classroom speaking activities or progress videos, provide ongoing feedback that supports skill development, encourages self-monitoring, and fosters SRL (Black & Wiliam, 2009; Adinda et al., 2021). Summative assessments, such as end-of-course speaking exams, measure final competency and often carry higher stakes, potentially intensifying both positive and negative washback (Harlen, 2010). In Vietnam, despite policy advocacy for formative and alternative assessment, summative testing remains dominant due to historical and ideological tensions (Ngo, 2022). Nevertheless, empirical studies demonstrate that formative approaches, including online assessments, can significantly improve learning outcomes, such as EFL students' writing achievement (Nhu & Tin, 2019). Integrating formative and summative strategies offers a balanced evaluation system that promotes both academic growth and professional readiness, though challenges persist, including the time-intensive nature of formative assessment and the stress associated with summative testing (Muhanguzi et al., 2025).

By situating EOP speaking tests within this continuum, the present study draws on theoretical perspectives that highlight how the timing, purpose, and stakes of an assessment can influence learner behavior and autonomy.

Research Questions

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

1. To what extent do EOP speaking tests affect students' self-regulated learning at HaUI?
2. What factors contribute to the positive and negative washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' self-regulated learning?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted at HaUI, where EOP is a compulsory program for all non-English major students. The EOP program includes six 10-week courses delivered through a blended model via the official platform <https://eop.edu.vn>, combining 35 periods of online self-study with 40 periods of face-to-face instruction. Each course focuses on developing four language skills across eight workplace-themed units. Assessment is continuous and multi-dimensional, including Progress Test 1 (PT1: vocabulary and grammar), a Midterm Test (MT: listening, reading, and writing), Progress Test 2 (PT2: speaking), and a Final Test covering all four skills. A key component is the submission of eight speaking videos, one after each unit, which serve as formative assessments to enhance speaking skills, promote self-reflection, and support SRL. This study focuses on three speaking tasks: the eight formative videos, PT2, and the speaking section of the Final Test, which together represent both formative and summative assessments. Participants were 256 second-year students majoring in English for Mechanical Engineering, enrolled in the fourth EOP course during the 2024–2025 academic year. Their English proficiency ranged from A2 to B1, and they were already familiar with the EOP system and its learning format. With direct experience in both online and classroom learning, these students were well-suited to provide insights into the washback effects of EOP speaking tests on their SRL. Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the HaUI, and all participants provided informed consent before data collection. The survey and interview instruments underwent

expert review by three EOP assessment specialists to establish content validity, and a pilot study with 32 students from a similar cohort confirmed the clarity, reliability, and appropriateness of the items.

Design of the Study

The study used a mixed-methods design to examine how EOP speaking tests affect students' SRL. Quantitative surveys provided general patterns, while qualitative interviews offered deeper insights into students' experiences.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from Su et al. (2024) and Nguyen (2023) and modified to suit the EOP context at HaUI. Items were revised to align with the course structure, including both formative (unit-based speaking videos) and summative assessments (PT2 and Final Test), thereby ensuring construct validity. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure students' perceptions. Reliability was high (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.910) with all item-total correlations > 0.3. The questionnaire was administered via Google Forms and consisted of three sections: Section 1 (14 items) examined the washback effects on students' SRL, categorized into learning attitude, approach, and habit; Section 2 (17 items) explored factors influencing positive and negative washback, along with students' general perspectives; and Section 3 collected demographic data, including gender and the frequency of speaking practice outside the classroom.

Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted online via Zoom with students. For the student interviews, participants were selected from those who had agreed to be interviewed after completing the questionnaire. A total of 45 students were divided into 9 groups of five, with each session lasting 25–30 minutes. All interviews were recorded and supported by note-taking. The discussions focused on three core aspects of SRL: learning attitude, learning approach, and learning habit, as outlined in the questionnaire. Additionally, students were asked to reflect on the factors they believed contributed to the positive or negative washback effects of EOP speaking tests.

Data collection & analysis

The data collection began with a review of relevant theories and existing instruments related to washback and SRL in English language assessments. Based on this, a questionnaire was developed specifically for the EOP speaking test context at HaUI, focusing on students' attitudes toward learning, approaches, and habits. A pilot study with 32 second-year students was conducted to test clarity and reliability, followed by revisions based on feedback and Cronbach's alpha analysis. The final questionnaire was distributed online to 700 second-year students majoring in English for Mechanical Engineering, with 265 valid responses retained for analysis. To gain deeper insights, 45 students who agreed to be interviewed were divided into 9 groups for online semi-structured interviews via Zoom, each lasting 25–30 minutes. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and thematically coded. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations), and the results are presented in tables to address the two research questions. Qualitative data were coded according to students' learning attitudes, approaches, and habits, as well as perceived positive and negative washback effects. Triangulation of both data sources was used to enhance validity and provide a comprehensive understanding of how EOP speaking tests influence students' SRL.

Results/Findings

The washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' self-regulated learning

The Washback Effect of the EOP Speaking Tests on Students' Learning Attitude

Table 1

The Washback Effects of the EOP Speaking Tests on Students' Learning Attitude

No	Items	Level of agreement (%)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	The EOP speaking tests made me more motivated to improve my English speaking skills.	2.6	3.0	15.8	36.2	42.3	4.12	0.963
2	The EOP speaking tests increased my interest in practicing English speaking.	2.3	9.4	16.6	32.8	38.9	3.97	1.067
3	The EOP speaking tests encouraged me to pay more attention to my English speaking practice.	0.4	11.7	20.0	31.7	36.2	3.92	1.030
4	I would feel dissatisfied if speaking practice sessions related to the EOP test were not arranged by my teacher.	3.4	9.8	17.4	32.1	37.4	3.90	1.114

As shown in Table 1, most students reported positive learning attitudes resulting from the EOP speaking test. Specifically, 78.5% felt more motivated to improve their speaking skills ($M = 4.12$, $SD = 0.96$), and 71.7% said the test increased their interest in speaking practice ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 1.07$). Additionally, 67.9% agreed that it encouraged greater attention to speaking activities ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.03$), while 69.5% expressed dissatisfaction if speaking sessions were not arranged by their teacher ($M = 3.90$, $SD = 1.11$). These results indicate that the speaking test generally fostered motivation and attentiveness, though some variation existed.

In the interviews, students also shared that the EOP speaking tests played an important role in shaping their learning attitude. Student S2 commented, "Before the EOP test, I didn't focus much on speaking. But after knowing about it, I started practicing at home by preparing topic answers and speaking out loud to improve fluency." Student S5 added, "Knowing we would be tested pushed me to try harder in each session. I prepared my ideas in advance and practiced with friends to get used to speaking longer." Meanwhile, some students still expressed concern about limited practice opportunities. As student S4 shared, "*I got nervous before the test because we didn't practice enough in class. We mostly did grammar and vocabulary, so I wasn't confident speaking for more than a minute.*" While most students found the EOP speaking test to be a motivating factor, the interview data also point to a continued need for structured, teacher-guided speaking opportunities to help students feel fully prepared and confident.

The Washback Effect of the EOP Speaking Test on Students' Learning Approach

According to Table 2, most students reported positive shifts in their learning approach due to the EOP speaking test. Specifically, 71.2% agreed that the test encouraged them to evaluate their learning behavior ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.08$), and 70.6% said it helped them reflect on how to improve their speaking skills ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.07$). Additionally, 66.0% recognized the importance of using methods that support speaking development ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.17$), and 69.6% felt motivated to monitor their speaking practice consciously ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.03$). Notably, 70.5% reported taking greater initiative in organizing their speaking study plan, with the highest mean score of 3.97 ($SD = 0.92$). These findings suggest that the EOP speaking test

positively influenced students' metacognitive awareness and fostered more proactive, strategic learning behaviors.

Table 2

The Washback Effects of the EOP Speaking Test on Students' Learning Approach

No	Items	Level of agreement (%)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to evaluate my English speaking learning behavior.	3.8	7.5	18.1	36.6	34.6	3.89	1.075
2	The EOP speaking tests made me value the use of learning methods that help me improve my speaking skills.	5.7	7.5	20.8	29.4	36.6	3.84	1.168
3	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to think about how I can improve my English speaking skills.	5.3	3.4	20.8	38.1	32.5	3.89	1.066
4	The EOP speaking tests motivated me to consciously monitor my English speaking practice.	4.5	2.6	22.3	38.5	32.1	3.91	1.026
5	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to take the initiative in organizing my English speaking study plan.	1.1	4.5	23.8	37.7	32.8	3.97	0.923

In the interviews, students also reflected on changes in their learning behavior. Student S1 shared, "Before the test, I didn't really evaluate how I was learning to speak. After that, I began to review my recordings and reflect on my mistakes to track my progress." Student S8 added, "The test helped me see that I needed better strategies. Now I focus on practicing with specific goals, like using more complex structures or improving pronunciation." However, a few students admitted that, while they became more aware of effective learning methods, they still could not consistently apply them. As student S20 noted, "I know I should plan my learning better, but I'm still unsure what steps to take. I often feel lost when trying to organize my speaking practice on my own." These findings suggested that the EOP speaking test positively influenced students' learning strategies and metacognitive awareness. Nonetheless, some learners appeared to need further support to turn reflection into effective, long-term habits.

The Washback Effect of the EOP Speaking Test on Students' Learning Habits

As shown in Table 3, the EOP speaking test had a positive impact on students' learning habits. A majority (74.7%) reported spending more time on speaking practice ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.08$), and 70.6% stated that the test significantly influenced their speaking studies overall ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.17$). Additionally, 70.5% said the test motivated them to practice speaking outside the classroom ($M = 3.89$, $SD = 1.07$), while 61.2% engaged in more focused, targeted speaking practice ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.03$). Notably, 62.3% were encouraged to develop appropriate test-taking strategies in advance, with this item receiving the highest mean score in the group ($M = 3.97$, $SD = 0.92$). These results highlight the test's effectiveness in promoting regular, self-directed, and strategic speaking habits among students.

Table 3

The Washback Effects of the EOP Speaking Test on Students' Learning Habits

No	Items	Level of agreement (%)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to spend more time practicing my English speaking skills.	1.9	6.0	17.4	37.7	37	3.89	1.075
2	The EOP speaking tests had a big impact on my English speaking study.	1.9	8.7	18.9	29.1	41.5	3.84	1.168
3	The EOP speaking tests increased my English speaking practice frequency outside the classroom.	1.5	10.9	17.0	27.5	43.0	3.89	1.066
4	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to do targeted English speaking training.	4.9	13.2	20.8	27.2	34.0	3.91	1.026
5	The EOP speaking tests prompted me to learn appropriate test-taking skills before the test.	3.4	12.5	21.9	29.1	33.2	3.97	0.923

Interview data supported these findings. Several students mentioned that they had started spending more time preparing for the test and developing specific speaking habits. Student S9 shared, "I used to only speak during class activities, but after the test was announced, I started practicing at home by doing role-plays with friends and recording myself to review." Student S2 added, "The test helped me realize that confidence wasn't enough—I began using topic lists and planning key vocabulary before I practiced speaking." However, some students admitted that while they understood the importance of preparation, they still lacked consistency or structure in building these habits. These results indicated that the EOP speaking test had a strong washback effect on students' speaking-related habits, encouraging them to increase their preparation time, focus, and independence. Nonetheless, some students still needed guidance to translate motivation into effective, habitual action.

The Overall Perspective of Students and the Washback Effect of the EOP Speaking Tests

Table 4

The Overall Perspective of Students and the Washback Effects of the EOP Speaking Tests

No	Items	Level of agreement (%)					Mean	SD
		1	2	3	4	5		
1	I am satisfied with the content of the EOP speaking tests.	1.1	15.5	21.9	29.4	32.1	3.76	1.098
2	I am satisfied with the question types for the EOP speaking tests.	1.9	9.4	24.2	34.3	30.2	3.82	1.030
3	The effect of the EOP speaking tests on my English speaking learning is more favorable than unfavorable.	2.3	4.9	17.0	34.0	41.9	4.08	0.993
4	The EOP speaking tests helped to improve my English speaking skills.	1.1	2.3	14.0	34.7	47.9	4.26	0.864

Table 4 summarizes students' overall perceptions of the EOP speaking tests, showing generally favorable attitudes. Specifically, 61.5% expressed satisfaction with the test content ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 1.10$), and 64.5% were satisfied with the question types ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.03$), indicating a positive reception of both structure and content, though with some variation. The most favorable response was related to the test's impact on speaking learning, with 75.1% agreeing

it had more positive than negative effects ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 0.99$). Notably, 82.3% believed the test helped improve their speaking skills—the highest-rated item in this group ($M = 4.26$, $SD = 0.86$). These results suggest that students view the EOP speaking tests not only as fair and relevant but also as beneficial tools for developing their English speaking competence.

Interview responses also aligned with these results. Many students expressed that the test was not only a challenge but also a helpful push toward improving their speaking. Student S11 noted, “*At first, the test made me nervous, but after regular practice and reviewing my mistakes, I noticed real improvement in how I speak.*” Another student, S25, commented, “*I actually enjoy the test questions—they’re practical and push me to think more clearly and organize my ideas better.*” These reflections reinforced the idea that the EOP speaking tests were generally well-received and had a meaningful impact on students’ speaking development.

In conclusion, the overall perspective of students was largely positive. Most learners were satisfied with the test design and recognized its role in improving their speaking skills. These perceptions supported the presence of a constructive washback effect and highlighted the importance of maintaining a balanced test design that promotes both motivation and learning outcomes.

Factors affecting the washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students’ self-regulated learning

Factors affecting the positive washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students’ self-regulated learning

Figure 1

Students’ Responses on Learning Motivation (Positive Washback Effects of EOP Speaking Tests)

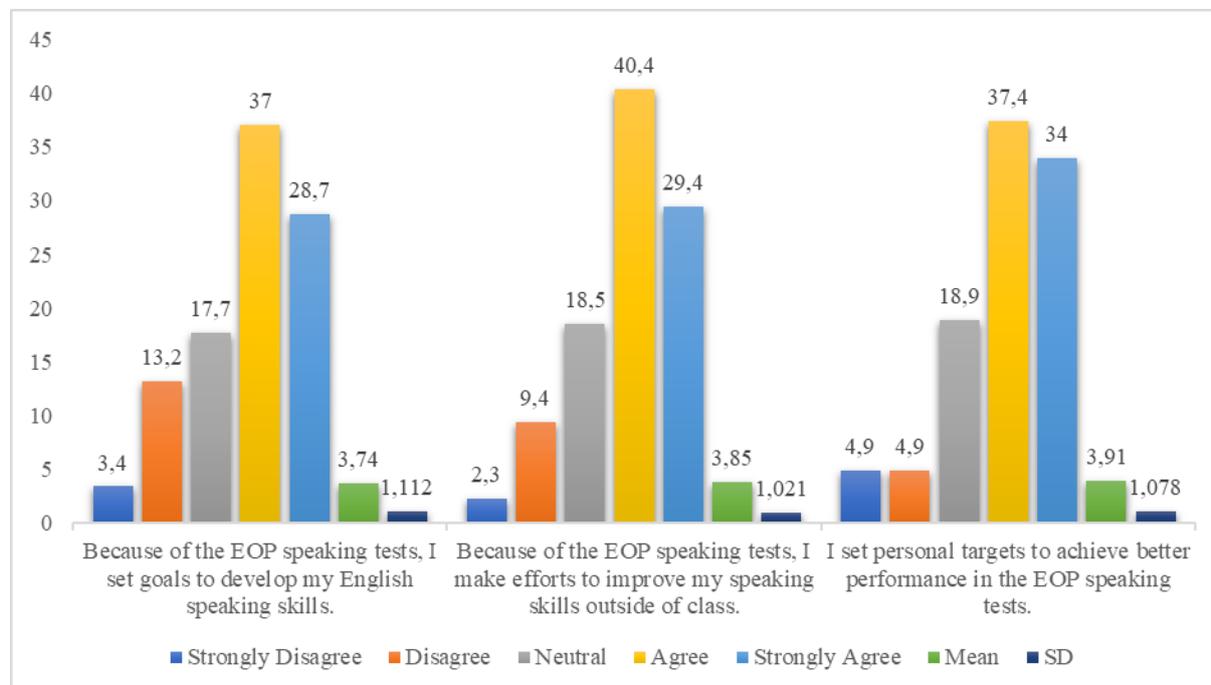


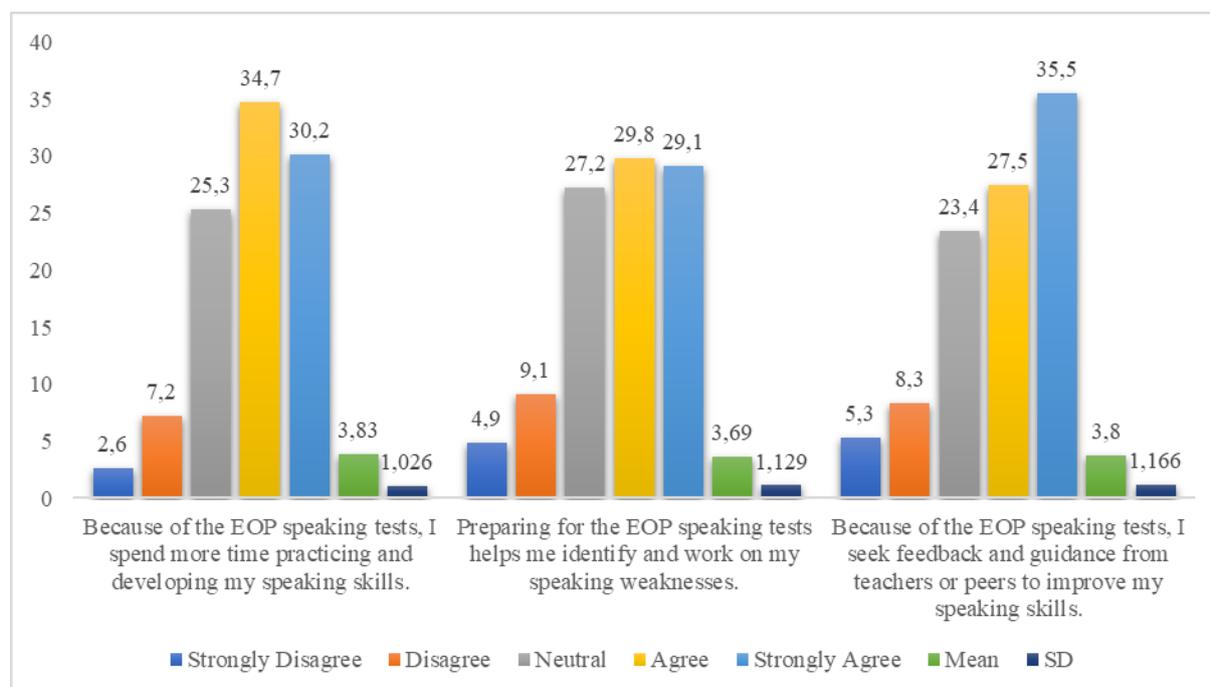
Figure 1 shows that the EOP speaking tests positively influenced students’ motivation, a key driver of SRL. Specifically, 65.7% of students reported setting goals to improve their speaking skills ($M = 3.74$, $SD = 1.11$), while 69.8% said the tests motivated them to practice outside of class ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.02$). The strongest agreement was observed in goal-setting for test

performance, with 71.4% of students confirming they set personal targets ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.08$). These findings highlight the test's role in encouraging students to take ownership of their learning and engage in purposeful practice beyond the classroom.

Interview data further confirmed these results. Several students reported that they became more proactive in setting goals and monitoring their efforts due to the EOP speaking tests. Student S12 stated, *"The test gave me a reason to set clear goals. I created a weekly plan to practice speaking on different topics and checked my progress each week."* Student S4 added, *"Before the test, I didn't pay attention to improvement. But now I try to review feedback after each task and spend extra time practicing at home with my friends."* These responses suggested that the tests helped learners internalize motivational goals and translate them into more focused learning efforts. These findings indicated that learning motivation was a key factor contributing to the positive washback effects of the EOP speaking tests. By encouraging students to set goals, make efforts beyond class, and strive for better performance, the test promoted essential SRL. However, to maintain this momentum, continued support and encouragement from teachers may still be needed.

Figure 2

Students' Responses on Holistic Learning (Positive Washback Effects of EOP Speaking Tests)



As shown in Figure 2, 64.9% of students reported spending more time practicing speaking due to the EOP tests ($M = 3.83$, $SD = 1.03$), indicating a strong perceived impact. In terms of self-assessment, 59.7% agreed that preparing for the tests helped them recognize and address their weaknesses, though the lower mean score ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.13$) suggests some variation in this effect. Additionally, 63% sought feedback from teachers or peers to improve their performance ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.17$), reflecting the test's role in encouraging feedback-driven and collaborative learning. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the EOP speaking tests not only enhanced practice habits but also supported reflective and interactive learning processes.

Interview data provided further support for these findings. Some students acknowledged that the EOP speaking tests encouraged them to take practice more seriously and become more reflective learners. Student S17 shared, *"Before the test, I just spoke without thinking much."*

Now I focus on the parts I'm weak at—like linking sounds or organizing ideas—and practice them more carefully.” Student S40 commented, “When I knew the test was coming, I asked my teacher to give more detailed corrections after speaking tasks, and I tried to apply the feedback in later practice.” Additionally, student S25 also shared, “I didn't really focus on improving my speaking before the test. Now, I make it a habit to go over the teacher's feedback after each activity and dedicate around 30 minutes every night to practicing speaking at home.” These comments suggest that the tests played a role in shaping students' efforts toward comprehensive and strategic learning. Overall, the results indicated that the EOP speaking tests contributed positively to holistic learning by promoting extended practice, self-assessment, and peer/teacher interaction. These are key aspects of SRL that go beyond basic task completion, focusing on deeper engagement and improvement. However, some students may still need support in effectively using feedback and identifying their learning needs.

Factors affecting the negative washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' self-regulated learning

Figure 3

Students' Responses on Learning Anxiety (Negative Washback Effects of EOP Speaking Tests)

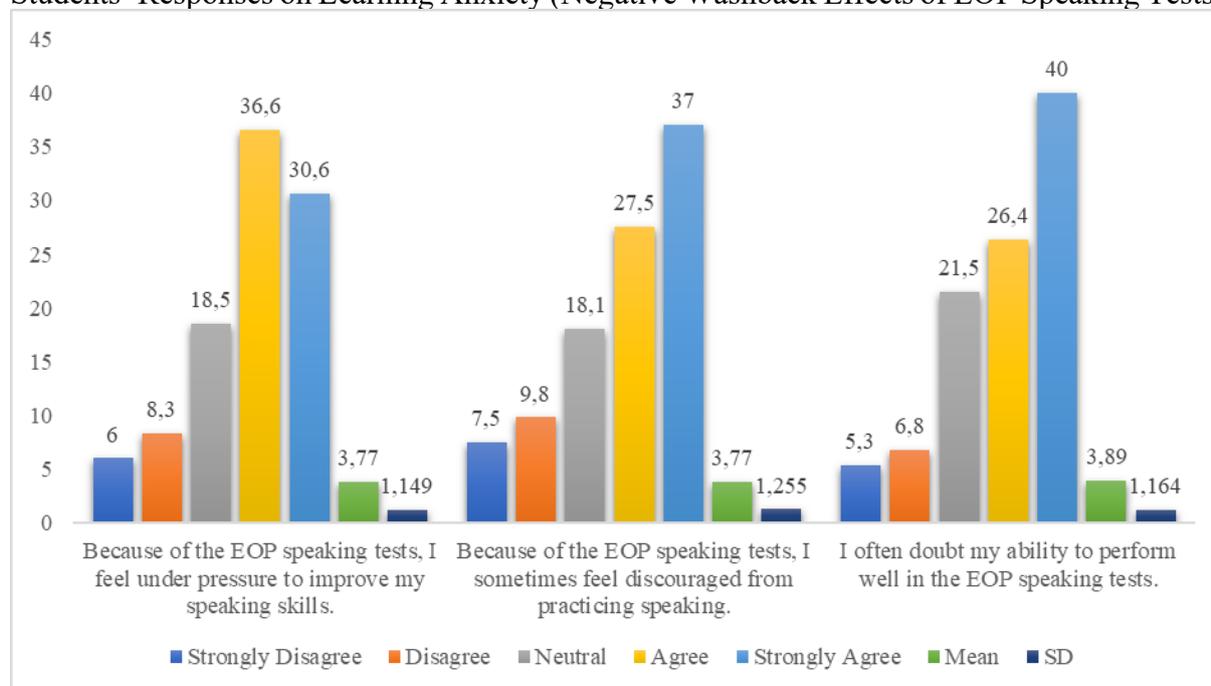


Figure 3 indicates that the EOP speaking tests generated a certain level of anxiety that negatively affected students' SRL. Specifically, 66.2% felt pressured to improve their speaking skills (M = 3.77, SD = 1.15), while 64.5% admitted to feeling discouraged from practicing at times (M = 3.77, SD = 1.26), reflecting emotional strain with varied intensity. Notably, 66.4% of students reported frequent self-doubt about their performance (M = 3.89, SD = 1.16), highlighting that test-related anxiety and confidence issues were significant concerns for many learners.

Comments from students during the interviews reflected these concerns. For example, Student S1 shared, “Even though I practiced before the test, I kept imagining myself making mistakes in front of the teacher, so I hesitated to speak during practice.” Student S24 said, “I sometimes felt so nervous that I avoided speaking altogether. The thought of being judged in the test made me question my ability to improve.” These quotes showed how anxiety could reduce students'

willingness to practice or believe in their progress. In short, learning anxiety expressed through pressure, discouragement, and self-doubt was one of the key factors limiting the positive washback effects of the EOP speaking tests. While testing can motivate learning, it can also create emotional stress that prevents students from developing confidence and taking control of their learning without proper support.

Figure 4

Students' Responses on Restricted Learning (Negative Washback Effects of EOP Speaking Tests)

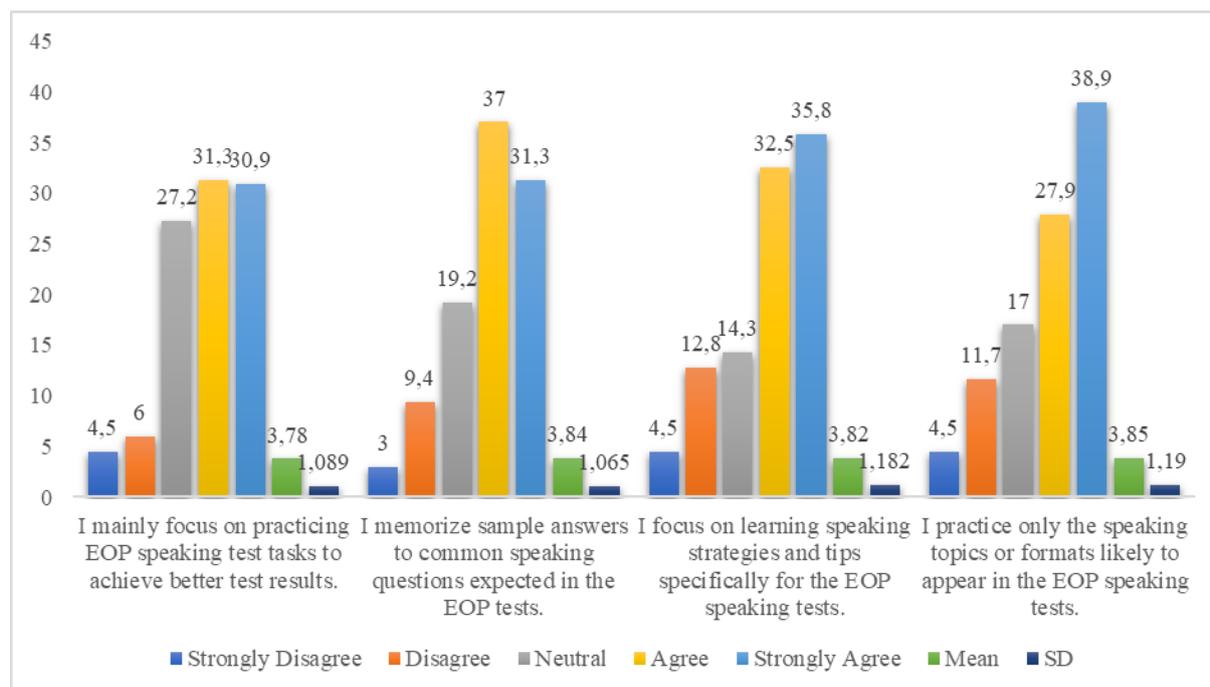


Figure 4 reveals that many students adopted a test-oriented learning approach in response to the EOP speaking tests, potentially limiting broader language development and authentic communication. Specifically, 62.2% focused mainly on practicing test-related tasks ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.09$), while 68.3% reported memorizing sample answers to expected questions ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 1.07$). An equal proportion (68.3%) concentrated on learning strategies and tips tailored to the test ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.18$), and 66.8% practiced only speaking topics likely to appear in the test ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.19$), the highest mean score in this group. These findings suggest that while the tests motivated preparation, they also encouraged a narrow focus that may have limited opportunities for more flexible and meaningful language use.

Students' responses in interviews reflected this pattern. Several learners admitted that they focused mostly on predicted topics and common test formats instead of exploring broader speaking skills. Student S26 stated, "I mostly go over topics I think will appear in the test. If something seems unrelated, I skip it because I want to save time for test-specific practice." Another student, S35, added, "I memorized full answers to avoid getting stuck during the test. I didn't practice creating ideas on the spot because I was too worried I'd freeze." These findings showed that the EOP speaking tests encouraged a restricted form of learning in many students. While targeted preparation could help improve test performance, this approach might limit students' language development and reduce their autonomy in managing learning goals. To support effective SRL, students may need guidance to move beyond test-driven strategies and engage in more meaningful speaking practice.

Figure 5

Students' Responses on Test Difficulty (Negative Washback Effects of EOP Speaking Tests)

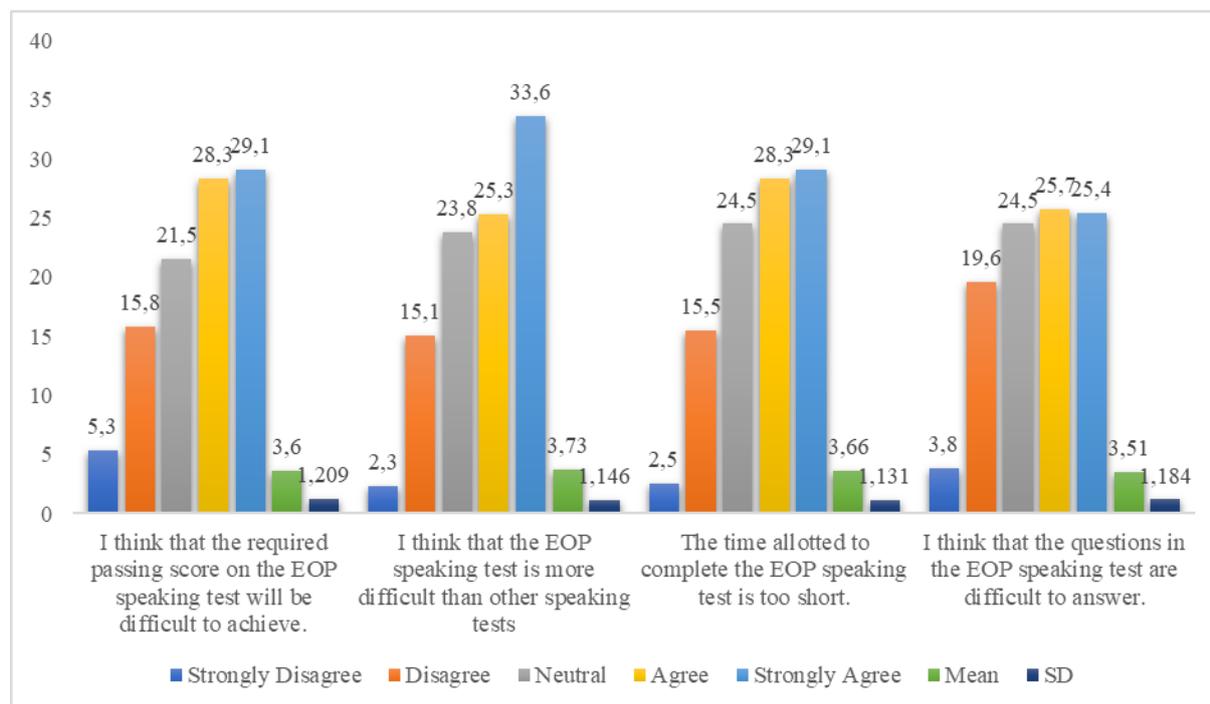


Figure 5 illustrates that many students perceived the EOP speaking test as challenging, which contributed to negative washback effects on SRL. Specifically, 57.4% believed that achieving the required passing score was difficult ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.21$), and 59.1% considered the EOP test harder than other speaking assessments they had taken ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 1.15$). Additionally, 57.4% felt that the time limit was too short ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.13$), potentially affecting their performance. Finally, 51.1% found the test questions difficult to answer ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.18$), marking this as the lowest-rated item in the group but still reflecting a considerable level of concern. Overall, perceptions of difficulty, time pressure, and demanding tasks likely influenced students' learning strategies and confidence.

Students' responses during interviews also reflected these concerns. Some admitted that the test made them feel overwhelmed due to unclear scoring or unpredictable topics. Student S17 shared, "I studied a lot, but I wasn't sure how the test would be scored, so I felt nervous and doubted if I'd pass." Another student, S39, commented, "I had prepared several ideas, but the test time was too short—I couldn't express everything, which made me feel frustrated." These results suggested that students' perceptions of the EOP speaking test as difficult, whether due to scoring criteria, time constraints, or task complexity, negatively influenced their motivation and confidence. When learners viewed the test as too hard, they were less likely to take initiative, persist in practice, or believe in their improvement. Such perceptions limited the positive washback potential of the assessment and called for clearer rubrics, more transparent expectations, and better-aligned practice opportunities.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the EOP speaking tests produced both positive and negative washback effects on students' SRL, consistent with previous research, while highlighting context-specific patterns. Positively, the tests enhanced students' motivation, engagement, and

metacognitive awareness. Most participants reported increased goal-setting, proactive practice, and reflection on their speaking strategies, aligning with positive washback described by Shohamy (1992), Bailey (1996), and Pan & Newfields (2012). These results confirm that assessments aligned with curriculum goals and authentic tasks can foster autonomous, strategic learning (Nguyen, 2025; Wen & Chano, 2024). Nevertheless, negative effects emerged. Some students experienced anxiety, self-doubt, and pressure, while others focused narrowly on predicted test content or memorized sample answers, limiting broader language development. These outcomes reflect concerns noted by Davies (1999) and Shohamy et al. (1996) regarding restricted, test-oriented learning. Perceptions of difficulty and time constraints further influenced students' confidence and study behaviors, showing that individual learner factors mediate washback effects. Importantly, this study emphasizes the learner's perspective as a key mediator. SRL skills such as goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reflective practice determined whether the test fostered sustained improvement or merely short-term preparation, highlighting the centrality of learners' agency over teacher-centered factors (Spratt, 2005; Cheng, 2005). Overall, the findings suggest that well-designed EOP speaking assessments can positively shape learning attitudes, approaches, and habits, but support for SRL through structured guidance, explicit strategy training, and authentic speaking opportunities is essential to mitigate negative washback and ensure meaningful skill development (Rathnayake, 2025; Wen & Chano, 2024).

Conclusion/ Implications

The study based on questionnaire and interview data revealed both positive and negative washback effects of EOP speaking tests on students' SRL. The tests created positive attitudes toward speaking English while motivating students to set goals and develop strategic behaviors, including planning, self-assessment, and additional speaking practice outside the classroom. However, negative effects were also present. Test anxiety affected some students who also memorized information and limited their preparation to specific approaches. The combination of time constraints, challenging tasks, and ambiguous scoring methods limited students' autonomy. The majority of students felt content with the tests while recognizing their effectiveness in enhancing their speaking abilities and classroom participation. The research indicates EOP speaking tests can motivate SRL development, but individual and contextual elements determine their impact, thus requiring careful test development and supportive educational approaches.

The research results provide educational recommendations for language instructors, curriculum developers, and assessment creators who want to maximize the positive effects of speaking tests on students' SRL. Teachers should use the motivational power by implementing goal-setting and reflection, and feedback-seeking activities throughout their classroom teaching. The EOP tests enhanced students' strategic awareness, so instruction should build on these behaviors while developing learner autonomy. Educators need to provide structured guidance and emotional support to students who experience anxiety and develop test-focused strategies. The use of clear rubrics together with model answers and explicit test-taking strategies helps students move away from memorization and builds their confidence levels. A supportive environment with low-stakes activities serves as the foundation for students to develop their skills over time. Curriculum designers must create speaking assessments that mimic real-life communication by using diverse tasks at appropriate levels that match learner needs and interests. This method improves both the test's authenticity and its connection to practical language usage. The training of teachers through professional development programs should focus on using assessment data for formative purposes. By integrating theoretical insights into

these practices, educators can better understand the mechanisms through which assessment influences SRL and design interventions that sustain positive washback while reducing negative effects. Educators who understand student performance patterns can provide specific feedback while demonstrating learning strategies to help students develop independent study habits through reflection.

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Utilizing TikTok in Improving English Skills: A Case Study of Vietnamese University Students

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: TikTok, English learning, Vietnamese university students, MALL

This study aims to explore the role of the social media platform TikTok in improving the English skills of Vietnamese university students. Data were collected through a cross-sectional survey completed by 105 student participants from universities across Vietnam, from the north to the south of the country. The study focused on students' perceptions of TikTok's role in enhancing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, as well as its influence on their motivation and confidence in using English for daily communication. The results showed that most students considered TikTok an effective platform for improving their English, with the greatest improvements reported in speaking and listening skills. In addition, students' motivation and confidence in using English were significantly increased after using TikTok to practice. Findings suggest that social media platforms such as TikTok can support formal English language education and enhance learner engagement outside traditional classrooms.

Introduction

The importance of learning English for Vietnamese university students

English has emerged as a global language and plays an essential role in enabling people to interact and integrate into society (Nguyen, 2019). Thanks to it, we can talk about any topic anywhere, regardless of our ethnicity or nationality. Owing to English's widespread use, several countries, including Vietnam, have made English a foreign language for all students at all educational levels and the main language of instruction for a range of subjects (Van & Duong, 2022). Dang et al. (2021) described the English learning process: in primary school, students are initially encouraged to learn one of the most widely spoken languages in the world. At the secondary and high school levels, their English proficiency will be developed so that, when they enter university, they can communicate with people from around the world. In most Vietnamese universities, English is used as an entrance requirement to screen candidates, and as an introductory subject for students, and before graduating, students must achieve a certain

level of English set by the school (Nguyen, 2019). Therefore, for students at academies in Vietnam, learning English is essential not only for admission and graduation but also for preparing for their future careers.

The penetration and development of TikTok as a new method of learning English

TikTok, a Chinese-developed application with the domestic name "Douyin," has generated excitement among social media users worldwide because of its featured function, which allows creators to generate short-form videos (Boffone, 2022). Today, netizens are accustomed to the term "short-form content," and TikTok has become a global phenomenon in which young people find their preferred type of entertaining videos (Feldkamp, 2021). Such videos have captured the attention of millions of people, particularly among younger generations (Aldabhy, 2022). Owing to its widespread dissemination, TikTok is now considered not only an entertainment platform but also a mobile-assisted language-learning tool for English language learners, owing to its accessibility and user-generated content that supports traditional learning methods. Moreover, TikTok's algorithms, designed to personalize content based on users' preferences, increase exposure to English-language content and support the acquisition of English knowledge (Fitria, 2023).

Purpose of this research

Based on the research mentioned above, TikTok is considered an effective tool for students in the language learning process due to its ease of use, time-saving, creativity, and recreational value. Many Asian countries are conducting thorough investigations into TikTok to assess its effectiveness in students' English learning. Meanwhile, Vietnam, which widely adopts English as a foreign language, has not conducted much research on the effectiveness of this platform. This highlights the need for articles that provide data on TikTok use in academic settings. This paper further examines another perspective on Vietnamese university students' use of TikTok to improve their English proficiency.

Significance of the study

This research is valuable as a reference for university students seeking effective strategies to enhance their English language skills through social media. By investigating their peers' perceptions and practices, the study empowers students to make informed decisions about how to incorporate TikTok into their learning journeys. Understanding the effectiveness of learning English through TikTok will also prompt educators to consider this platform and to integrate it into educational settings. This research serves as a steppingstone toward a deeper understanding of how social media platforms can be used to foster language learning in the digital age.

Literature Review

The importance of social media in improving English skills

Since 2019, COVID-19 has severely affected the face-to-face education system worldwide (UNESCO, 2020). Citizens were restricted from gathering around to hold conversations or exchange messages, schools were closed, and students were quarantined due to social distancing. It hindered students' opportunities to practice and enhance their English skills through in-person interactions with peers and teachers (Rashid & Yadav, 2020). As a result, numerous online methods for learning English have been developed and adopted by teachers and instructors worldwide as an optimal alternative. According to Taj et al. (2016), language studies have benefited greatly from the increasing use of smart gadgets, especially mobile-

assisted language learning, which has the potential to broaden language learning beyond the traditional classroom.

Pham et al. (2023) stated that it is unquestionable that social media plays a key role in making things more straightforward. Particularly for language learning, the use of mobile applications in general and social media in particular has increased at an unprecedented rate in recent decades due to significant technological breakthroughs (Van & Duong, 2022). They also stated that social media is widely used by younger generations; thus, it is reasonable to expect that using this technology will improve the vocabulary knowledge and English proficiency of English learners in specific circumstances.

Introduction of TikTok

TikTok is a social media platform for short videos owned by ByteDance and developed by Zhang Yiming in 2016. Domestically known as Douyin, this program became a phenomenon in China. Due to its immense popularity, Douyin has spread to many nations under the new name TikTok (Pratiwi et al., 2021). It is a short-form mobile video platform that allows users to produce videos often lasting 15-60 seconds and share them with the larger TikTok community, which has emerged as an important social media platform in this day and age (Li et al., 2021). Lindsley (2022) noted that TikTok is particularly popular among the traditionally hard-to-reach 18–29 age cohort, as evidenced by data from the United States. 32.5% of users are aged 10–19, and 29.5% are aged 20–29. Therefore, TikTok can be considered as a networked public: it is a digital space constructed by networked architecture and contributed to by user communities that diversify its mediated environment (Boyd, 2007). Globally, TikTok is available in 150 countries and has 800 million monthly active users, with over 2 billion downloads. It was also the most downloaded smartphone app in 2018 and 2019, surpassing Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram (Perez, 2018).

TikTok's popularity and usefulness in language learning among university students in Asia

In Asian countries that teach English as a second or foreign language, TikTok has established its position among university students in the digital era. Xiuwen and Razali (2021) stated that the popularity of TikTok among Chinese international undergraduate students has led them to use it as a learning tool. In Indonesia, Sarkila et al. (2024) as well as Simanungkalit and Katemba (2023) indicated TikTok as an easy-to-use feature of TikTok among students. Specifically, they pointed out that anyone can use it, such as for the reuse of the platform's videos, unlimited learning experience, joy and relaxation when learning, and ease of exploring native English speakers' content. In Thailand, Luangmang (2023) found that TikTok can be used as a teaching and learning tool in the classroom. Both teachers and students can adopt this tool in order to leverage the learning process.

In Malaysia, Abdullah et al. (2023) reported that TikTok is an effective tool for boosting language skills and is widely accepted by students nationwide. In Vietnam, another EFL country, TikTok is widely used, and it demonstrates usefulness through helping students sharpen their English for school (Ngo, 2024; Nguyen & Tran, 2024).

In Indonesia, Simanungkalit and Katemba (2023) reported that students mostly agreed that learning through TikTok can greatly improve their vocabulary, pronunciation, and conversation by following the example of the speaker in the video. Researchers mention duet challenges as a crucial factor contributing to TikTok's uniqueness. Zaitun et al. (2021) found that using the TikTok app to learn English is highly engaging and effective at boosting students' confidence and language proficiency, as evidenced by the sharp rise in their test scores.

Xiuwen and Razali (2021) from China examined TikTok's effectiveness in English learning, finding that the platform offers opportunities for short video sharing, which may be particularly effective for English as a foreign language (EFL) undergraduates learning English communication skills. In the listening and speaking sector, TikTok enables EFL young learners to develop their listening and speaking in English by accessing short videos that teach English-language communication. In terms of reading and writing abilities, Zeng and Gopez (2025) indicated that TikTok offers English-learning resources on popular subjects that help pupils improve their vocabulary and grammar, thereby becoming more proficient readers and writers of English.

Not only in school, but students can also use TikTok as a platform for self-study anytime, anywhere. In Malaysia, Tan et al.'s (2022) research found that students can learn at their own pace, grasp the material, and advance toward a deeper understanding of English concepts and structures through TikTok. They can also learn how to express themselves inside and outside of the classroom.

In Vietnam, TikTok use is widespread, and students, particularly university students, prefer it as an effective tool for learning English (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). Their findings demonstrated that students generally held positive views of TikTok for enhancing their speaking abilities through vocabulary development. TikTok is also considered a tool that increases motivation and confidence when learning English, as Pham et al. (2023) reported that duet videos on TikTok are an effective way for students to learn adjectives, as they enjoy creating them. In addition, helps students remember English adjectives while simultaneously providing them with inspiration and fun. Tran (2023) also describes TikTok as a good tool for learning English. The author found that using TikTok videos as an English-learning approach improved students' retention of English vocabulary. Not only students but also teachers can use this platform to help learners learn how to use and interact with TikTok (Tran, 2023).

Research gaps

In Vietnam, there is limited research on how university students use TikTok as a tool for studying English. While TikTok's popularity and potential for English language learning are unquestionable, and there has been a lot of research from countries using English as a foreign language (EFL), such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, etc., the number of studies specifically exploring how Vietnamese university students utilize the platform for English language acquisition remains limited. This limitation of localized research, in contrast to the numerous investigations in neighboring EFL countries, underscores the need for further exploration into the specific contexts and practices within the Vietnamese educational landscape (Nguyen & Tran, 2024). This study will serve as a reference for university students seeking a scientific review of learning English via TikTok and for further study of TikTok.

Research theory

This study adopted Hug's (2005) microlearning theory to explore how TikTok, a mobile-assisted language learning tool, supports language learning. The microlearning theory emphasizes that learners are able to improve language skills through brief, focused, and repetitive content. The largest advantage of this method is cognitive, as Lopez (2024) found in his research that students can acquire substantial knowledge from various sources; therefore, the perceived knowledge will be more varied and robust than in traditional learning, where students learn from 1 material. Gabrielli et al. (2017) indicated that microlearning theory is the future as technology is widely applied worldwide. They also stated that in a classroom setting, students can learn effectively without feeling overwhelmed. Another study by Silva et al. (2025)

found that microlearning can enhance motivation, performance, and classroom interaction when combined with digital tools such as short films, mobile applications, and online platforms. It also supports collaborative learning and the growth of digital skills. Therefore, this theory aligns with TikTok's features, and this study will investigate how effectively TikTok supports students' English language development.

Research Questions

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

1. What is the attitude of Vietnamese university students when using TikTok as a medium to learn English?
2. What English skills do Vietnamese university students improve by using TikTok?

Methodology

Design of the Study

This study employed a quantitative research method, using a single questionnaire (administered in English and Vietnamese) to collect data from university students in Vietnam. To ensure the questionnaire's validity and reliability, the researchers will collect responses from a random sample of students across three regions of Vietnam: the North, Central, and South.

Data collection and analysis

The researchers developed a questionnaire in Google Forms comprising three main sections. Attendees would receive a link to a Google Forms survey created by the researchers to assess the effectiveness of TikTok for English learning, and they would complete it. The collecting data process lasted for one month, from March to April, 2025.

The first section collected educational data through 4 questions: year in school, TikTok use, university, and region. The second part investigated their habits and attitudes when using TikTok to enhance their English skills, using six questions adapted from Pham et al. (2023), who studied the attitudes of university students at Van Lang University, Vietnam. The measurement was based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

In the last section, six questions were adapted from Nguyen and Tran (2024), which examined the improvement of speaking skills through TikTok. In this section, students answered questions about the skills they improved through learning on TikTok. The measurement was based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly Agree).

In the questionnaire, the researchers included concentration-checking questions (e.g., "Choose the Red color" and "Choose the Purple color"). After collecting all results, the study would use IBM SPSS Statistics 26 to analyze the data, verify the findings, and draw conclusions.

Participants

The questionnaires were initially distributed to 111 Vietnamese university students. After excluding invalid responses, the final sample comprised 105 Vietnamese university students from the North, Central, and South regions of Vietnam who had used TikTok for learning English. All of them are learning English as a foreign language at their universities. The

respondents are divided into 4 groups, including freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior. All of the demographic data are shown in the tables below.

Table 1

Status of students attending the research

Status	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Freshman	9	7.6	7.6	7.6
Sophomore	36	34.3	34.3	41.9
Junior	9	6.7	6.7	48.6
Senior	51	48.6	48.6	97.1
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 2

Using TikTok rates of participants

Answer	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No	6	5.5	5.5	5.5
Yes	105	94.5	94.5	100.0
Total	111	100.0	100.0	

Tables 1 and 2 displayed that among the 105 respondents, the majority were seniors, with 51 people seizing 48.57% in total, followed by 36 university sophomores, who accounted for 34.29%; 8 freshmen took hold of 7.62%; juniors, with 7 students, grasped 6.67%; and finally, 3 graduate students grabbed 2.85% in total. TikTok is widely used by most of the students attending the survey, with 94.5%, and a part of 5.5% reported that they have not used it at all.

Table 3

Geographical information of participants

Area	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
North area	28	26.7	26.7	26.7
Central area	9	8.6	8.6	35.2
South area	68	64.8	64.8	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

In terms of geographical areas in Table 3, most respondents were from the South area (64.76%), followed by the North (26.67%) and the Central (8.57%).

Table 4*TikTok using duration daily of participants*

Time using daily	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-2 hours	69	65.7	65.7	65.7
3-4 hours	14	13.3	13.3	79.0
5-6 hours	3	2.9	2.9	81.9
Less than 1 hour	17	16.2	16.2	98.1
More than 6 hours	2	1.9	1.9	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Regarding the time Vietnamese university students spend on TikTok daily, the largest proportion (65.71%) reported spending 1-2 hours. Other students using TikTok for less than 1 hour daily seized 16.19%; from 3 to 4 hours, 13.33%; from 5 to 6 hours, 2.86%; and more than 6 hours, 1.90% in total.

Table 5*Preferred video duration on TikTok*

Video duration	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under 15 seconds	10	9.5	9.5	9.5
15 - 30 seconds	40	38.1	38.1	47.6
31 - 45 seconds	32	30.5	30.5	78.1
46 seconds - Under 1 minute	10	9.5	9.5	87.6
1 - 1.5 minutes	5	4.8	4.8	92.4
More than 1.5 minutes	8	7.6	7.6	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Mentioning learning English specifically, the study asked a question about the duration of English learning videos that the students prefer when browsing TikTok. A great part of the respondents reported that they are prone to consuming English learning content for 15-30 seconds, seizing 38.10%, and 31-45 seconds, with 30.58%. Both the under 15-second and 46-second to 1-minute video formats received the same results of 9.52% from the students. The rest of the students reported that they prefer videos lasting from 1 to 1.5 minutes (4.76%) and more than 1.5 minutes for each video (6.67%).

Results/Findings

Table 6

Reliability of the questionnaire

Cronbach's Alpha		Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
0.801		0.791	12

The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire was found to be $\alpha = 0.801$, which was proved reliable due to Hair (2014).

Attitude of Vietnamese university students when using TikTok as a medium to learn English

Table 7

Satisfaction when using TikTok as a medium to learn English

Satisfaction	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Strongly Disagree	2	1.9	1.9	1.9
Disagree	4	3.8	3.8	5.7
Neutral	19	18.1	18.1	23.8
Agree	65	61.9	61.9	85.7
Strongly Agree	15	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

To investigate students' attitudes toward learning English on TikTok, the authors created a question asking them to rate their satisfaction with using TikTok as a tool for studying English. According to Table 6, the proportion of students satisfied with the platform was 61.9%, the highest among all. Another 14.3% of pupils strongly approved of TikTok as a platform for sharpening their English skills. In contrast, a small group of students who were dissatisfied with learning on TikTok selected 3.8% as unsatisfying and 1.9% as strongly unsatisfying. Additionally, 19 students expressed uncertainty about how they felt when using the platform, accounting for 18.1 percent.

Table 8

Willingness to apply knowledge learned on TikTok into daily communication

Option	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Always	5	4.8	4.8	4.8
Often	47	44.8	44.8	49.5
Rarely	8	7.6	7.6	57.1
Sometimes	45	42.9	42.9	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

Table 9*Willingness to recommend TikTok as a medium to learn English to others*

Answer	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Maybe	38	36.2	36.2	36.2
No	10	9.5	9.5	45.7
Yes	57	54.3	54.3	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

After learning English from TikTok videos, the students were asked about their willingness to apply what they had learned in real communication situations. Respondents reported the frequency with which they applied English knowledge from TikTok in daily communication, with 44.76% indicating "often," 42.86% "sometimes," 7.62% "rarely," and 4.76% "always." The researchers continued to investigate university students' willingness to introduce TikTok as an English learning method to others. The results showed that more than half of the respondents (54.29%) stated they would recommend TikTok as a method for learning English, while 36.19% were uncertain, and 9.52% would not recommend it.

*English skills improved by using TikTok***Table 10***Item Statistics of the questions investigating English skills improved by using TikTok*

No.	Content	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	N
1	Learning English on TikTok improves my listening skill	3.87	4.0	0.721	105
2	Learning English on TikTok improves my reading skill	3.19	4.0	0.606	105
3	Learning English on TikTok improves my writing skill	2.94	3.0	0.745	105
4	Learning English on TikTok improves my speaking skill	3.70	3.0	0.887	105
5	TikTok increases my confidence to use English for communicating	3.51	4.0	0.921	105
6	TikTok increases my motivation to learn English beyond the classroom	3.73	4.0	0.891	105

In Table 10, there were 4 main English skills, including listening, reading, writing, and speaking, and 2 further abilities, including confidence to use English and motivation to learn English beyond the classroom. 2 skill improvements received strong student advocacy: listening and speaking, with mean values of 3.87 and 3.70, respectively. The other 2 skills which are reading and writing skills, had the mean values of 3.19 and 2.94 for each. Confidence in using English to communicate had a mean of 3.51, and motivation to learn English beyond the

classroom had a mean of 3.73. The standard deviation of 6 questions ranged from 0.606 to 0.921 in all 105 responses.

Table 11

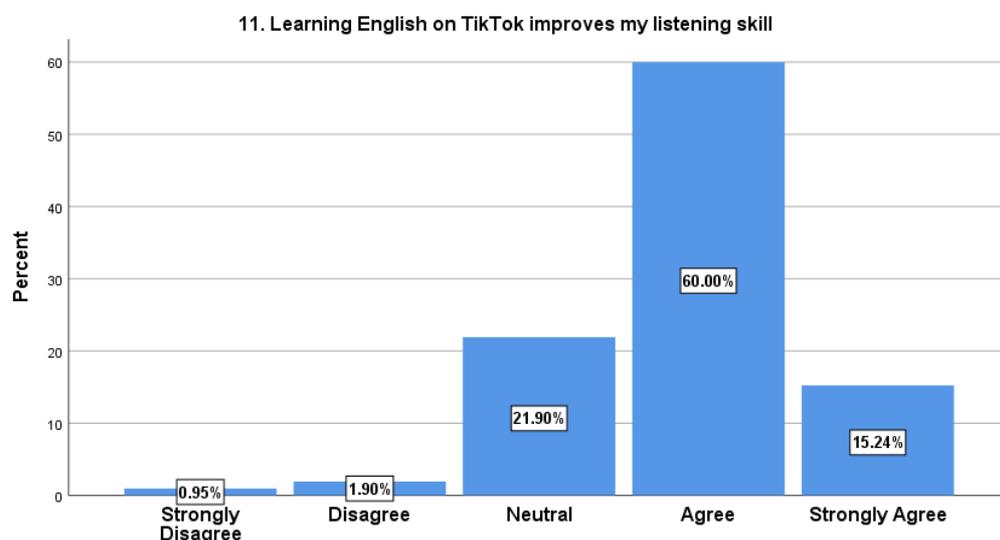
Inter-Item Correlation Matrix of the questions investigating English skills improved by using TikTok

No.	Content	11. Learning English on TikTok improves my listening skill	12. Learning English on TikTok improves my reading skill	13. Learning English on TikTok improves my writing skill	14. Learning English on TikTok improves my speaking skill	15. TikTok increases my confidence to use English for communicating	16. TikTok increases my motivation to learn English beyond the classroom
1	Learning English on TikTok improves my listening skill	1.000	0.169	0.218	0.404	0.495	0.498
2	Learning English on TikTok improves my reading skill	0.169	1.000	0.387	0.213	0.167	0.255
3	Learning English on TikTok improves my writing skill	0.218	0.387	1.000	0.425	0.366	0.397
4	Learning English on TikTok improves my speaking skill	0.404	0.213	0.425	1.000	0.729	0.483
5	TikTok increases my confidence to use English for communicating	0.495	0.167	0.366	0.729	1.000	0.602
6	TikTok increases my motivation to learn English beyond the classroom	0.498	0.255	0.397	0.483	0.602	1.000

Listening skills

Figure 1

Rates of improvement in English listening skills after using TikTok

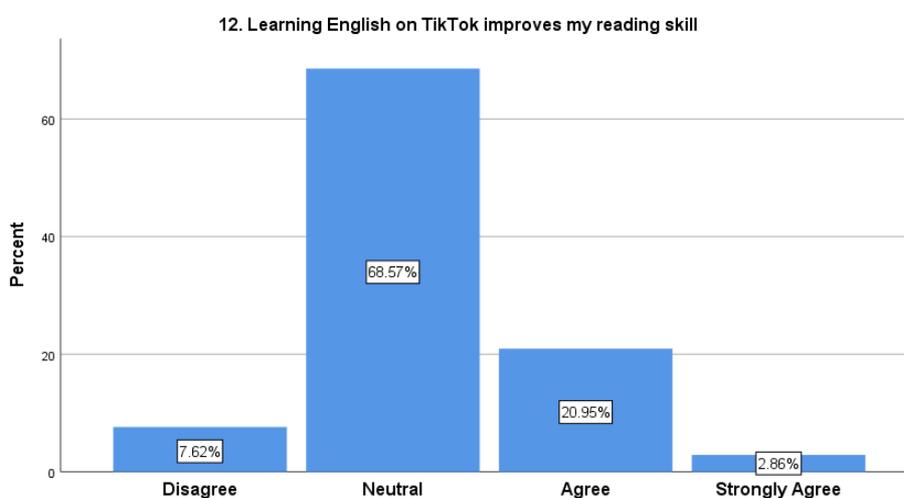


According to Figure 1, a large proportion of respondents (60%) confirmed that studying English on TikTok improves their listening abilities, while 21.90% stated that they were on the neutral side. 15.24% of the total students emphasized that TikTok has effectively leveraged their listening skills. Small percentages of pupils who did not agree with the effectiveness of TikTok in enhancing skills were 1.9% Disagree and 0.95% Strongly Disagree. According to the mean and median values of 3.87 and 4.00 in Table 10, respectively, listening skill was reported to have a strong relationship with students' motivation to learn English beyond the classroom and with students' confidence in using English for communication, with correlation coefficients of 0.498 and 0.495 in Table 11.

Reading skills

Figure 2

Rates of improving English reading skill after using TikTok

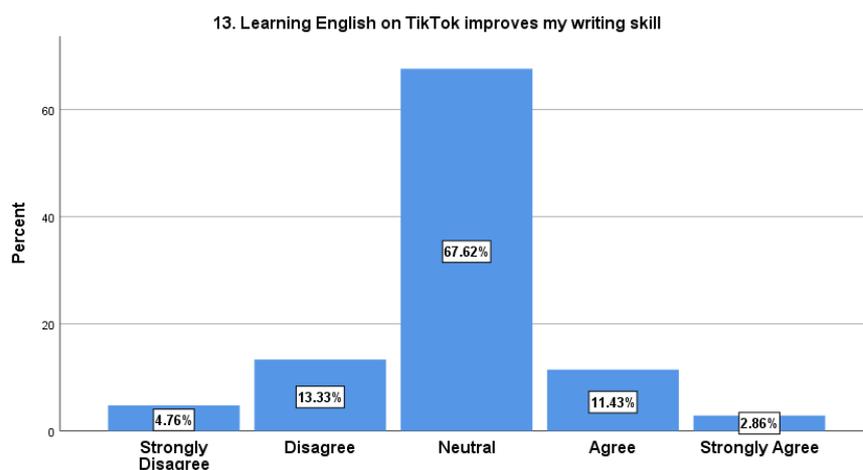


Regarding the advantage of TikTok in assisting students with their reading skills, as demonstrated in Figure 2. Specifically, 68.57% of students reported holding a neutral opinion regarding the use of TikTok to enhance their reading abilities. Combining the mean and median values of 3.19 and 3.0 for each in Table 10, it is strongly confirmed that the respondents were on the neutral side. However, the Agree and Strongly Agree rates were 20.95% and 2.86%, respectively. A small proportion (7.62%) of students did not consider TikTok a platform for sharpening their reading skills.

Writing skills

Figure 3

Rates of improvement in English writing skills after using TikTok

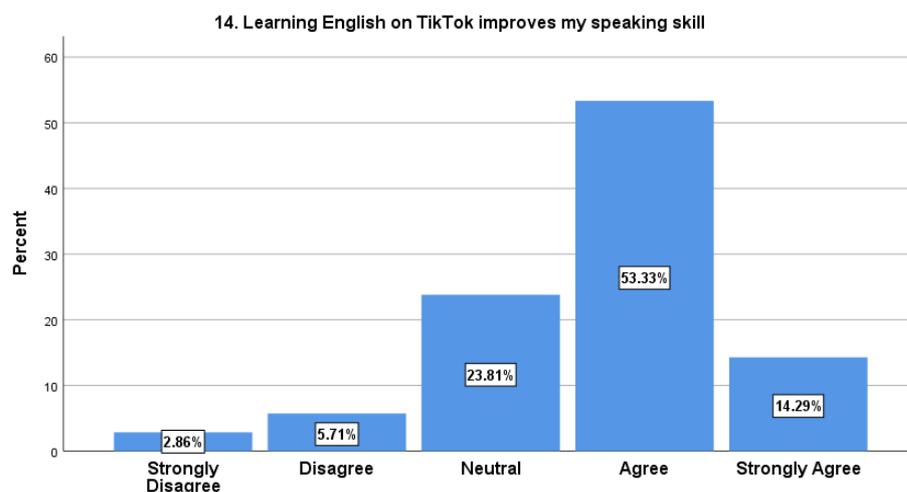


The study continued to assess the advantage of TikTok in helping students enhance their writing ability. Most of the students chose the neutral option, with the rate being 67.62%. There was a recognition of improvement in writing skills, especially displayed by Agree and Strongly Agree percentages of 11.43% and 2.86%, respectively. However, TikTok may not be as strongly recommended in terms of improving writing ability because of the larger disagreement rate (13.33% disagree, and 4.76% strongly disagree).

Speaking skills

Figure 4

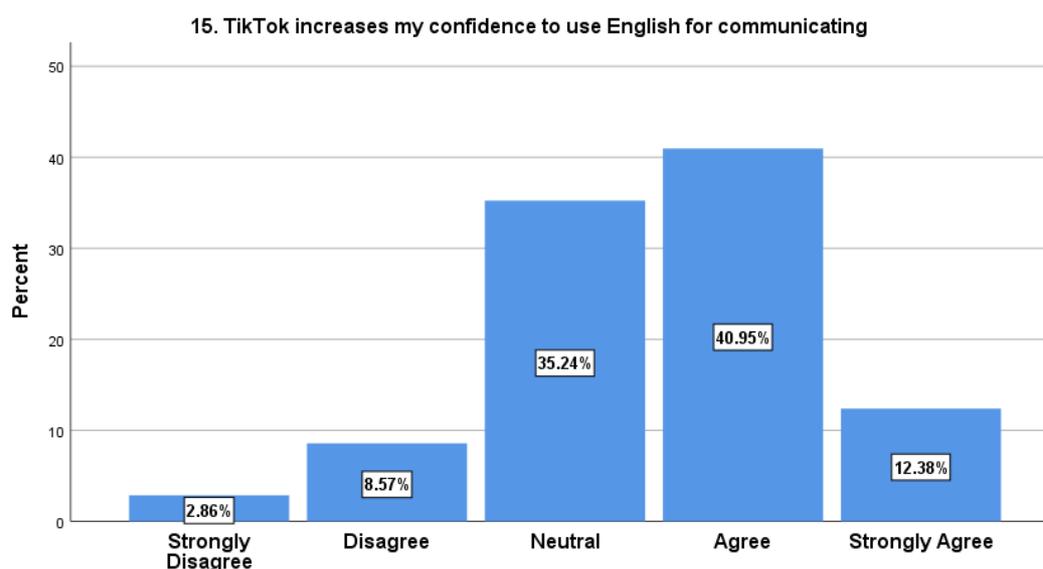
Rates of improvement in English-speaking skills after using TikTok



Regarding speaking skills, many respondents agreed that TikTok enhances their speaking skills, with "agree" and "strongly agree" percentages of 53.33% and 14.29%, respectively. Even though disagreement persisted, with rates of Strongly Disagree and Disagree at 2.86% and 5.71%, respectively, they accounted for only small parts of the total sample. In addition, 23.81% of students were unsure whether they could improve their writing skills by using TikTok. According to Table 11, speaking skills are strongly linked with the confidence of students when using English, displaying a correlation value of 0.729, and motivation for further English learning, with a value of 0.483.

Figure 5

Confidence in daily communication



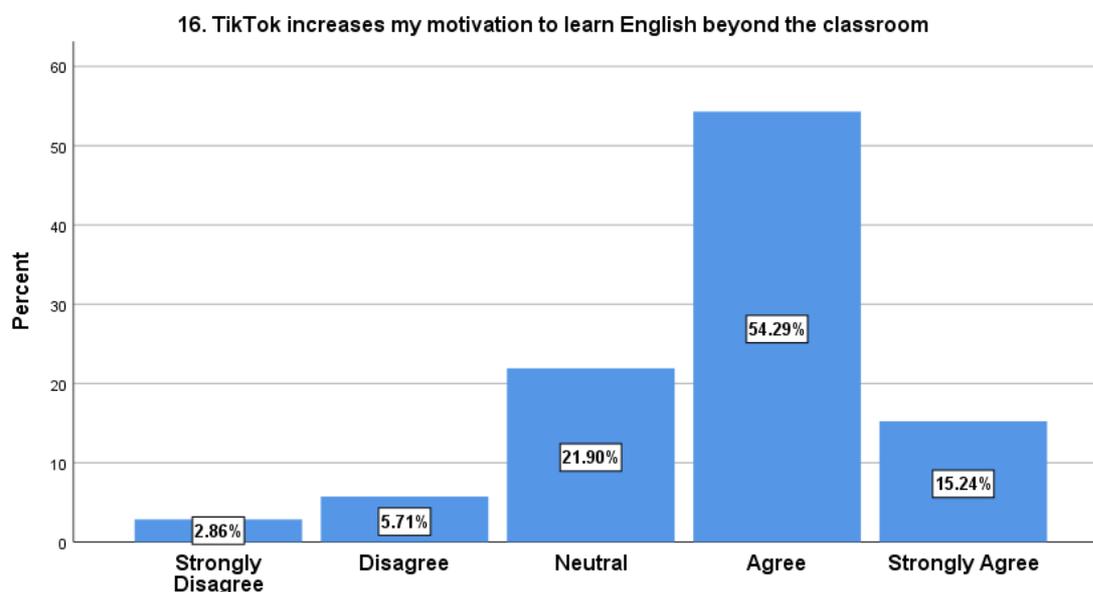
Confidence in daily communication after using TikTok

To further investigate whether students become more confident in daily conversations by using TikTok for practice, the researchers asked them to evaluate their communication confidence after using the platform and analyzed the results to draw a precise conclusion. A majority of respondents (40.95% agree and 12.38% strongly agree) supported the statement that TikTok helps them feel more confident in communicating with others. However, a significant number of students (35.24% in total) remained neutral, indicating that they did not clearly perceive TikTok's effectiveness in enhancing their communication confidence. A small group of students expressed disagreement regarding TikTok's role in boosting their confidence, with 8.57% disagreeing and 2.86% strongly disagreeing. Overall, TikTok has a positive effect on students' communication confidence.

Motivation to learn English beyond the classroom

Figure 6

Motivation improvement to learn English beyond the classroom after using TikTok



In the last part of the questionnaire, the authors asked the students to evaluate whether TikTok inspires them to learn English after their main English class and synthesize their points of view. Over half (54.29%) of the respondents agreed, and another 15.24% strongly agreed that TikTok increases their motivation to learn English after class. Over one-fifth of the students (21.90%) had a balanced view of this platform's role in helping them learn English beyond the class. In contrast, a small group of pupils show their dissatisfaction with the statement (5.71% disagree and 2.86% strongly disagree).

Discussion

The results of the studies

Attitude of Vietnamese university students toward using TikTok for learning English

Vietnamese university students widely use TikTok for English learning, with 94.5% of participants engaging with the platform, particularly seniors aiming for B1 proficiency required for graduation. TikTok's simplicity, as noted by Sarkila et al. (2024), makes it accessible, especially for the 18-29 age group (Lindsley, 2022). Most students (65.7%) spend 1-2 hours daily on TikTok, exceeding the global average of about one hour (Duarte, 2026). They prefer short-form videos (15-45 seconds), consistent with Tan et al. (2022) and Xiuwen and Razali (2021), who highlight the effectiveness of concise content for short attention spans and English proficiency. Students frequently apply knowledge acquired through TikTok to daily communication, with 54.3% willing to recommend it, supporting Pratiwi et al. (2021) and Sarkila et al. (2024) in characterizing its growing role as a learning tool.

English skills improved through practicing on TikTok

Regarding listening ability, TikTok has received strong support from attendees: 60% agree and 15.24% strongly agree that it significantly enhances their listening skills. Moreover, with a correlation of 0.498 between listening and improvement in motivation, it is highly likely that if

a student successfully improves their listening skills through TikTok, their motivation to learn English will also increase. Therefore, TikTok is considered a platform that helps university students improve their English listening skills. The same conclusion was reached by Sarkila et al. (2024), who stated that TikTok offers opportunities for students to develop their English skills, including listening. To enhance the effectiveness of TikTok in the listening sector, Xiuwen and Razali (2021) stated that English-language learning materials in the short-video format on TikTok could be used to help young learners improve their English listening.

Regarding reading ability, more than 68% of students selected the neutral option, indicating uncertainty about whether TikTok is a useful tool for improving their reading skills. However, TikTok may have improved students' reading skills, as over 20% of students reported it helped them sharpen their reading skills. This result, in contrast to Zeng and Gopez's (2025) research, found that students' reading fluency significantly improved when they used TikTok to practice their reading. Moreover, using TikTok as a teaching tool in higher vocational applied writing courses can enhance students' creativity and improve their learning outcomes. Writing skill also showed the same pattern as reading skill, receiving a large number of neutral responses from respondents, accounting for over 67% in total. It means that they neither confirmed nor denied that TikTok is helpful for writing skills, but they did not underestimate the platform.

More than 53% of students endorsed TikTok for improving speaking skills. Moreover, when the speaking ability of a student has been boosted, the confidence in using English and motivation to learn this language can be significantly improved, as the correlation value between speaking skill and confidence as well as motivation was 0.729 and 0.783, respectively. Therefore, TikTok is highly advocated for sharpening the speaking skills of Vietnamese university students. This finding aligns with that of Sarkila et al. (2024), who state that TikTok provides opportunities for students to improve their English skills, including speaking, grammar, pronunciation, and acquiring new English vocabulary. Xiuwen and Razali (2021) also confirmed that TikTok significantly enhances students' speaking skills, particularly pronunciation, through a range of platform materials. Tan et al. (2022) noted that the Duet feature contributes to TikTok's popularity as a tool for learning to speak. Specifically, Tan et al. (2022) affirmed that TikTok has a positive impact on pupils' English proficiency, as they can practice the language in real-world situations accessible through TikTok's duet challenge concept. If TikTok improves speaking skills, it is very likely to also boost users' confidence in using English.

Among Vietnamese university students who used TikTok to improve their English, 40.95% agreed that TikTok helped them increase their self-confidence in daily communication. Thus, TikTok appears to be an effective tool for boosting students' confidence in using English. This conclusion aligns with Zaitun et al. (2021), which emphasized that using the TikTok application for English learning is highly interactive and effective in improving students' confidence and skills.

In terms of motivation to learn English, over 54% of students agree that TikTok inspires them to learn English in and out of the classroom. Therefore, TikTok is considered a platform that amplifies Vietnamese university students' motivation to sharpen their English skills beyond their main English classroom. It also supports an environment for learning English inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, Taj et al. (2016) concluded that students can learn to manifest themselves in and out of the classroom environment. Pham et al. (2023) reached the same conclusion: language studies have benefited greatly from the increasing use of smart devices, which have the potential to broaden language learning beyond the traditional classroom and make it easier.

Overall, the findings suggest that TikTok plays a positive role in supporting English language learners, particularly in listening and speaking. In addition, the students' motivation and self-confidence are leveraged when using the platform as a practice space. However, there is a need to improve content on reading and writing to provide a more comprehensive learning experience.

Conclusion

Main findings from the study

Attitude of Vietnamese university students toward using TikTok for learning English

The findings showed that most Vietnamese university students used TikTok for 1-2 hours daily, nearly an hour more than the global average reported by Duarte (2026). Therefore, university students in Vietnam engage with TikTok's content more frequently than normal users. In terms of their favorite types of English learning videos, students tend to consume short-form videos, particularly 15–30 second videos, followed by 31–45 second videos, more than those exceeding 1 minute. This suggests that short-form videos appeal more to students than longer ones, and that concise content is more effective when it aligns with students' short attention spans. The students demonstrated a strong tendency to apply knowledge acquired on TikTok to real-life communication, and TikTok has become a tool for improving their daily English conversation.

English skills enhanced by using TikTok

Through statistical analysis, the researchers found that when Vietnamese university students use TikTok as a MALL method, their English proficiency improves in multiple areas, particularly listening and speaking, which received the most students' endorsement. In terms of writing and reading skills, TikTok showed positive results by assisting a portion of students in improving their listening and reading abilities. However, some students disagreed, noting little improvement in writing and reading skills after using TikTok. Therefore, TikTok creators should produce more content that focuses on developing university students' listening and reading skills.

The research concluded that TikTok has demonstrated a clear positive effect on students' daily communication in English, improving their confidence after using the application. Moreover, TikTok was considered a useful tool for inspiring university students in Vietnam to learn English both within and beyond the classroom. By providing opportunities for self-practice and interpersonal practice, students can now use English both inside and outside the classroom.

Implications and Contributions

By conducting research on the effectiveness of TikTok in improving English skills among Vietnamese university students, both teachers and students can gain a broader understanding of how to apply social media applications in English language learning within Vietnamese educational institutions. Among learners, those who use TikTok for entertainment are also aware that it can help them sharpen their English skills, in addition to its recreational function. Accordingly, the application can serve as both a platform for students to learn English and a space for them to relax after hours of study. Through various functions that assist students, such as shadowing, duets, and language challenges, TikTok creates an active learning environment. Boredom will be minimized, and productivity will be maximized. With teachers and instructors, instead of assigning paper homework after English class, they can now cheer up their students by asking them to use English to actively express themselves on TikTok. As a result, the

classroom can be a modern and engaging environment that encourages students to attend class more effectively.

Limitations of the study

A limitation of this study is the small number of students that can be investigated in Vietnam; the focus is only on university students, and the study does not examine differences in the experiences of students at different levels. Because the study employed a quantitative research method, the researchers examined only the behavior and outcomes of their English learning process on TikTok. To explore the reasons behind it, further study should incorporate qualitative methods. The next limitation is about the number of respondents. Because this study collected only 105 responses, it is impossible to generalize to the opinions of all university students in Vietnam. Last but not least, the learning environment (formal vs. informal) may influence how students interact with TikTok; students in less formal settings may have different motivations and outcomes. Differences in access to technology and internet connectivity may affect how students in different areas use TikTok to learn.

Recommendations for Further Research

First, in domestic settings, a larger sample size could be used to draw more accurate conclusions. As the number of students increases, more opinions will be collected. Based on this, the effectiveness of TikTok for learning English will be examined across various student groups with different ages, educational backgrounds, and English proficiency levels. Qualitative data should also be collected as a more solid source to conclude the effectiveness of TikTok in helping students improve their English skills. Specifically, further research can elucidate the rationale for that improvement, thereby yielding more profound conclusions.

Secondly, the study found that TikTok is highly regarded for English listening and speaking skills, whereas it showed a more neutral profile in reading and writing. Therefore, in further research, authors can investigate why TikTok is highly beneficial for listening and speaking skills. On the other hand, with reading and writing skills, researchers can more deeply investigate the reasons why TikTok receives limited approval from students; from that, they can identify solutions to help students fully improve their English proficiency.

Teachers' perspectives on TikTok in education also warrant future study, particularly its incorporation into instruction. Teachers may raise concerns about the quality of TikTok content, such as disinformation or errors. Alternatively, research on support tools might examine how instructors perceive TikTok as a learning tool, enabling students to use English in informal contexts. These points would shed further light on how TikTok may be utilized effectively in language learning, as well as the problems and opportunities the platform presents.

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Biodata

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Call to Action: Translingual Writing Pedagogy and Students' Perceptions in Nepali Multicultural Classrooms

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ABSTRACT

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In Nepal, an English-only policy is dominant in most EFL classrooms of public schools. Moreover, English is taught as a subject rather than a language. Therefore, there is a strong need to conduct research on how this policy has impacted students' cognitive and linguistic skills in public schools. Studies on students' perceptions and experiences have been inadequate in Nepal because qualitative research on translingual pedagogy has not been a priority. Therefore, this study investigates the improvements and impacts of translingual writing (code-meshing) at Nepal's community schools. To address this gap, a qualitative research method was adopted, particularly through observations and focus group discussions with students. The data was collected from eight tenth graders and one EFL teacher. The research site was a public, basic school (grades 1-8) in Dhankuta. The study demonstrates that students completed their English assignments and participated in conversations when they were permitted to code-mesh between Nepali and English whenever permitted. This practice implies that a translingual approach provides EFL students with a conducive environment in which to write and speak more confidently, drawing on multiple linguistic sources.

Introduction

Nepal is a multiethnic, multilingual, and multi-religious country. Nepal is a small South Asian country where 142 different mother tongues are officially recognized (CBS, 2021). Nepali is the national language. While the majority of people (44%) speak Nepali (the official language) as their mother tongue, 11.6% speak Maithili as their first language. 5.98% speak Bhojपुरi, 55.88% speak Tharu, and 4.88% speak Tamang, respectively. The languages with fewer than 5% of the speakers are Bajika and Newar, which have 2.96% of the population. Only 1.02% speak Baitadeli, and 1.22% speak Gurung (CBS, 2021). Specifically, English is spoken by 0.01% of the population, placing it in 76th place nationwide (CBS, 2021). The linguistic, ethnic, and other characteristics are evident in the corpus.

Although private schools offer classes in English and the number of English speakers is increasing, Nepal does not recognize English as an official language. In this sense, English is still regarded as a foreign language in Nepal. The cultural diversity of Nepalese society is reflected in educational institutions, where classrooms are becoming increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse.

In multicultural classrooms, imposing only one language policy tends to privilege certain students and discomfort students from low-income families. Students who come from different cultural backgrounds tend to learn in different ways. Forcing students to master the four skills of English through rigid, rule-based exercises maximizes the risk of distorting students' language-acquisition instincts in the long term. English itself is not static. Different versions of English exist, such as Singaporean English, Indian English, South African English, and Indonesian English. Therefore, these classrooms with a variety of languages and cultures require pedagogical care or inclusive approaches. English teachers have a significant responsibility to design activities that support learners by building on their linguistic and cultural resources. There is a need for a translanguaging pedagogy that can accommodate students' home languages and backgrounds alongside the target language, such as English, so that students not only maintain linguistic identities but also enhance their English language proficiency.

When it comes to language learning in Nepal, the most common languages are English and Nepali, which are utilized in all private schools and in some public schools as the primary language of instruction for pupils from a wide range of backgrounds. English is still spoken as a foreign language in Nepal. The school where I teach English is almost full of students who speak Rai, Limbu, and Nepali as their mother tongue. "Code-meshing arises because of a sense of comfort in the way a speaker expresses it" (Sianipar & Tambunsaribu, 2022, p. 7). Code-meshing allows students to think more freely and use languages as they please. This practice fosters communication flow. However, code-meshing has not been used as a teaching tool or as a whole in the classroom in Nepal's context. The resources in the students' native languages are therefore not incorporated into classroom content. In other words, mother tongues are limited in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classrooms rather than being deployed. Code-meshing is not adopted in the process of creating meaning for them. This shows that students in Nepalese schools are forced to speak English at all costs. Nepal's education system is influenced by the monolithic ideology of the "English-only" policy to create a hostile environment for some learners. English-only policy perpetuates the use of dominant languages as the medium of instruction in classrooms. Moreover, instruction in EFL contexts is biased both linguistically and culturally. English dominates the linguistic and cultural diversity of multilingual classrooms. Among academics, language instruction has been a contentious issue in academic organizations in Nepal. English language proficiency is required as a subject.

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Nepal mandated English as a compulsory subject in grade 1 in 2003. Indeed, this ministry has adopted English as the language for studying English course materials and engaging in classroom interactions. Dearden (2014) asserts that enhancing English language proficiency is facilitated by instruction starting in the early grades. The earlier students begin learning English, the more proficient they will become. However, teaching English at a very young age is not the only method to achieve proficiency. Rather, language acquisition is the most important part of early childhood. A strong foundation in the mother tongue can help students acquire additional languages. As a multilingual country, it is common for students in each class to speak different mother tongues.

Educators should recognize the use of such linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms. The primary source of instruction in the classroom is the student's past knowledge. Inadequate qualitative research has been conducted on translanguaging pedagogies in the Nepalese context. Therefore, this issue has many implications and significant potential. The study investigates the perceptions of both teachers and students regarding diversity. This study examines students' perceptions of code-meshing and its effects on their participation in class through writing and verbal communication. This examination is important because most of these students speak different mother tongues and lack a strong foundation in English. Most people in this area are farmers, and they do not speak English. When students do not have opportunities to speak English outside the classroom, their English language proficiency is severely affected. The following two questions will guide this small-scale research:

- i. What perceptions do students have of translanguaging writing pedagogy in Nepali multilingual public-school classrooms?
- ii. How do students incorporate code-meshing and code-switching into their English writing exercises to improve their English?

Literature review

Translanguaging and translingualism are the same concept, but they exist in different genres—composition and teaching, respectively. However, in ESL or EFL contexts, these two notions overlap. Translanguaging and translingualism complement each other. Translanguaging is a process of creating meaning through hybrid and functionally grounded language. Ayash (2019) views translingualism as the fluid and mobile nature of language. She suggests that English teachers strive to understand the concrete practices in which language users engage and the possibilities that translingual approaches offer. Each language comprises components borrowed from other languages. No language is inherently pure. Translingualism relies on the flexible language use of bilingual and multilingual students to generate new insights and new language practices, such as those considered standard in academia (García & Wei, 2015). Canagarajah (2013) argues that when multilinguals blend their linguistic sources into English, they synthesize various forms of content and create new meaning. This is different from code-switching, where students use two or more languages as a form of translation, but in this process, they do not use different languages as fluid components to help them improve their cognitive skills and rhetorical awareness. The best method for teaching English linguistically is a translanguaging pedagogy in diverse classroom settings. Translanguaging in English language courses is more than just that, involving the use of L1 while acknowledging the student's overall language proficiency (Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Pham & Nguyen, 2024). Translanguaging tends to assist students in thinking critically, in making meaning from language sources, and in using languages fluidly.

Furthermore, translanguaging is a tool for learning a minority language. It improves students' proficiency in their second language and helps them to be proficient in the classroom (Beres, 2015). By using language and cultural allusions that a minority of speakers are accustomed to, students can break down barriers and break the silence, according to García and Wei (2015). Young (2014) speaks on behalf of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) and demands that African American English (AAE) speakers be allowed to mix AAE and Standard English in both academic and professional contexts to ensure effective communication and the articulation of ideas. In Nepal's context, students are encouraged to leave their home languages behind and focus on English to become proficient in it. This means most Nepali students are

not monolithic. Most of them are bilingual and multilingual students. Their brains are trained to process different linguistic components simultaneously and make sense of what they read, see, and hear. These students can perform better when allowed to think freely through code-meshing (Sharma, 2025). Code-meshing may not improve students' target language overnight, yet it allows their brains to negotiate with other languages and construct meaning.

Using translanguaging pedagogy in EFL classes benefits students who are reluctant to speak by giving them a chance to participate and improve their English fluency (Garcia & Wei, 2015). They learn through classroom participation and improve their academic achievement. For effective participation, students must be allowed to use what they are confident with. Realizing the need for the use of mother tongues, in 1974, the executive committee of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in the United States adopted the position that students had a right to live in their linguistic world and write in their mother tongues to maintain their linguistic identity (Perryman-Clark, 2015). Most countries, including Nepal, have multilingual and bilingual speakers. This resolution has given bilinguals and multilinguals some relief in words. Unfortunately, this resolution has not been implemented institutionally in most countries, including Nepal. In Nepal, students are under pressure to memorize English words, verb forms, sentence structures, and more. This is painful and unfair to them (Ranjit, 2024; Rai & Pokharel, 2025). English teachers must keep their students' challenges in mind. According to Seltzer et al. (2017), there are four reasons to use translanguaging strategically. In education, translanguaging means: a) helping students interact with linguistic sources, b) giving students the chance to understand difficult texts and content and cultivate academic language usage, c) creating room for students' bilingual identities and methods of knowing, and d) encouraging students to be bilingual. Ranjit (2024) argues that merging the L1 and the target language (English) is advantageous because bilingual components operate simultaneously, facilitating communicative efficacy. In Nepal, some students go to prominent schools. They speak standard English. Sharma (2025) points out that even when students speak a standardized language, they do not understand how local linguistic features and cultural references blend. Only speaking English perfectly does not guarantee a speaker's understanding of linguistic sources.

Ghimire et al. (2024) suggest that teachers can use bilingual textbooks and students' mother tongues in class discussions and facilitate students' understanding during exams, thereby achieving two goals simultaneously meeting the needs of multilingual students and complying with the English Medium Instruction (EMI) policy in Nepal. Likewise, Wei (2018) highlights the efficacy of EMI in situations where the language of instruction at school differs from students' native tongues. All of these studies highlight the importance of incorporating translanguaging techniques for Nepali EFL teachers. This study adopts Garcia and Weis's (2015) model of translanguaging pedagogy: idea generation, concept arrangement, revision and refinement, and final drafting. In addition, this study employs transformative pedagogy (Mezirow, 2000) to thematize data for clear understanding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transformative pedagogy places learners at the center and fosters collaboration and reflection for effective learning.

Methods

Design of Research

In order to investigate how translanguaging writing pedagogy can empower students in a linguistically diverse Nepali classroom, this study used a qualitative critical research design.

Because it challenges the monolingual ideologies that predominate in English Language Teaching (ELT) and aims to advance equity and agency among multilingual learners, a critical paradigm was selected (Canagarajah, 2013; Pennycook, 2010). Within this framework of translanguaging, the study examined teachers' and students' perceptions of code-meshing practices and their positive impact on writing confidence, fluency, and classroom participation, using an ethnographic observational approach conducted in the classroom. The study was conducted at a community-based basic school in the linguistically diverse Dhankuta District of Nepal. At this school, teaching English is required at the lower secondary level. The location was chosen because it exemplifies the type of multilingual learning setting that characterizes Nepali public education, where students predominantly speak Rai, Limbu, and Nepali (CBS, 2021).

Participants

Participants included 10 grade 8 students aged 14 to 16 and one English language teacher (the researcher) (Table 1). It was convenience sampling. Since this research site is in a remote area, the student population is insufficient. In remote areas of Nepal, population density does not vary proportionately. Moreover, the researcher encountered a shortage of research materials due to the remoteness. The majority of students were from multilingual households where the primary language was either Limbu, Rai, or Nepali. Informed consent was acquired from the school principal, participating students, and their parents, and participation was entirely voluntary. To preserve anonymity and moral integrity, pseudonyms were used in place of the students' real names (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Table 1:

Students' and a teacher's demographic information

S. N.	Students (Pseudonyms)	Mother tongue	Age	Interest in Translanguaging
1	Rakshya	Nepali	13	Yes
2	Bina	Nepali	13	Yes
3	Harka	Rai	14	Yes
4	Numa	Rai	13	Yes
5	Gita	Limbu	12	Yes
6	Kabita	Nepali	14	Yes
7	Prem	Nepali	13	Yes
8	Bal	Limbu	14	Yes
9	Hangma	Limbu	14	Yes
10	Lakpa	Limbu	14	Yes
1	Samar (English Teacher)	Nepali	36	Yes

Tools and Processes for Data Collection

Four primary tools were used to gather data during a six-week classroom observation. The researcher used both Nepali and English to collect data. Nepali was used more dominantly to elicit students' responses.

a. Participant Observation:

The teacher-researcher recorded student participation in translingual writing assignments and classroom interactions in diaries during and after class.

b. Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):

Two FGDs, each lasting roughly 45 minutes, were held to gather students' opinions on how they write and how comfortable they are using multiple languages during recess.

c. Brief casual discussions:

During class breaks, participants' thoughts were observed to document impromptu student responses and changing perspectives. They were asked whether they benefited from translingualism or translanguaging.

d. Journal keeping:

The researcher kept weekly reflections and analytical field notes while the students kept journals documenting their progress in translingual writing. For the "My Community writing assignment," students were free to use any language they wanted for brainstorming, drafting, and revision. Peer review, translation, and code-meshing were all specifically adopted to promote linguistic flexibility and individual expression. To follow García and Weis's (2014) model of translanguaging pedagogy, the activity was developed in four stages: idea generation, concept arrangement, revision and refinement, and final drafting.

Analysis of data

Using the critical lens of transformative pedagogy (Mezirow, 2000), the data were examined using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Recurring themes regarding linguistic identity, classroom participation, and writing confidence were identified by carefully reviewing field notes, student journals, and focus group transcripts. Based on Grounded Theory, the coding process involved three steps. Open coding involves highlighting student narratives related to language use and emotion, as well as recurrent words and phrases. Axial coding is the process of organizing starter codes into more general groups: code-meshing for confidence-building, students' prior knowledge, and translation and code-meshing in writing assignments. Selective coding allows for integrating important research to demonstrate how translingual education includes students' need for multiple languages or linguistic sources for meaning-making. Validity and credibility were increased through the triangulation of several data sources, including journals, FGDs and observations (Denzin, 2012). To recognize positionality as both a participant observer and an insider teacher, the researcher maintained reflexivity through consistent journaling and note-taking. The researcher read the notes repeatedly when developing the manuscript.

Results/Findings

- i. What perceptions do students have of translingual writing pedagogy in Nepali multilingual public-school classrooms?
- ii. How do students incorporate code-meshing and code-switching into their English writing exercises

The researcher employed Garcia and Wei's model of translanguaging pedagogy: idea generation, concept arrangement, revision and refinement, and final drafting during the study. Participants were allowed to use both Nepali and English and participate in translanguaging.

Practice of Translingual Writing

1. Idea Generation (My Community as the Theme): Students were asked to use prompts, like names, occupations of community people, likes and dislikes, natural beauty, social concerns, and future goals, to write about their communities during the first six days. They were urged to speak in any language, emphasizing concepts over precision. They felt more at ease when they spoke about their surroundings in their mother tongues. They shared a positive attitude towards the translingual practice.

2. Arranging Concepts: After presenting and debating their writing, the students rearranged their thoughts by recognizing terms from different languages. Peers, teachers, and dictionaries all assisted in refining and translating concepts into English. Topic sentences that support details and maintain coherence were emphasized. They found it more comfortable and convenient.

3. Revision and refinement: Students worked together to revise the content, grammar, and vocabulary during this phase. To improve their drafts, they turned to peer assistance and multilingual dictionaries (Nepali to English). They had a sense of control over their own learning and of co-producing texts.

4. Creating the finished draft: Peers praised the students as authors after they finished their My Community booklets. The way translingual pedagogy promotes transformation in multilingual classrooms is evident in the confidence and identity shifts that resulted from this realization. Based on their final draft, other findings are thematized as follows.

i. Code-meshing for confidence building

Traditional methods of teaching English frequently resemble the banking model proposed by Freire (2000) in which teachers impart knowledge to passive students. Such pedagogy imposes linguistic hierarchies while ignoring students' lived knowledge. According to the participants of the focus group, writing assignments in only one language left them feeling uneasy and uninspired. One student (Kabita) revealed, for instance, that she used to become very nervous when faced with English assignments, but that her confidence significantly increased once she was able to come up with ideas in her mother tongue and then switch to English:

Malai pahile English class man pardena thyo because English ma bolna aaudena thyo ani laaaz lagthyo. Tesaile math maa vanda English ko exam dar lagthyo. Class ma kahili kahi assignment nabujera chupa lagera basthe. Paxi new sir le English ra Nepali misayera lekha vannu vayo ani alia li confidence badyo.

[As we were supposed to speak English in class, I used to hate this lesson. I preferred math classes to English ones. I had to look down as I had no idea of some English assignments. Realizing our difficulties, our new sir (teacher) allowed us to mix both English and Nepali at our convenience, resulting in better confidence.]

Still, many English teachers may enforce strict English-speaking environments in class, which does not improve students' English but discourages them from developing their creative and critical thinking skills due to the barrier of English. Nguyen (2022) did a study and found that most students were interested in translanguaging, but institutional policies did not allow them to practice it. A language does not reflect someone's talent or creativity. English should be taught as a language, not as content in multilingual classrooms. Some teachers tend to focus on grammatical rules, formatting, and quantity rather than on students' engagement in learning processes, creativity, and expression. Students' linguistic proficiency is judged by products, not processes. This idea is in line with Mezirow's (2000) concept of transformative pedagogy, which is education that challenges unfair practices to foster critical awareness.

ii. Students' previous knowledge

All the participating students frequently reported that using plurilingual strategies allowed them to express their thoughts and feelings more freely. Gita, another participant, said that she enjoyed learning English when her peers actively engaged in the code-meshing instruction:

Jaba hamro new sir le copy ma garo English word tipera rakhnu ani timile pohor saal gareko five interesting activities ko barema Nepali ra English use garera bola vannu vayo ani hamile sajilo sanga bolna sakyoo. Tespachi sangai bench maa basne sathi sanga interact gardai sabai kura lekha vannu hunthyo. Yo idea dherai ramro lagyo.

[As our new teacher instructed us to note down potential difficult words on a piece of paper and share any five interesting activities that we did the previous year, using English and Nepali, back and forth. As a result, we could share it in English easily. After that, he would tell us to write everything we shared through interactions with bench partners. All of us appreciated this technique.]

When students are not exposed to many English-speaking activities, English teachers should allow them to speak about something they can easily remember. English teachers could ask them to share something from their past. English teachers must specify the number of things, such as any five, any two, about your brother or best friend. These results support Andrade's (2009) claim that assessing students' prior knowledge fosters productive teamwork in which bilinguals and multilinguals engage in meaning-making and co-produce meaning. This shifts pedagogy from teacher-centered to learner-driven. Furthermore, this exercise echoes Sherma's (2024) emphasis on writing through interactions to keep the writing momentum.

iii. Translation and code-meshing in writing assignments

The process demystified learning English, according to the participants. Previously, Harka, thought he would never learn English. Nevertheless, he gradually became interested in translanguaging writing, learned how to draft in his mother tongue and even created a journal about his everyday life as a village boy:

Pahile ta English book bata sarnu matra garthe. Kati kura bujeko hunna thyo. English homework gardina thiye. Ani naya sir le English improve garne tarika dinu vayo. Maile Nepali ra English mix garera euta journal copy ma daily one paragraph lekhna thale. School gayeko, kheleko, daura liyeko, gol kheleko barema. Maile euta journal ready gareko chu. Aba euta photo tasna baki xa.

[I used to copy answers from the textbook. I would hardly understand anything. I would not do any English homework. Our new teacher shared some strategies for improving English. I started writing a paragraph in one of my notebooks each day, mixing both Nepali and English. I would write about my trip to school, break time, collecting firewood, football matches, etc. My journal is almost ready. I need to stick a photo to it.]

Another student Bal added:

Ma sanga Nepali-English dictionary cha. Jaba lekhne kaam dinu huncha, ma Nepali words ra English meanings khojchu. Dherai time lagxa. Kaile kahi I mix all words but no Nepali word. Esari lekhda mero work complete huncha ani no punishment.

[I have a Nepali-English dictionary. When I do writing tasks, I look up Nepali words and their English meanings. It is time consuming. And sometimes, I mix both Nepali

and English words. But I do not use Nepali letters. Mixing these two languages helps me complete my writing assignments and avoid punishment.]

Overall, the participants shared positive perceptions of the translingual practice. Students code-meshed and code-switched between English and their home languages by using dictionaries and thinking in their home languages. Also, they felt more empowered and confident when they had the opportunity to discuss familiar topics in both Nepali and English. Translingual exercises created a fearless environment. Working with peers helped them open up. For them, translingualism was effective and necessary.

Dictionaries are helpful for multilinguals and bilinguals when they cannot write in a single language. When students use two languages simultaneously, they can guess meanings and improve long-term memories. They do not count the number of Nepali words or how many of English words. Their goal is to use words randomly and make meaning. This is where code-meshing enters. Looking up Nepali words in a dictionary regularly can help them memorize their meanings and improve their memory. More importantly, students can engage in academic work, such as doing projects, writing essays, or stories.

Speaking and writing should be practiced simultaneously. These two skills are productive skills. When students speak and write or write and speak, they are likely to enhance their language proficiency. Translingualism supports the idea that writing and speaking can master any linguistic feature. Speaking and writing skills should not be learned in isolation. It also improves students' memory power. Writing something on a piece of paper can consolidate what is acquired by cognitive power. According to these arguments, students develop self-reliance, inventiveness, and long-term motivation when pedagogy values linguistic repertoires (Council of Europe, 2007; Piccardo, 2013). Students tend to learn faster when they read and write in a foreign language. To master a foreign language, such as English, translingual pedagogies stress both writing and speaking. These skills complement each other.

Discussion

The data (Table 1) indicate that all Nepali students want translingual practices to facilitate their acquisition of English. Nepali multilingual classrooms, where English-only instruction has long predominated, is reflected by the results of this study. Translingual practice addresses students' needs and empowers them by providing more feasible options and materials. Therefore, it can be argued that translingual writing pedagogy can be a transformative approach. The findings both support and expand upon earlier studies that highlighted the inclusive and liberating potential of translingualism in English language learning (Canagarajah, 2013; García & Wei, 2015). Unlike in English medium schools, public school students often fail Math, Science, and English exams in Nepal. Bilinguals and multilinguals have been victimized by such a rigid practice of restricting students' mother tongues. In Nepali-medium schools (mostly public schools in Nepal's context), students learn every subject in Nepali and English. It is unwise and unfair to expect students to write everything perfectly in English exams. Linguistic flexibility is required for them. Pedagogies and evaluation should be more inclusive and liberatory. Allowing students to use more than one linguistic source can allow students to retain their cultural and linguistic identity. Students participate more critically in class discussions.

Translingualism leads to high confidence

In line with Freire's (1997, 2000) banking model of education, in which students passively absorb information rather than actively create knowledge, the research participants reported

that monolingual classroom practices hampered their capacity to express ideas confidently. After being allowed to speak their mother tongue alongside English, students, like Kabita, who had previously feared English classes, became more confident. Students' self-esteem was high and impacted positively their learning outcomes. This research supports the claim made by García and Wei (2015) that translanguaging frees multilingual learners from strict linguistic boundaries and enables them to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to create meaning. Teachers' evaluations should be based on how students reflect their understanding and meaning in exams. If students are offered linguistic options, they can articulate their thoughts, participate in discussions, and find a safer classroom to learn. But a language barrier disempowers students, leading to negative perceptions of them. Students' words alone cannot represent what is in their brains. This outcome also supports Ayash's (2019) theory that translanguaging reflects the fluid and mobile character of language. Students' transition from nervousness to confidence shows how linguistic fluidity can break down hierarchies between dominant and minority languages, supporting Canagarajah's (2013) assertion that multilingual writers generate richer meanings and hybrid identities by combining a variety of linguistic options. Several scholars also argue that translanguaging empowers lower-proficiency students to grasp difficult content. At the same time, higher-proficiency students can also benefit from it. They can also experience how languages interact with each other to form meaning.

This study found that students bring their home cultures and linguistic elements into the classroom, and when they have permission from their authority (English teachers), they feel empowered to challenge the monolithic domination of the English-only policy. Code-meshing gave them a sense of strong confidence and achievement. In the context of code-meshing and sometimes code-switching, students emerge as victorious and independent. They control their own learning and take greater responsibility for it.

Translingualism leads to active engagement and collaboration

Creese and Blackledge's (2010) concept of flexible bilingualism, in which classroom interaction becomes a space for knowledge negotiation and co-construction, is strongly reflected in participants' participation and cooperation during translingual writing tasks. As an example of how translanguaging promotes collaborative learning environments, students such as Gita explained how bilingual notetaking and peer discussion enhanced their proficiency in speaking and writing in English. Nepali students (bilinguals) sometimes code-mesh and code-switch to produce their answers. They mix languages and create meaning. Multiple languages facilitate their quick understanding. This is becoming common in everyday life, too. If we watch celebrity interviews, they often code-mesh and code-switch. The notion of mixing languages bolsters Andrade's (2009) argument that leveraging students' existing knowledge improves collaboration and engagement. Students are not empty vessels but need a linguistic medium to express themselves. Translingualism is one practice they blend formal and informal linguistic features. Seltzer et al.'s (2017) framework, which highlights translanguaging as a way to help students access complex academic content, strengthen bilingual identities, and cultivate agency, is also echoed by the observed classroom transformation from teacher-centered to learner-driven. Allowing students to switch and code-mesh between Nepali, Rai, Limbu, and English in classroom activities helped to achieve these exact objectives. Students' active participation clearly indicates that they needed their background knowledge (home culture and language). When they did not have something to talk about or use in conversations, they felt reluctant. In other words, they had no content to share.

Translingualism helps students engage in the meaning-making process through writing.

Translingual pedagogy has the potential to promote long-term independence, as evidenced by students' growing independence in journaling and creative writing. For instance, Harka's experience keeping a bilingual journal every day demonstrates how code-switching and code-meshing techniques promote consistent language use outside of the classroom. Nepali students in rural areas may not have access to computers or other digital devices to record ideas or notes. So, content in different languages is recorded in diaries for future use. Students cannot memorize everything that they learn in class. They must take notes, re-read them, and engage in meaning-making outside the classroom.

In the same way, Bal's use of a Nepali-English dictionary allows him to translate, memorize vocabulary, and code-mesh between these two languages to complete writing assignments. When students use two or more languages at random, their brains interact with different languages, creating new meaning in harmony. Unknowingly, these students play with linguistic features and improve their metacognitive and metalinguistic skills.

Mezirow's (2000) theory of transformative learning, which holds that education should question limiting presumptions and enable students to critically reinterpret their experiences, is supported by this result. The Conference on College Composition and Communication's 1974 stance is also supported by findings (cited in Perryman-Clark, 2015) that pupils are entitled to use their native tongues for self-expression. Instead of being the passive recipients of instruction in English, students became active participants in meaning-making by incorporating their local linguistic sources into the writing process. Moreover, when students lack access to the internet, child-friendly books, and educated family members, their learning becomes more difficult. However, translingual practices allow students to note down and mix L1 and L2 words, combine them fluidly, interact with them, and make meaning. They first try to understand through their connections and put their understanding into words. The use of multiple linguistic elements does not confuse students but helps them derive meaning from the synthesis of multiple sources. Note-taking and journaling keep students engaged in meaning-making processes outside the classroom as well.

It is evident that this study supports and extends the theoretical claims made by Mezirow (2000), Canagarajah (2013), and García and Wei (2015). Translingual pedagogy facilitates inclusive, participatory, and transformative learning in Nepali community classrooms. By dismantling linguistic hierarchies, promoting cooperation, and confirming multilingual identities, it reframes English instruction as a means of empowerment rather than exclusion. Government schools in remote areas of Nepal face several challenges. Flexible pedagogies can prove to be useful and fair to such students.

Conclusion

This study shows Nepali students are interested in translingual practices and how translingual writing can be a game-changer in Nepal's multilingual classrooms. It provides educators with a pedagogy that is both adaptable and resource-rich. In addition to affirming their identities, it helps students become more involved, confident, and capable of producing meaningful English texts. In multilingual countries like Nepal, where policies of dominant language continue to exist (Liddicoat, 2007; Phillipson, 1992; Tollefson et al., 1991), translanguaging challenges linguistic hegemony and reframes classrooms as places of empowerment. The number of EFL and ESL students is outnumbering that of native English speakers. EFL and ESL speakers interact with multiple languages every day. Different linguistic interactions, such as music,

songs, semiotics, advertisements, and posters, shape their learning. If translanguaging is adopted in EFL and ESL contexts, students can feel empowered to demonstrate their creativity and critical thinking. Translingual approaches are not only ideological but pragmatic. Translingualism helps students become more interactive, confident, and creative. Depending on the socio-economic context, teachers can start with a small initiative. For example, teachers can choose specific chapters and allow students to use code-meshing to break their silence and engage in English-speaking and writing, in the absence of any institutional policies. Even if a school or college has not implemented a translingual policy, teachers can still be proactive and assign low-stakes translingual assignments. Thus, incorporating translingual and plurilingual approaches into regular practice can improve sociocultural inclusion and English learning.

Furthermore, the research shows that implementing translingual pedagogy in Nepali classrooms requires only a shift in teachers' perspectives on linguistic diversity, rather than a total revision of the current curriculum. Policymakers can internalize the concept of translanguaging and empower students to shape their own learning. More teacher training and empirical data can accelerate this process in Nepal. When students face such problems, their abilities and mastery cannot be assessed with a single, monolithic rubric. Different banks and government bodies should allow citizens to code-switch languages when filling out forms. Students should be encouraged to use multiple linguistic sources when giving presentations or preparing collages.

Research limitation

This study has some limitations. This was conducted in a small community-based basic school located in a hilly region of Nepal, where multilingual students are abundant. Students' major profession is farming and wage-based jobs. The parents of the participants were minimally literate. Therefore, the outcome cannot be generalized across Nepal. However, the findings are worth considering and comparing for future research. Future research can focus more on larger random samples, including participants from both cities and villages, educated and illiterate parents, teachers, and policymakers, to gain a broader understanding of a translingual approach in middle school, high school, college, and university contexts.

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Consent

The study sought consent from the headteacher and the students' parents.

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GenAI Declaration

The author used the free version of ChatGPT-3.5 to refine some language and create the reference list.

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Biodata

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Assessing L2 Student Writing in the AI Era: A Systematic Review on Challenges and Best Practices

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a systematic review of the existing literature on the effects of AI on L2 (ESL/EFL) student writing and assessment. A comprehensive search was conducted through ScienceDirect, ERIC and Taylor & Francis Online, providing qualitative analysis of three major themes: the effects of AI on L2 writing, challenges in identifying AI-generated content, and practices for adapting writing assessment. PRISMA 2020 guidelines and the CASP checklist were used to select appropriate articles and assess validity, relevance and ethical issues. The review included 20 studies published between 2023 and 2025. The results show that AI offers numerous advantages, such as giving individualized feedback and support, improving writing quality and helpfully assisting the grading processes. However, issues related to academic integrity, originality and the difficulties in distinguishing between AI-created writing and student-written work have emerged. The paper proposes best practices for integrating AI into assessment frameworks in which academic integrity is still maintained while AI is utilized to improve learning outcomes.

Keywords: AI tools, EFL students, writing assessment, academic integrity

Introduction

Recently, rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) have not only created new opportunities but also posed challenges for educators and institutions, especially in balancing student learning outcomes with the benefits of AI tools (Thanh et al., 2023). In L2 (second/foreign language) writing contexts, educators effectively employ AI, such as ChatGPT, to provide students with personalized feedback (Dai et al., 2023; Cotton et al., 2024) and automated essay scoring systems to facilitate teachers' grading processes (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023). Additionally, AI technologies enhance the writing process for English learners through feedback and revision (Alharbi, 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024) and improve their writing quality (Marzuki et al., 2023; Mahapatra, 2024).

Nonetheless, the above-mentioned benefits could be undermined when students rely on AI to submit their assignments (Thanh et al., 2023). This presents significant challenges to the field

of assessment (Luo, 2024). Concerns about academic integrity were raised when researchers reported over 85% of students used ChatGPT to do their homework (Westfall, 2023; Fakir et al., 2024), and one-third of tertiary students were dishonest in doing their assignments when they used AI tools to complete them (Sullivan et al., 2023). Therefore, questions of originality, authorship and fair assessment become a critical issue to be addressed (Luo, 2024). In fact, a few universities implemented bans on students' utilization of AI for classroom tasks and assessment due to their undecided AI policies (Sullivan et al., 2023). Such bans may inadvertently hinder innovation in pedagogy and fail to sustain the positive effects of AI on writing development (Graham, 2023). Instead of prohibiting these technologies, educators should instruct students to use them responsibly (Smerdon, 2024). This also presents a valuable opportunity to renew assessment methods, making them suitable with AI availability (Rudolph et al., 2023). However, the question remains: how can the new methods both ensure the objectives and outcomes of students' learning and maintain the effective support of AI (Crawford et al., 2023)? This paper continues to discuss the effects of AI on L2 writing and how teachers can overcome the challenges of identifying AI-generated content, so that they can propose the best ways to evaluate writing assignments. In this review, L2 writing is used as an umbrella term covering both ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. While these terms differ in sociolinguistic environments, they share common pedagogical concerns related to writing development and assessment. Notably, the majority of studies included in this review are situated in tertiary EFL settings, reflecting the current concentration of empirical research on AI and writing assessment in higher education. Accordingly, the findings are most directly transferable to university-level L2 writing contexts.

Literature Review

Common AI Writing Tools

Grammarly, a widely recognized Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) tool, is known for its thorough grammar checks and style recommendations, helping students improve their writing by identifying errors that may otherwise be overlooked (Karyuatry, 2018; Ha & Ho, 2025). It provides a range of features, including grammar and punctuation correction, spell checking, plagiarism detection, and writing style assessment (Fitriana & Nurazni, 2022). This tool helps students save time and effort in editing their writing. This, in turn, contributes to their overall satisfaction with the tool (Ha & Ho, 2025). However, Grammarly may overlook context-specific errors, just focus on grammar, spelling, and clarity while failing to notice broader aspects of content, organization, and coherence of a piece of writing, or inaccurately flag correct elements as mistakes, leading to confusion and frustration among users (Yurika et al., 2023; Ha & Ho, 2025). In addition, users sometimes doubted the accuracy of Grammarly's suggestions, as certain corrections altered the intended meaning of their writing (Fitriana & Nurazni, 2022).

ChatGPT, an advanced chatbot released in November 2022, is commonly used in academic writing for grammar correction, paraphrasing, and expanding ideas, thereby enhancing the efficiency of students' written products and creating a less stressful classroom (Pham & Le, 2024). Mahapatra (2024) also notes that ChatGPT helps students generate focused ideas, improve sentence links, and use grammar more accurately. Besides, ChatGPT can deliver personalized feedback that helps to overcome language, time, and location constraints, effectively addressing the challenges in providing formative feedback in large classrooms (Mahapatra, 2024; Pham & Cao, 2025). Ultimately, ChatGPT can give scores that are closely similar to human evaluators when it comes to automated grading processes, especially in

formative assessments (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023; Tate et al., 2024), which optimizes teachers' time for other essential tasks such as planning lessons and supporting students (Owan et al., 2023). However, several researchers express their concerns regarding students' over-reliance on ChatGPT. They argue that excessive dependence on this technology may hinder the development of important writing capabilities, such as creativity, reasoning, and problem-solving skills (Marzuki et al., 2023; Pham & Le, 2024; Bui & Tong, 2025). In addition, ChatGPT demonstrates its technical limitations in understanding contexts and cultural affairs, as well as in handling questions that require high cognitive skills (Johinke et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2024). This indicates ChatGPT struggles with advanced writing skills, which presents a significant challenge for ESL learners. Last but not least, ethical concerns regarding the privacy of users' data and the trustworthiness of AI-generated content have also been raised for further investigation (Bui & Tong, 2025).

QuillBot is another popular writing tool well known for its user-friendly features and support for students' writing processes (Kurniati & Fithriani, 2022; Latifah et al., 2024). Several studies acknowledge QuillBot's ability to improve students' paraphrasing skills, increase vocabulary, correct grammar and vocabulary errors, and save students time and effort when writing (Fitria, 2022; Mohammad et al., 2024; Latifah et al., 2024). Nonetheless, Quillbot faces difficulties adapting to different students' learning levels and also blocks students' creativity (Mohamad et al., 2024). Sometimes the created sentences do not meet users' expectations, even failing to follow language structures, punctuation, and correct spelling (Fitria, 2022).

Effects of AI on Academic Integrity

As a result of the widespread use of AI, students easily commit plagiarism and misinterpret authorship of written work (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024; Maphoto et al., 2024; Bui & Tong, 2025; Pham & Cao, 2025). In addition, Generative AI tools such as ChatGPT can produce highly sophisticated texts that resemble human writing, posing challenges for teachers to ensure academic integrity and fair assessment (Cotton et al., 2024; Perkins et al., 2023; Herbold et al., 2023). Researchers also raise concerns that ChatGPT may hinder students' abilities in independent writing and original idea development, as they found that many university students use ChatGPT not only for proofreading and paraphrasing but also for generating content (Črček & Patekar, 2023). Therefore, clear guidelines for responsible AI use in academic settings are required to address these challenges (Perkins et al., 2023).

Complexities in Evaluating Students' Writing

Traditional assessments in higher education institutions have been significantly impacted since the public introduction of new AI tools due to concerns about academic integrity, cheating, and plagiarism (Moorhouse et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2023). As AI-generated content is more accessible to AI (Herbold et al., 2023), and advanced AI technologies can write compelling essays on any topic (Perkins et al., 2023), educators are facing a range of complexities related to fair assessment and the authenticity of students' written work. One of the rising obstacles is teachers' inability to accurately distinguish AI-generated content from student-written texts. According to Waltzer et al. (2024), although instructors demonstrated a moderate success in identifying AI-generated essays, distinguishing AI-generated content remains a complex task. Similarly, Fleckenstein et al. (2024) found that both pre-service and experienced teachers faced challenges in evaluating the sources of texts written by AI and students.

Furthermore, the recent emerging research shows a variation in the effectiveness of AI detectors such as Open AI Detector, Crossplag, GPT-2 Output Detector, iThenticate, and Turnitin, and there remains inconsistency about the detection reliability (Perkins et al., 2023; Ibrahim, 2023;

Khalil & Er, 2023). According to Alexander et al. (2023), a large amount of AI-generated text remains undetected by plagiarism detection software, with even higher rates of undetected content when evaluated by human raters. The limitations of current assessment practices necessitate a reconsideration of writing evaluation criteria that emphasize process-based writing approaches (Fleckenstein et al., 2024; Cong-Lem et al., 2024; Waltzer et al., 2024).

Research Gaps

Although there is a number of research investigating AI-based tools for writing, their role in student writing assessment needs to be better understood. Existing studies demonstrate how AI-driven tools can improve the quality of students' writing, coherence, and feedback (Marzuki et al., 2023; Mahapatra, 2024; Chan & Hu, 2023). However, there is limited systematic analysis of how educators can integrate AI into L2 assessment frameworks without diminishing students' independent writing skills.

A major challenge in AI-assisted writing is its impact on academic integrity. As generative AI tools become more sophisticated, students increasingly rely on them for idea generation, summarization, and even full-text composition (Črček & Patekar, 2023). While studies discuss AI-driven plagiarism and concerns about students' declining originality (Bui & Tong, 2025; Herbold et al., 2023), research has yet to fully address how educators can effectively distinguish between AI-generated content and students' authentic work. Furthermore, AI detection tools are unreliable (Fleckenstein, 2024; Waltzer et al., 2024), making it difficult for teachers to maintain assessment integrity. More research is needed to explore practical strategies for ensuring authenticity in L2 student writing.

Additionally, the best practices for evaluating students' writing in the AI era remain underexplored. Current studies emphasize the importance of balancing AI with traditional writing instruction (Cotton et al., 2024), but there is still little research offering clear guidelines on how educators should adapt writing assessment to encourage critical thinking and originality. Therefore, addressing these gaps through a systematic review will provide educators with proper strategies for integrating AI in teaching, ensuring academic integrity and fair evaluation practices.

Research Questions

To address the research gaps, this review is guided by the questions below:

1. How do AI tools impact L2 student writing?
2. What challenges do teachers have when distinguishing between AI-created content and students' original writing products?
3. What are the best practices for evaluating L2 student writing in the age of AI?

Methods

Design of the Study

The study adheres to a Systematic Literature Review methodology by following PRISMA 2020 guidance. This method is often used to identify and review evidence from previous studies, summarize the current state of knowledge, identify gaps and priorities for future research, and highlight problems in primary studies that need improvement (Page et al., 2021). The current study aims to synthesize existing findings from relevant academic literature to better understand

the impact of AI on L2 student writing assessment and to suggest the most effective methods for this practice.

Search Strategy

A comprehensive literature search was conducted using three core academic databases: ScienceDirect, ERIC, and Taylor & Francis Online. In addition, ResearchGate and Google Scholar were used as a supplementary hand-searching source to locate open-access full texts and to conduct reference chaining for studies already identified through the primary databases.

To ensure comprehensive coverage, two Boolean search strings were developed based on the research questions. The first targeted studies on AI-assisted L2 writing and assessment practices, while the second focused on challenges related to AI-text detection, originality, and academic integrity.

Table 1.

Boolean search strings

String 1 (Themes 1 & 3): Writing & assessment	("artificial intelligence" OR "AI" OR "generative AI") AND ("academic writing" OR "essay writing" OR "writing skills") AND ("assessment" OR "feedback" OR "evaluation")
String 2 (Theme 2): Detection & originality	("artificial intelligence" OR "AI" OR "generative AI") AND ("academic writing" OR "student writing") AND ("detection" OR "originality" OR "academic integrity" OR "plagiarism")

Criteria for Selection and Omission

Peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and academic books issued between 2023 and 2025 were selected. This period was chosen because it captures the rapid advances in AI for language education, providing up-to-date findings and relevant insights for the study. Only studies that addressed AI in relation to student writing, particularly in ESL and EFL contexts, were included. Research focused on AI in non-academic settings or technical evaluations of AI technologies outside the context of education was omitted. In addition, to ensure accessibility, the authors just chose the studies available in English.

To evaluate the standards of the included articles, the authors also used the Critical Appraisal Skills Program (CASP) checklist which is popularly employed in systematic reviews (Long et al., 2020). Although CASP was originally developed for qualitative research, selected core criteria (e.g., clarity of aims, methodological rigor, transparency of analysis, and ethical considerations) were adapted pragmatically and applied across qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods studies. The selected articles had to meet 8 out of 10 items in the following CASP checklist:

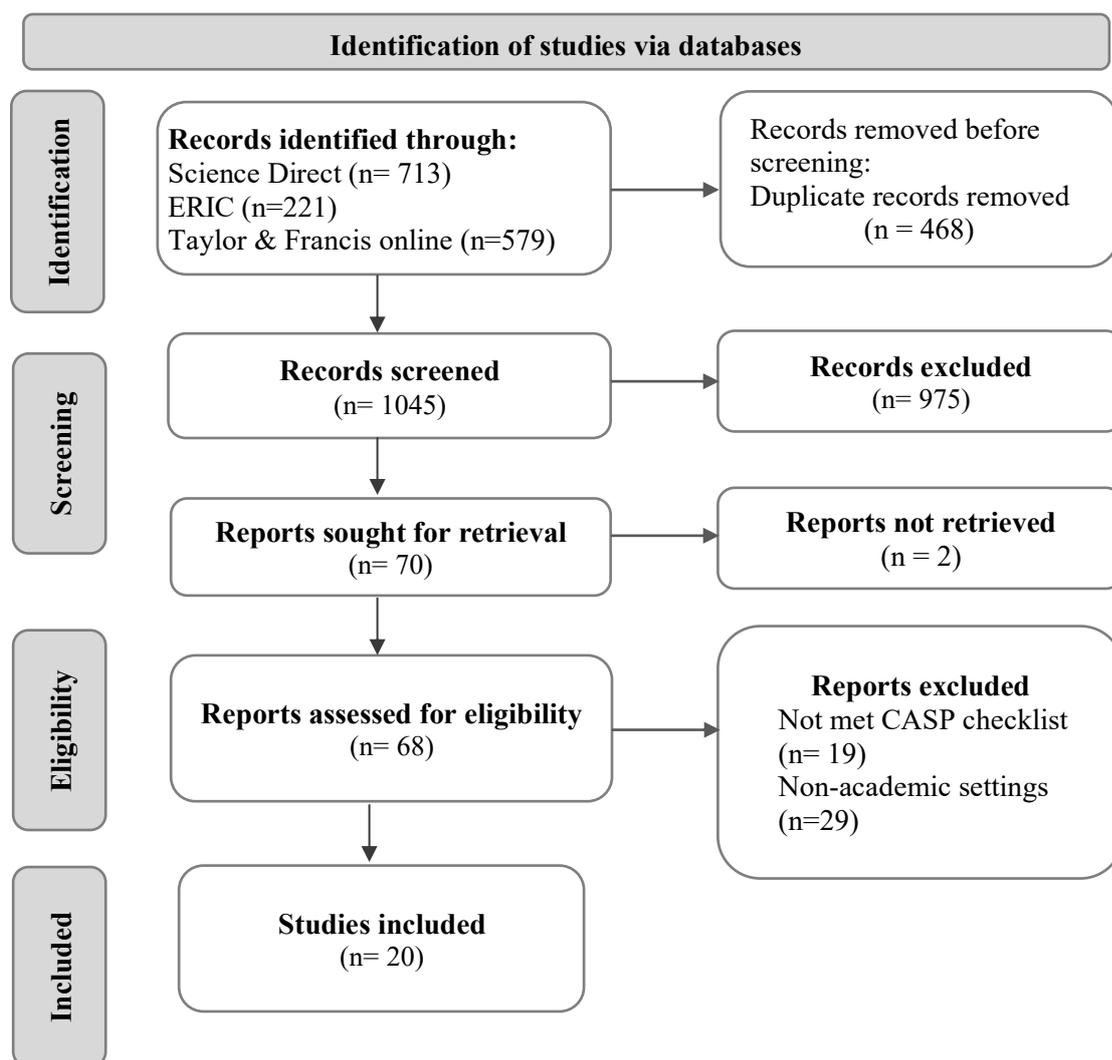
1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?
2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?
3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?
4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?
5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?
6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?
7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?
8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?

9. Is there a clear statement of findings?
10. How valuable is the research?

A total of 1513 articles were first identified from the databases. After removing duplicate records and records excluded before screening, titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles were then assessed for eligibility based on the inclusion and omission criteria. A total of 20 studies were eligible for review. Figure 1 describes the procedure of the research using the PRISMA 2020 approach.

Figure 1.

PRISMA 2020 flowchart of article selection



Data Analysis

The literature selected was categorized into thematic areas deductively, based on the predefined research questions: 1) AI's effects upon student writing, (2) Challenges in identifying AI-generated texts and students' original writing, (3) Recommendations for assessing students' writing.

This study employed a qualitative thematic synthesis to integrate findings across the included studies. Two reviewers independently coded the extracted data using an initial deductive

codebook aligned with the research questions and prior literature on AI-assisted writing and assessment. During the coding process, inductive codes were added to capture emerging concepts not represented in the initial framework. In addition, any coding discrepancies were resolved through discussion until consensus was reached. Codes were then iteratively compared and grouped into higher-order themes through constant comparison across studies. For example, codes such as *personalized feedback*, *revision support*, and *enhancing writing performance* were synthesized into the theme *Advantages of AI writing tools*.

Each study was further examined to identify recurring themes, recommendations and reports on how AI tools are being implemented in writing assessment, especially in English education contexts. Special attention was given to the pedagogical challenges and ethical considerations highlighted by researchers, as well as the recommendations for adapting assessment practices to incorporate AI responsibly. Table 2 summarizes the 20 articles that meet the demands of inclusion criteria.

Table 2.

Summary of the included studies

Study No.	Author(s), Year	Title	Publication Venue	Publication Type	Indexing
1	Marzuki et al., 2023	The Impact of AI Writing Tools on the Content and Organization of Students' Writing: EFL Teachers' Perspective	<i>Cogent Education</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q2)
2	Hossain et al., 2025	Exploring EFL Students' AI Literacy in Academic Writing: Insights into Familiarity, Knowledge and Ethical Perceptions	<i>Journal of Theoretical Educational Science</i>	Journal article	Scopus indexing not identified
3	Marghany, 2023	Using Artificial Intelligence-based Instruction to Develop EFL Higher Education Students' Essay Writing Skills	<i>CDELT Occasional Papers in the Development of English Education</i>	Journal article	Scopus indexing not identified
4	Mahapatra, 2024	Impact of ChatGPT on ESL Students' Academic Writing Skills: A Mixed Methods Intervention Study	<i>Smart Learning Environments</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
5	Kim et al., 2024	Exploring Students' Perspectives on Generative AI-assisted Academic Writing	<i>Education and Information Technologies</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
6	Thangthong et al., 2024	Navigating AI Writing Assistance Tools: Unveiling the Insights of Thai EFL Learners	<i>THAITESOL Journal</i>	Journal article	Scopus indexing not identified
7	Mizumoto and Eguchi, 2023	Exploring the Potential of Using an AI language Model for Automated	<i>Research Methods in Applied</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)

		Essay Scoring	<i>Linguistics</i>		
8	Tate et al., 2024	Can AI Provide Useful Holistic Essay Scoring?	<i>Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
9	Chan and Hu, 2023	Students' Voices on Generative AI: Perceptions, Benefits, and Challenges in Higher Education	<i>International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
10	Khampusaen, 2025	The Impact of ChatGPT on Academic Writing Skills and Knowledge: An Investigation of Its Use in Argumentative Essays	<i>LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q2)
11	Cong-Lem et al., 2024	Academic Integrity in the Age of Generative AI: Perceptions and Responses of Vietnamese EFL Teachers	<i>Teaching English with Technology</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
12	Bui and Tong, 2025	The Impact of AI Writing Tools on Academic Integrity: Unveiling English Majored Students' Perceptions and Practical Solutions	<i>AsiaCALL Online Journal</i>	Journal article	Scopus indexing not identified
13.	Herbold et al., 2023	A Large-scale Comparison of Human-Written Versus ChatGPT-generated Essays	<i>Scientific Reports</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
14	Fleckenstein et al., 2024	Do Teachers Spot AI? Evaluating the Detectability of AI-Generated Texts among Student Essays	<i>Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
15	Waltzer et al., 2024	Can You Spot the Bot? Identifying AI-generated Writing in College Essays	<i>International Journal for Educational Integrity</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
16	Alexander et al., 2023	Who Wrote This Essay? Detecting AI-generated Writing in Second Language Education in Higher Education	<i>Teaching English with Technology</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
17	Perkins et al., 2023	Detection of GPT-4 Generated Text in Higher Education: Combining Academic Judgment and Software to Identify	<i>Journal of Academic Ethics</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)

		Generative AI Tool Misuse			
18	Ibrahim, 2023	Using AI-based Detectors to Control AI-assisted Plagiarism in ESL Writing: “The Terminator versus the Machines.”	<i>Language Testing in Asia</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)
19	Khalil and Er, 2023	Will ChatGPT Get You Caught? Rethinking Plagiarism Detection	<i>Springer</i>	Conference proceeding	Scopus
20	Bordalejo et al., 2025	“Scarlet Cloak and the Forest Adventure”: A Preliminary Study of the Impact of AI on Commonly Used Writing Tools	<i>International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education</i>	Journal article	Scopus (Q1)

Quality appraisal outcomes of included studies based on CASP checklist.

Supplementary Table S1.

Quality appraisal CASP scores

Study No.	Author(s), Year	Research Method	CASP Score
1	Marzuki et al., 2023	Qualitative	9/10
2	Hossain et al., 2025	Quantitative	9/10
3	Marghany, 2023	Mixed methods	8/10
4	Mahapatra, 2024	Mixed methods	9/10
5	Kim et al., 2024	Qualitative	9/10
6	Thangthong et al., 2024	Qualitative	8/10
7	Mizumoto and Eguchi, 2023	Quantitative	9/10
8	Tate et al., 2024	Quantitative	9/10
9	Chan and Hu, 2023	Quantitative	8/10
10	Khampusaen, 2025	Mixed methods	8/10
11	Cong-Lem et al., 2024	Quantitative	9/10
12	Bui and Tong, 2025	Mixed methods	8/10
13.	Herbold et al., 2023	Mixed methods	9/10
14	Fleckenstein et al., 2024	Quantitative	9/10
15	Waltzer et al., 2024	Quantitative	8/10
16	Alexander et al., 2023	Qualitative	8/10
17	Perkins et al., 2023	Quantitative	9/10
18	Ibrahim, 2023	Quantitative	8/10
19	Khalil and Er, 2023	Quantitative	8/10
20	Bordalejo et al., 2025	Quantitative	9/10

Findings and Discussion

Overview of the Included Studies

The literature is predominantly situated in EFL/ESL contexts, with most studies conducted at

universities, while evidence from primary, secondary, or non-tertiary settings remains limited. In addition, most studies concentrated in Asian and European contexts and relatively little represented from other regions. Furthermore, longitudinal investigations are scarce, as most studies adopt cross-sectional or short-term designs. These patterns suggest that, although research on AI and L2 writing assessment is growing, important gaps remain in terms of educational levels, regional diversity, and long-term empirical evidence.

Effects of AI on Student Writing

The findings show that using AI tools in teaching, learning and evaluation of writing has both positive and negative effects. Table 3 provides a summary of studies exploring the effects of AI on students' writing, focusing on their advantages, drawbacks and the effects in academic integrity and assessment.

Table 3.

Summary of the effects of AI on students' writing

Advantages of AI writing tools	Study No.
Enhancing students' writing performance	(1), (2), (4), (3), (5), (6), (10), (12)
Providing quick and personalized feedback and support	(5), (4), (9)
Demonstrating a notable degree of accuracy and reliability in automated scoring	(7), (8)
Drawbacks of AI writing tools	Study No.
Concerns about over-reliance, preventing critical thinking and problem-solving skills	(1), (5), (6), (11), (12)
Occasional ineffectiveness, making errors	(5), (6), (9)
Producing hallucination	(5), (13), (16)
Lack of contextualization and pedagogical skills	(5)
Effects on academic integrity and assessment	Study No.
Ethical issues: academic fraud, misconduct and plagiarism	(2), (6), (9), (10), (11), (12), (13), (16), (19)
Challenges to distinguish human written texts from AI-generated content	(11), (13), (14), (15), (16), (17), (18), (19), (20)
Potential of unfairness in assessment	(11), (13), (15), (17), (20)

Advantages of AI Writing Tools

As can be seen from the results, AI tools provide substantial benefits in enhancing students' writing performance. AI-driven tools like Grammarly, ChatGPT, and Quillbot help improve students' writing quality, structure, and coherence (Marzuki et al., 2023; Marghany, 2023; Mahapatra, 2024; Thangthong et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Khampusaen, 2025; Bui & Tong, 2025). In addition, when comparing learning with Grammarly to traditional methods, Marghany (2023) found that Grammarly significantly improved students' essay writing skills, particularly

in grammar, tenses, punctuation, and revision. This observation aligns with Ha and Ho (2025), who highlighted the effectiveness of Grammarly in saving students' time and effort in the writing and editing processes. While this shows promise for learning to write in general, the same benefits may not apply to different students' learning styles and strategies in writing. Additionally, most studies lack investigation into the long-term effects on students' independent writing ability.

Another widely recognized benefit of AI tools in teaching student writing is their ability to provide quick and personalized feedback and support (Chan & Hu, 2023; Mahapatra, 2024; Kim et al., 2024). As noted by Naz and Robertson (2024), ChatGPT-3 demonstrates a good understanding of paragraph structure and can provide timely and individualized comments that encourage deeper student engagement. This aligns with Krashen's (1982) theories of language acquisition, which emphasize authentic, interactive communication as a key to language development. Mahapatra (2024) added that in large classes, where providing individualized feedback is challenging for teachers, ChatGPT could help, overcoming language, time, and location constraints to deliver personalized evaluations for students. However, the effectiveness of AI-generated feedback remains under debate in the literature (Thangthong et al., 2024). Further research is needed to evaluate whether they can replace or complement teachers' feedback in meaningful ways.

Finally, AI tools demonstrate notable accuracy and reliability in automated scoring by analyzing essays, reports, and other written assignments and providing comments on syntax, grammar, spelling, and organization (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023; Tate et al., 2024). For instance, GPT-based AES (Automated Essay Scoring) systems can achieve high accuracy and reliability, significantly supporting teacher evaluations in formative assessment (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023). Similarly, Tate et al. (2024) compared multiple versions of ChatGPT's automated scoring of secondary-school essays across three established corpora against expert human ratings and found no statistically significant differences in the examined datasets or scoring criteria. Although it is not recommended to use AI for important summative assessments (e.g., end-of-course tests, standardized tests, achievement tests) or to substitute for instructors' evaluation, this technology is proposed to be a valuable assistance during the first stages of the writing process and in other progress evaluations (Tate et al., 2024). Therefore, the potential of AI in writing assessment and giving feedback can enhance the efficiency and fairness of student work evaluations (Mizumoto & Eguchi, 2023).

Drawbacks of AI Writing Tools

Throughout the literature, a significant area of concern for educators and researchers is students' over-reliance on AI tools (Marzuki et al., 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024; Cong-Lem et al., 2024; Bui & Tong, 2025). AI over-dependence potentially weakens students' ability to think critically and find solutions for problems, inhibits students' confidence in their writing capabilities, and reduces their capacity to be involved in cognitive activities independently and achieve true knowledge (Marzuki et al., 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024; Cong-Lem et al., 2024). These points are further elaborated by Johnke et al. (2023) and Bui and Tong (2025), who note that teachers' fear of students using AI not just to refine language in their writing but also to generate ideas, which severely affects students' creativity and original thought. However, these claims are largely based on teachers' perceptions rather than longitudinal evidence, so the degree of the problem remains uncertain.

Technical limitations of AI tools are another area of concern. Studies highlight issues such as occasional ineffectiveness, making errors, and hallucination (Chan & Hu, 2023; Thangthong et al., 2024; Kim et al., 2024). For instance, Grammarly may fail to notice context-specific errors

or inaccurately flag correct items as mistakes (Thangthong et al., 2024). In addition, AI tools still lack understanding of culture and pedagogies, which are critical in academic settings (Kim et al., 2024). These observations align with Ha and Ho (2025), who expressed that the shortcomings could lead to confusion among students. Such limitations need to be addressed thoroughly.

Emerging Challenges in Academic Integrity and Writing Assessment

The findings also reveal major concerns that AI tools encourage dishonesty in assignment completion and threaten academic integrity. Ethical issues related to academic fraud, misconduct, and plagiarism are raised by several researchers (Hossain et al., 2025; Thangthong et al., 2024; Cong-Lem et al., 2024; Herbold et al., 2023; Chan & Hu, 2023; Khampusaen, 2025; Bui & Tong, 2025; Alexander et al., 2023; Khalil & Er, 2023). The concerns have been discussed regarding the possibility of AI introducing inaccurate information, copying available materials, creating original work lacking human knowledge, causing bias in AI-created content (Frye, 2023), and misrepresenting the authorship and originality of students' written products (Perkins et al., 2023). Such concerns are increased by recent AI advancements, which can now produce writing comparable to, or in some cases more persuasive than, human essays (Perkins et al., 2023; Herbold et al., 2023). Studies indicate that a significant proportion of students use AI to find ideas, summarize, paraphrase, proofread, and even write full assignments (Črček & Patekar, 2023; Fakir et al., 2024). Some scholars attribute this reliance to students' lack of original ideas, low motivation, and limited linguistic skills (Cong-Lem et al., 2024), while others point to the accessibility of AI as an easy way to higher grades for their assignments (Herbold et al., 2023). Obviously, this cannot be the purpose of education, and teachers are facing difficulty retaining academic honesty and fair evaluation. However, the literature is not entirely in agreement: Fakir et al. (2024) found no difference in the final performance scores of students who used AI or not in their writing, and many students believed that using AI for assignments was not a form of cheating. This viewpoint aligns with Smerdon (2024), who argues that there may be no risk of academic violations given the neutral impact of AI on academic performance. Therefore, ongoing research is needed to clarify the contradiction.

Challenges in Distinguishing AI-generated Content from Students' Original Work

Table 4 summarizes studies on challenges in identifying AI-generated texts.

A key challenge in L2 writing assessment today involves differentiating between AI-generated texts and human-written submissions. Fleckenstein et al. (2024) found that both pre-service and experienced teachers struggled with identifying the original source of the texts. Pre-service teachers had difficulty regardless of text quality. In contrast, experienced teachers showed higher accuracy in identifying polished AI-created texts but struggled with flawed ones. This indicates that experienced teachers may be unaware that AI can generate low-quality texts with grammar and spelling mistakes. In terms of text quality assessment, neither group favored AI-created texts over those produced by students, though experienced teachers tended to give higher ratings to high-quality AI-created texts. Importantly, text quality did not help teachers to better identify the origin of the texts, emphasizing the need to familiarize teachers with AI's capabilities (Fleckenstein et al., 2024).

Waltzer et al. (2024) further showed that recognition ability remains inconsistent across participating groups. University teachers accurately identified only 70% of essays written by ChatGPT; students achieved 60%, and ChatGPT itself got 63% accuracy. The participating teachers also expressed concerns about assigning take-home written tasks and grading students on how good and creative they are. Therefore, this raises questions about the accuracy of the

current assessment and academic standards.

Table 4.

Summary of challenges in identifying AI-generated texts and assessment suggestions

Author(s), Year	Key findings	Recommendation
Fleckenstein et al., 2024	Less experienced teachers could not accurately recognize the origins of the examined texts. Experienced teachers struggled to find the origins of flawed texts but were able to identify polished ones.	Rethinking the assessment strategies and criteria, considering AI presence; training teachers on the awareness of AI content.
Waltzer et al., 2024	University lecturers accurately recognized 70% of essays produced by ChatGPT, students achieved 60%, ChatGPT itself got 63%.	Designing assessments encouraging cognitive engagement; doing more practice on identifying AI created content.
Alexander et al., 2023	AI detectors accurately identify fully AI-created texts but struggle with mixed human-AI content. No fully reliable methods exist for differentiating AI and human produced content, leading to potential misjudgments.	Training digital literacy for teachers, students and administrators; revising assessment policies and procedures; training teachers to effectively identify features of an AI-written work.

Alexander et al. (2023) reported similar challenges among ESL lecturers. Accuracy ranged from 33% to 66%, with lecturers often associating AI-generated texts with advanced vocabulary, complex sentences, and error-free writing, while attributing low language proficiency, repetitive words and grammatical structures, weak connections, or failure to follow the correct essay organization to students. However, such features are not always reliable indicators, since repetition of vocabulary and grammar is believed to be typical in AI-generated writing. Therefore, these findings underscore the variation in teachers' judgements and the lack of suitable criteria for distinguishing AI from human work.

Given the obstacles, researchers widely recommended AI literacy training for teachers, especially on how to identify features of AI-created content (Alexander et al., 2023; Fleckenstein et al., 2024), and teachers themselves need to do more practice to get their grading fair and accurate in students' assignments (Waltzer et al., 2024). AI literacy training sessions not only build teachers' confidence and capabilities in addressing AI-related challenges but also help teachers and students effectively apply this technology in their teaching and learning (Bui & Tong, 2025).

The Efficacy of AI Detection Tools

Several studies have examined the effectiveness of AI detectors. Table 5 summarizes the efficacy of these tools.

Table 5.

Summary of the efficiency of AI detectors

Author(s), Year	Key findings	Recommendation
Perkins et al., 2023	Turnitin effectively recognized 91% of AI-generated submissions but marked just 54.8% of AI-created content. Teachers detected only 54.5% of the identified cases for academic fraud.	Adapting assessment strategies with the presence of AI; providing training for teachers and students to ensure academic integrity; improving detection software.
Ibrahim, 2023	GPT 2 Output and Crossplag detectors could identify AI-generated texts with a relatively high degree of accuracy but inconsistencies in the accuracy levels remain throughout the data records.	Double-checking the flagged results with another detection tool; combining the suggested results of the detector with traditional methods; improving the detectors' accuracy.
Khalil and Er, 2023	Among 50 essays written by ChatGPT that were analyzed, iThenticate and Turnitin classified 40 as highly original.	Improving the detector tools; encouraging critical thinking assignments; training AI literacy, academic integrity and responsible use; giving clear AI policies.
Bordalejo et al., 2025	Turnitin and GPTZero showed significant shortcomings in distinguishing AI-created and human-paraphrased content.	Requiring careful interpretation of the detectors' results; developing clear AI use guidelines and policies.

Across studies, AI detection tools show highly variable performance depending on text type, degree of human-AI collaboration, and evaluation criteria, limiting their validity as standalone evidence of misconduct.

Perkins et al. (2023) found that Turnitin could effectively detect 91% of AI-generated submissions but identified only 54.8% of fully AI-generated content, while faculty themselves recognized only 54.5% of cases of academic fraud. Similarly, Ibrahim (2023) reported that GPT-2 Output Detector and Crossplag achieved high accuracy in flagging AI-created content but still lacked consistency in the detection reliability, suggesting cross-checking flagged texts across multiple detectors and adopting supplementary verification methods such as student interviews.

Other studies identified even greater challenges. Khalil and Er (2023) found that Turnitin and iThenticate rated around 80% of the AI-generated essays (40 out of 50 examined essays) as highly original. Bordalejo et al. (2025) further added significant shortcomings of Turnitin and GPTZero in distinguishing AI-created and human-paraphrased content. Especially when evaluating modified content, Turnitin tended to skip all the interventions while GPTZero remained inconsistent. Obviously, there is variation in the accuracy of AI detectors, raising concerns about the trustworthiness of the tools currently used in several universities. As a result, scholars recommend carefully interpreting the detection results, improving the reliability of detection tools, and clear guidelines on AI use to avoid unfair punishments to students (Ibrahim, 2023; Khalil & Er, 2023; Bordalejo et al., 2025)

Practices for Evaluating Students' Writing

Concerns about the effects of AI and questions about how to evaluate students' writing properly in the age of AI have prompted educators and institutions worldwide to rethink traditional assessment practices. The three main approaches drawn from literature include redesigning assessments, collaborating between humans and AI, and establishing clear institutional policies.

Redesigning Assessments

Perkins et al. (2023) recommended designing assignments that incorporate group-based projects, require distinctive organization, pre-submit topics for approval, or use data specifically collected to minimize opportunities for students relying on AI-completed assignments. Such measures ensure that students engage deeply with the subject matter and foster genuine learning. Testing tasks also integrate AI by requiring students to analyze and evaluate AI outputs, promoting students' responsible use of the tools. The testing tasks should also require students to critically evaluate AI-generated content and prompt engineering to help students learn how to work with AI effectively and ethically. Similarly, Moorhouse et al. (2023) suggested that integrating AI into student assessments is vital to enhancing students' AI literacy.

Holistic and process-oriented assessment approaches that prioritize higher-order thinking skills and student engagement are also emphasized. Assignments that focus on completion procedures, such as submitting notes, drafts, or proposals for feedback, or structuring the assignment into small steps, are recommended (Moorhouse et al., 2023). In addition, portfolio-based teaching and flipped-classroom approaches can enhance student engagement and provide real-world learning experiences (Cong-Lem et al., 2024). Flipped activities, such as assigning multimedia tasks for students to prepare in advance or giving presentations, also help teachers save time for reviewing and providing feedback on students' work (Rudolph et al., 2023).

In addition, since AI technologies often thrive in low-order tasks but struggle with creating, evaluating, and applying complex concepts (Thanh et al., 2023), assessments should therefore focus on tasks that emphasize high-order skills (Moorhouse et al., 2023). Furthermore, it's necessary to revise evaluation criteria, integrating skills-based assessment such as oral examinations, interviews, and presentations to complement written assignments and in-class writing. These practices help teachers to verify if students understand their work and reduce academic dishonesty (Waltzer et al., 2024; Fleckenstein et al., 2024; Bordalejo et al., 2025).

Human and AI Collaboration

Given the limitations of AI detectors and teachers' challenges in distinguishing AI-generated content from students' original writing, it is important to use a balanced assessment method to uphold academic honesty and fair evaluation (Perkins et al., 2023). Ibrahim (2023) highlights the importance of using multiple detectors to cross-check flagged texts and combining these tools with traditional methods, such as interviewing students or comparing submissions with in-class work, to mitigate false positives. Educators should remain aware of the limitations of AI detectors and exercise their own judgment to ensure fair and accurate assessments. Likewise, Pham and Le (2024) suggest that AI tools should act as a powerful complement, not a replacement, to teachers because human evaluators remain critical for contextual judgment, particularly for hybrid texts that blend human and AI content.

Institutional Policies and Guidelines to Promote AI Literacy and Responsible Use

As noted by Moorhouse et al. (2023), just under half of the leading universities currently provide publicly available standards for communicating with students about AI use, planning assessments, and maintaining integrity in education. Therefore, there is an emerging need for

clear guidelines and policies on AI use and assessment across the broader landscape (Khalil & Er, 2023; Alexander et al., 2023; Bordalejo et al., 2025). These practices aim to support teachers in determining what might be considered an inappropriate use of AI, create protocols for students to acknowledge or cite AI use, make assignments more difficult for AI to complete alone, and discuss how AI can be used in assignment tasks (Moorhouse et al., 2023). Calls for global collaboration stress the need for adaptable frameworks and AI literacy initiatives that prepare educators and learners to endgame with these tools responsibly. Another critical issue is how to define originality in students' work in light of the increasing use of AI and student collaboration. Luo (2024) argues that current policies often regard AI-supported work as less authentic, so updating policies to treat AI as a collaborative tool can foster a better understanding of originality. Developing such policies requires broad participation of teachers, students, and administrators (Hong, 2023; Cong-Lem et al., 2024). Teachers and students should be involved in building policies to ensure a culture of trust and support (Luo, 2024).

Implications

Drawing primarily on evidence from tertiary EFL/ESL writing contexts, the following implications are mainly intended for higher education.

For students, given the AI's ability to improve writing proficiency, tertiary L2 students can exploit these technologies as a helpful tool at different stages of writing: brainstorming, drafting, and checking errors in final products, but not to create original thought. Students also need to critically examine AI-suggested content, verify the reliability of AI-provided knowledge, and recognize the ethical implications of AI-created writing. These strategies can help students use AI effectively to improve writing in English while keeping creativity, critical thinking, and academic integrity.

For teachers, providing careful guides on AI usage, critically evaluating AI suggestions, and organizing AI awareness workshops and classroom discussions on responsible AI use are necessary to build students' confidence in using the tools without violating academic rules. In addition, given the limited ability to differentiate between AI-produced content and students' original work, teachers require sustained professional development in AI literacy to familiarize themselves with common AI writing patterns, detector limitations, and ethical assessment practices. This can be done by joining AI literacy training workshops, interacting with various AI tools while evaluating students' assignments, critically examining AI writing patterns and students' writing styles, and sharing observations and experiences with colleagues.

For writing assessment design, several strategies are drawn. First, to prevent students from turning to AI to complete their assignments, process-oriented assessments that include portfolio writing, pre-submitted multiple drafts for teachers' approval (e.g., outlines, drafts, revisions), and reflective commentaries are highly recommended. These stages should be included in the grading criteria. Second, assessment frameworks should include higher-order thinking tasks that require students to think critically, combine ideas, and apply complex contexts because these skills are considered shortcomings of AI tools. Third, to ensure fairness and accuracy, a collaboration between AI and teachers is needed in the assessment processes. To this end, teachers need to cross-check flagged texts using multiple detectors and using supplementary methods such as interviews or in-class assignments. Fourth, teachers can develop AI-resistant assessments by requiring students to defend their written products with oral presentations or reflections. These approaches also help reduce dishonesty and misconduct in academic settings and, importantly, raise students' awareness of integrity in education.

For institutional policies, university administrators should collaborate with multiple stakeholders, e.g., teachers, students, curriculum designers, AI tools developers, and their counterparts to build clear and transparent policies for AI use in education, clarifying acceptable practices, expectations for original works, and the consequences of misconduct. Once developed, the policies should be clearly communicated through student handbooks, university websites, and official communication channels. Both students and teachers should also receive training on these policies and AI literacy to ensure understanding and proper implementation.

Conclusion

This systematic review synthesized evidence from 20 peer-reviewed studies published between 2023 and 2025, following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, to examine the effects of AI on L2 student writing and assessment. The findings suggest that AI tools are perceived as beneficial for enhancing students' writing efficiency, but also raise concerns about excessive dependence on these advanced technologies, including the loss of students' creativity and critical thinking skills, violations of academic integrity, and difficulties in ensuring fairness and correctness under current assessment methods. The results underscore the need to transform assessment approaches given the easy accessibility of AI support. The best way is to embrace AI as a potential supporting tool in the assessment process. Redesigning assessment methods, encouraging AI responsible use, and equipping students and teachers with AI literacy, especially on how to distinguish AI-created content from students' original writing, are essential to avoid academic violations.

Despite the valuable findings, this study has several limitations. First, since this is a secondary research analysis, it uses the findings and perspectives of the previous studies, which may limit the generalizability of the conclusions due to the limitations of geographic diversity and education levels. Second, although database-specific search strings and screening procedures were reported, the review was limited to three major databases, which may have excluded relevant studies indexed elsewhere. Third, the corpus comprised a mix of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods designs; while CASP criteria were applied pragmatically across study types with a defined inclusion threshold, the tool was not originally designed for cross-design appraisal, which may affect comparability of quality judgements. Furthermore, under the emerging challenges of AI on assessment, there might be new solutions and updated AI policies from universities around the world, which could affect the validity of the current insights. Finally, conclusions regarding AI detection tools should be interpreted cautiously, as detector performance is rapidly evolving and highly sensitive to task type, text manipulation, and software version. Therefore, on-going research is needed to keep the results updated. Future research should explore the development of innovative assessment methods, cross-regional studies that extend beyond dominant higher-education contexts, and AI's long-term effects in L2 writing competence.

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