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Table of Content

Vol. 2 No. 5 (2022): TESOL & Education
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.2225>
Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3233-457X>

Articles

Pages

1. Factors Influencing Freshmen's Acceptance of Online Learning: A Study at Hanoi University of Industry
Trinh Hong Linh, Pham Duc Long, Phan Van Viet, Nguyen Ha Trang 1-13
2. Preparedness for Online Learning in the Context of Monkeypox Virus: A Literature Review
Islam Asim Ismail, Laila K. A. Dawoud 14-19
3. Students' attitudes towards teacher's use of Vietnamese in EFL classrooms at Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School
Le Hoai Thu 20-33
4. The integration of English conversation rooms and chatting to enhance English communication skills for EFL students
Thuy Ngo Thi Cam, Nhi Ha Yen 34- 63
5. Applying Writing Feedback Orientation and Self-Regulated Learning Writing Strategies to EFL Students at Van Lang University During COVID-19
Vu Le Uyen, Tran Ngoc My, Le Thi Kim Hong, Dao Hoang Linh 64-88
6. Using English Discourse Markers to Enhance Speaking Skills: A Case Study at Van Lang University
Truong Phu Sy 89-99
7. Commitment to Core Values in Professional Development in ELT Contexts: A Case Study
Nguyen Dang Nguyen 100-109
8. An analysis of the modulation system in Vietnamese from a systemic functional perspective and some suggestions for legal translation
Nguyen Thi Nhat Linh, Phan Tuan Ly 110-123



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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear authors and colleagues,

We are pleased to inform you that the issue in November 2022 of the International Journal of TESOL & Education (ijte) has completed its mission. We got contributions from authors from 9 different universities in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

To Indonesia (1), we thank the English Language Education, The English and Foreign Languages University, India. To Malaysia (2), we acknowledged the Language and Literacy Education, University of Malaya, Malaysia. “The authors argue that the old outbreak of covid-19 has changed teaching forever. The educational process has changed dramatically, and policymakers have focused on e-learning, whereby education is undertaken remotely on online learning platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams.”

To Northern Vietnam, we send our thanks to (1) the University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Ha Noi, Vietnam, (2) Hanoi University of Industry, Ha Noi, Vietnam, (3) Testing and Training, Education Assurance Section, Political Officers University, Ha Noi, Vietnam, (4) National Testing Center, Ministry of Education and Training, Ha Noi, Vietnam. The study found that “first-year students’ acceptance of online learning is affected by four main factors: performance expectancy, effort expectancy, attitude, and technological competencies. Concerning the research findings, several implications are suggested for effective online learning and teaching in Vietnam.” Also, our sincere thanks go to (5) Faculty of Applied Linguistics, Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School, Vietnam. This study indicated that “the VNU-IS student participants were satisfied with their teacher’s use of L1. Vietnamese should be considered as a backup rather than a barrier for Vietnamese teachers.

To Southern Vietnam, we send our thanks to (1) HCMC University of Social Sciences and Humanities, HCMC National University. One study “focused on the exploration of commitment to core values in professional development in the local ELT context in HCMC, Vietnam”; another study “focused on Modulation analysis in Vietnamese, including Obligation and Inclination, from a Systemic Functional perspective.” The results of these studies provide a basis for building standards of professional conduct in the local ELT context and provide “some suggestions for legal translation in Viet Nam context.” We also send our special thanks to (2) the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University. In terms of virtual classrooms, the authors of these studies claimed that “learning Speaking via the Google Meet platform and English texting can substantially enhance their English communication abilities. In addition, texting in English and practicing with friends via the online-based app are effective ways to revise their English communication skills during the COVID pandemic with social distancing requirements.”

Last but not least, we really appreciate the hard-working of the editorial board and reviewers. Without their efforts and valuable time, the International Journal of TESOL & Education (ijte) could not achieve qualified research articles on this issue.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Sincerely yours



Associate Professor Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho

Editor-in-chief

Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University

Factors Influencing Freshmen's Acceptance of Online Learning: A Study at Hanoi University of Industry

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ABSTRACT

The sudden outbreak of Covid-19 has challenged Vietnamese educational systems, forcing educational institutions across the nation, especially universities and colleges, to shift to an online mode of teaching and learning. What has concerned Vietnamese educators and policymakers is the quality of these online teaching and learning activities. Blayone (2018), Cigdem and Ozturk (2016) as well as Wei and Chou (2020) shared the belief that the acceptance of students decided the success of online teaching and learning. However, only a little research has been done so far on Vietnamese students' acceptance of online learning. Therefore, this quantitative study focuses on determining factors influencing freshmen's acceptance of online learning at Hanoi University of Industry, thus identifying their acceptance level of online learning. Data was collected by a survey with the use of random sampling and the participation of language-majored students from the Hanoi University of Industry. The collected data was quantitatively processed with the employment of SPSS. The results indicate that freshmen's acceptance of online learning is affected by four main factors, including performance expectancy, effort expectancy, attitude, and technological competencies. With respect to the research findings, several implications are suggested for effective online learning and teaching in Vietnam.

Keywords: online learning, higher education, measurement, students' acceptance

Introduction

Online learning has become popular in Vietnam recently in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. Teachers and students have switched to online teaching and learning for nearly two years, but online education appears to remain many challenges and problems. For example, it is easy for online students to feel isolated from their teachers if their teachers overuse multiple-choice tests instead of collaborative learning tasks, leading to considerable barriers to maintaining the students' study to the end of coursework (Gillett-Swan, 2017). Besides teacher-related problems, students are likely to suffer from anxiety about interrupted

interactions with their peers for group-assigned presentations (Fabrizz, Mendzheritskaya, & Stehle, 2021). Therefore, there has been an enormous urge for teachers and researchers to research students' acceptance of online learning to identify whether students are ready for the new form of education so that teachers can provide support if necessary. However, it seems impractical to diagnose students' acceptance level of online learning without identifying elements of this acceptance. In Vietnam, there has been a great deal of research conducted about online learning; however, the majority of the papers are on the effectiveness of online learning or recommendations for better virtual teaching and learning. Although some researchers did focus on the topics related to Vietnamese students' readiness for only learning, their works were conducted in Central and Southern Vietnam. As a result of the lack of relevant research on this topic in Vietnam, this paper is conducted to determine factors affecting the acceptance of language-majored students at the Hanoi University of Industry of online learning, thus identifying their acceptance level for virtual learning.

Literature review

Online learning

As more and more researchers become interested in studying online learning, a myriad of definitions of online learning have been provided, most of which are based on technological platforms. Mosa, Mahrin and Ibrahim (2016) defined online learning as a learning method to create an interactive learning environment with the assistance of computers and the Internet. Sharing the same idea, Yacob, Kadir and Zainudin (2012) gave a more general definition by pointing out that online learning consisted of all forms of teaching and learning requiring technological devices' help. Therefore, online learning can be described as a method of learning based on the employment of technological platforms on different devices that had an Internet connection such as computers, laptops, or smartphones.

To assure the quality of online learning, it is necessary to “further build assessment and evaluation techniques” (Dumford & Miller, 2018, p.453). The reason could result from the practice that the established assessment tools for traditional classrooms might not work well in online learning (Dumford & Miller, 2018). In their research, Bhuasiri et al. (2012) stated that the success of online learning was attributed to four different factors, including technological expertise, recognition of its actual effectiveness, attitudes towards the learning method, and the efficiency of digital devices used for the learning process.

Students' acceptance of online learning

With the growing importance and popularity of online learning, a great deal of research has been conducted to assess students' acceptance of online learning. One of the first studies belonged to Mattice and Dixon (1999). This paper highlighted that students' acceptance of online learning was influenced by students' access to technological platforms, their interest in virtual learning, and other demographical features (Mattice & Dixon, 1999). Zimmerman and Kulikowich (2016) proposed that technology skills were among the significant factors in students' acceptance of online learning. However, some studies in Vietnam pointed out that the limitations of the technological infrastructure in Vietnam exerted a considerable impact on virtual research. The lack of digital devices and stable Internet connections, especially in rural and remote areas, hindered students' online learning (Pham & Ho, 2020). Nguyen and Doan (2021) also agreed that the availability of technological tools played an essential part in

students' acceptance of online learning. In short, students' acceptance of online learning is influenced by numerous elements such as students' attitudes towards online learning, the quality of the technological infrastructure, or demographical features. However, in this study, only four aspects are analyzed, including (1) efficiency expectations for online learning, (2) efforts expectations for online learning, (3) learners' attitudes toward online learning, and (4) students' technology skills.

Efficiency expectations for online learning

Efficiency expectations are concerned with the learners' assumptions. From their perspective, the technology used for online education can foster their academic achievement. Efficiency expectations originate from the Technology Acceptance Model which mentions the perceived usefulness of technology usage (Ngampornchai & Adams, 2016). Students could accept online learning when it helped target their educational and personal goals (Teo, 2013). There is a positive relationship between the learner's expectations and perceived usefulness (Liu, Teng, & Han, 2020). When the students' expectations for online education reach a high level, they are likely to realize the advantages of the online learning platform quickly and then foster their perceived usefulness of online learning. Furthermore, online education can bring about the advancement of computer skills necessary for the student's graduate jobs due to quickly seeking more updated Internet news (Kew et al., 2018).

Efforts expectations for online learning

Efforts expectations refer to the learners' belief of ease in employing technology. In other words, effort expectations are associated with perceived ease of technology usage (Ngampornchai & Adams, 2016). The majority of studies in Asia indicate that the perceived ease of use that emerges from the Technology Acceptance Model is a key factor in approving the users' different technologies (Murillo, Novoa-Hernández, & Rodríguez, 2021). In this research, we also adopted this element in the Technology Acceptance Model as a factor influencing students' acceptance of online learning. It can be inferred that the students could expect to save time from online learning because of the ease of online software applications. They can hope to become skillful in using technological applications without support from other members such as lecturers or friends.

Learners' attitudes towards online learning

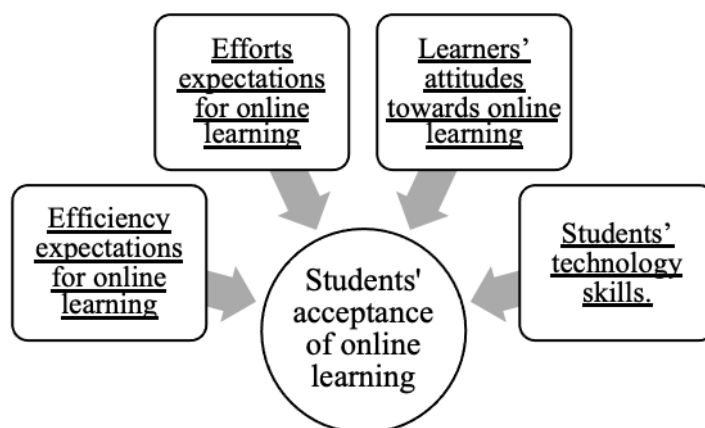
Attitude is identified to have a positive association with human behavior towards the surrounding environment (Liu et al., 2020). In terms of online learning, students' attitude was shown to have a direct impact on their learning participation (Ali, 2020). The previous study indicated that the student's attitudes brought about significant effects on their behavioral intention to accept language learners' mobile technology (García Botero et al., 2018). The students who had a positive attitude towards online education tended to encounter the lowest barrier. In contrast, the students who were pessimistic about learning online appeared to have the highest barrier ratings (Muilenburg & Berge, 2005)

Technology skills for online learning

Online learning also requires students to proficiently use multimedia applications, computer software, email, and video-based social interactions (Baytiyeh, 2018). It is undeniable that technology skills can affect the students' capacities in fulfilling their personal learning tasks and student-and-instructor interactions (Agyeiwaah et al., 2021). The readiness for online learning is partially constituted by "computer skills, internet self-efficacy, self-direction" (Tang et al., 2021, p.4). Digital readiness for online education as stated by Blayone et al.

(2018) was impacted by “four-human-computer-interaction types: computational, informational, communicational and technical” (Blayone et al., 2018, p.3). The first three categories originated directly from key capacities of computer hardware for processing, storing, and transmitting computer data. The technical competencies which belong to the learners' operational skills could be developed through working with devices, managing online accounts, and performing procedural tasks.

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of the research



Research hypotheses

After reviewing some themes in online learning and considering the present context at Hanoi University of Industry, we focused on four following hypotheses:

H1: Students' effectiveness expectations have a positive influence on their acceptance of online learning.

H2: Students' efforts and expectations have a positive effect on their acceptance of online learning.

H3: Students' attitude toward online learning has a positive influence on their acceptance.

H4: Students' technology skills have a positive effect on their acceptance of online learning.

Methods

For this research analysis, we employed a case study of the Hanoi University of Industry, an educational institution with a history of 124 years. Hanoi University of Industry was well known as a technical vocational school and has become a higher education institution since 2005. At Hanoi University of Industry, online and face-to-face education was implemented for foreign-languages students more than five years ago. Online learning has merged into the electronic university administration system, so teaching and learning activities can be systematically managed and inspected.

The participants in the study were first-year students who had just finished general education and attended higher education in two weeks. The freshmen spent online learning time when they were in grade 12. Therefore, they seemed familiar with meeting their teachers and friends through internet-based applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams.

The online survey questionnaire was utilized to collect data in this study because it saved costs, sorted data electronically, and helped receive feedback from participants in remote

locations (Teo, 2013). The questionnaire consists of 5 parts with 40 questions which require the participants to rate their response on the five-point Likert scale. The five first parts of 35 questions are related to five independent variables and one dependent variable. Five independent variables include the participants' efficiency expectations, efforts expectations, attitudes, and technology skills towards online learning. They were supposed to impact the participants' acceptance of online learning positively. The last part is five questions about the respondents' demographic information, including the participants' gender, living place, online learning equipment, and their training major at Hanoi University of Industry. It was designed in Vietnamese because it was the participants' mother tongue, although they pursued different training majors of languages, including English, Korean, Japanese, and Chinese.

After being piloted with the participation of 31 students, the official questionnaire was sent to the whole population of the research, which was 361 freshmen of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi University of Industry and excluded the number of participants for the survey pilot. After three days, 239 students responded and agreed to participate in the research, which made the confidence interval of the sample size more than 95%.

To analyze the study data, SPSS software version 26 was employed. Firstly, the article depicts the demographic information of the participants by using the descriptive statistic method. Afterward, the scales' reliability needed to be analyzed before executing dimension reduction to discover principal components. Lastly, correlation and multiple linear regression were performed to develop a model of relationships between the newly explored factors and the acceptance of online learning.

Results

Quality of the scale

Reliability of the scale (Cronbach's alpha coefficients)

Prior to further analysis into exploratory factors, correlation, and regression, the reliability and validity of the scale are verified. As can be seen from Table 1, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all items are higher than 0.80, which indicates a very good level of reliability of the scale (Peterson, 1994). The corrected item-total correlation of all indicators is more than 0.30, pointing out that all of the indicators are qualified (Nunnally, 1978). In terms of Cronbach's alpha coefficients, if an item is deleted, almost every indicator has a coefficient lower than the coefficient of the item, except for the two indicators E8 and P2. However, since Cronbach's alpha coefficients of the two items are high (more than 0.80), the coefficients of these two indicators, if items are deleted, are acceptable. Therefore, it can be claimed that the test is reliable, thus being qualified for further analysis.

Table 1. Test of reliability

No	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1. Effectiveness Expectations (E) – 0.86			
1	E1	0.73	0.82
2	E2	0.63	0.83
3	E3	0.54	0.85
4	E4	0.65	0.83
5	E5	0.54	0.85
6	E6	0.72	0.82
7	E7	0.61	0.84
8	E8	0.39	0.86
2. Efforts Expectations (P) – 0.83			
9	P1	0.55	0.81
10	P2	0.51	0.83
11	P3	0.73	0.76
12	P4	0.69	0.77
13	P5	0.67	0.78
3. Attitudes (A) – 0.86			
14	A1	0.46	0.86
15	A2	0.66	0.83
16	A3	0.56	0.85
17	A4	0.69	0.83
18	A5	0.63	0.84
19	A6	0.66	0.83
20	A7	0.71	0.83
4. Technology Skills (T) – 0.93			
21	T1	0.65	0.92
22	T2	0.72	0.92
23	T3	0.75	0.92
24	T4	0.78	0.91
25	T5	0.71	0.92
26	T6	0.74	0.92
27	T7	0.78	0.92
28	T8	0.74	0.92
29	T9	0.72	0.92
5. Students' Acceptance (D) – 0.90			
30	D1	0.76	0.88
31	D2	0.80	0.87
32	D3	0.69	0.89
33	D4	0.81	0.87
34	D5	0.65	0.89
35	D6	0.67	0.89

Validity of the scale (Exploratory factor analysis)

After confirming that the scales are reliable based on the results of the reliability assessment by Cronbach's alpha, a total of 35 items, including 29 items of the independent variables and 6 items of the dependent variables are utilized for the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The method of extraction used in this analysis is principal component analysis. The statistics in Table 2 show that the scale acquires adequate internal consistency. The results of assessing scale validity indicate that KMO is 0.90 and Sig. of Bartlett's Test is $0.000 < 0.005$. As the

KMO value and the result of Bartlett's Test are qualified, the factor analysis is allowed to proceed (Hair et al., 1998).

As indicated in Table 2, the Eigenvalues of all four explored factors, which represent the total amount of variance that all the components explain, are greater than 1. In addition, the cumulative percentage of justified variance is 62.88%, which means that these four factors can account for 62.88% of the total variance (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). These indexes indicate that the results of exploratory factor analysis of independent variables in this research are valid. Regarding the rotated component matrix from EFA, 4 factors are generated from 25 items. There are 9 items in Factor 1 named technology skills (T) while Factor 2 known as students' attitudes (A) includes 6 items. Factor 3 with 5 different items is called effectiveness expectations (E) and the last factor is Factor 4, named efforts expectations (P), which comprises 5 different items. Interestingly, one item of Factor 3 (E8) in the original questionnaire, after exploratory factor analysis, has been moved to Factor 4. Several items, including A1, P2, E5, and E7 have been eliminated because they are categorized into 4 other factors after the analysis. Each of these factors consists of 1 item only, making them invalid.

Table 2. Results of exploratory factor analysis for independent variables

Items	Components			
	1	2	3	4
T4	0.82			
T3	0.80			
T6	0.79			
T7	0.78			
T5	0.77			
T2	0.77			
T9	0.76			
T8	0.76			
T1	0.69			
A5		0.80		
A6		0.75		
A7		0.75		
A2		0.73		
A4		0.71		
A3		0.70		
E4			0.73	
E3			0.73	
E1			0.73	
E2			0.67	
E6			0.63	
P3				0.80
P5				0.71
P1				0.70
P4				0.59
E8				0.56
Eigenvalues	8.09	3.99	2.25	1.38
Cumulative (%)	32.34%	48.34%	57.35%	62.88%
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy			0.90	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square			3434.56
	Df			300
	Sig.			0.000

Table 3 illustrates the results of exploratory analysis for the dependent variable, which is

students' acceptance of online learning. As can be seen from the table, the indexes of the KMO coefficient and the Sig. of Bartlett's Test are 0.88 and 0.00 respectively, that there are enough conditions for factors analysis to be conducted with the dependent variable (Hair et al., 1998). There are 6 different items in this factor named students' acceptance of online learning. The Eigenvalues of this factor is 4.03, much greater than 1, with the accumulated percentage of explained variance being 67.19%. Based on these statistics, it can be concluded that there is a factor named students' acceptance of online learning generated from 6 items, which accounts for 67.19% of the variability of data.

Table 3. Results of exploratory factor analysis for the dependent variable

Items	Components	
D5	0.76	
D4	0.75	
D6	0.73	
D2	0.70	
D1	0.64	
D3	0.55	
Eigenvalues	4.03	
Cumulative (%)	67.19	
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.88	
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	847.91
	Df	15
	Sig.	0.000

Correlation

The correlation was conducted to assess the relationships between variables, including both independent and dependent ones. As shown in Table 4, all independent variables are correlated to dependent variables and this correlation has significant meaning since the Sig. of the test is all smaller than 0.01. While technology skills (T), effectiveness expectations (E), and efforts expectations (P) have a positive correlation with students' acceptance of online learning (D), the factor named attitudes (A) possesses a negative correlation ($r = -0.48$, $p < 0.01$). In general, all these four dependent variables just have a fair correlation with the dependent variable when the absolute value of correlation coefficients ranges from 0.39 to 0.66 ($p < 0.01$). The relationship between effective expectations (E) and students' acceptance (D) is the strongest while the relationship between technology skills (T) ($r = 0.66$, $p < 0.01$) and students' acceptance (D) is the weakest ($r = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$).

In addition to the correlation between independent variables and dependent variables, among independent variables exist correlations as well since the Sig. of correlation coefficients between most independent variables is smaller than 0.01, except for the relationship between attitudes and technology skills. Interestingly, both effectiveness expectations (E) and efforts expectations (P) have a negative relationship with attitudes toward online learning (A), with coefficients of -0.36 and -0.22 respectively ($p < 0.01$). However, these negative relationships are quite weak. Nevertheless, in order to confirm the correlation between variables, there is a need to conduct multiple linear regression to identify whether students' acceptance of online learning is attributed to these four explored factors. Therefore, multiple linear regression is carried out after the correlation test with a view to testifying these hypotheses.

Table 4. Pearson correlations between key variables

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Students' Acceptance (D)	1				
2. Technology Skills (T)	0.39**	1			
3. Attitudes (A)	-0.48**	-0.09	1		
4. Effectiveness Expectations (E)	0.66**	0.32**	-0.36**	1	
5. Efforts Expectations (P)	0.55**	0.50**	-0.22**	0.55**	1

* **significance at the level $p < 0.01$ level (2-tailed)

Multiple linear regression

Table 5 describes the results of multiple linear regression among one dependent variable, which is students' acceptance of online learning, and four independent variables including technological skills (T), students' attitudes (A), effectiveness expectations (E), and efforts expectations (P). The technique selected for data analysis was multiple regression because the relationships in this model are multivariate. As can be seen from Table 5, the Sig. of the test is 0.000 and the Sig. of all independent variables are lower than 0.05, which means that the results of the regression are significant, and thus reliable. The R square value is 0.56, illustrating that all the explored factors including students' attitudes (A), effectiveness expectation (E), efforts expectations (P), and technology skills (T) can explain 55.70% of the student's acceptance of online learning while 45.30% of this acceptance is attributed to other factors which are not included in the regression model.

Table 5. The models' regression results

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B Std. Error	B Std. Error	B Std. Error Beta			Tolerance VIF	Tolerance VIF
1							
(Constant)	1.09	0.28		4.11	0.000		
T	0.15	0.05	0.14	2.74	0.005	0.75	1.33
A	-0.27	0.04	-0.28	-6.08	0.000	0.87	1.15
E	0.39	0.05	0.41	7.55	0.000	0.64	1.56
P	0.22	0.06	0.20	3.55	0.000	0.59	1.70
a. Dependent Variable: D							
Adjusted R Square = 0.56			F (ANOVA) = 76.51			Sig. = 0.000	

Discussion

From the data analysis of this article, it can be concluded that students' acceptance of online learning is attributed to four different factors, including students' effectiveness expectations, students' efforts expectations, their attitudes towards online learning, and their technological skills. In addition, although three hypotheses about students' effectiveness expectations, students' efforts expectations, and students' technological skills are supported, the other about students' attitudes is rejected. While students' effectiveness expectations, students' efforts expectations, and students' technology skills exert a positive influence on their acceptance of online learning, students' attitudes are negatively influential, which contradicts the hypotheses of this research. The study also identifies the weakest relationship between students' technology skills and their acceptance of online learning. This finding helps to clarify the

results of the questionnaire – why students are confident about their technical skills but still feel skeptical about online learning.

Although there have been numerous studies about students' acceptance of online learning, this paper has identified several noteworthy points which contradict the previous study. While all four factors named performance expectancy, effort expectancy, attitudes, and technology skills were claimed to exert positive influences on students' acceptance and readiness for e-learning in many studies (Ngambonchai & Adams, 2016), students' attitudes have been identified to have a negative relationship with students' acceptance in this paper.

In addition, the findings in this research also point out that students' technological skills have little impact on students' acceptance of online learning. Besides, the statistics collected from participants also indicate that while the majority felt confident about their technological skills, they were still uncertain or skeptical about online learning. This finding about students' acceptance of online learning is quite contradictory to relevant research conducted in the Vietnamese context. The study of Nguyen and Chu (2021) implied that students' confidence in their technological abilities would improve their likelihood to accept the use of technological tools for learning. However, this study indicated students' confidence in using technology does not help them to be more positive about online learning.

The discovery of relationship between attitudes and students' acceptance of online learning also overlaps with what has been discovered in the study of Ngo (2021). He believed that opportunities to interact, and students' feelings and emotions strongly affect their engagement in online learning (Ngo, 2021). This finding bears a resemblance to the analysis of this research which indicates the relationship between students' attitudes and their acceptance of online learning. However, while Ngo (2021) discovered a positive impact of students' emotions on their online learning, this study on students' acceptance of online learning represents a negative relationship between the two factors.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the acceptance of online learning among language-majored freshmen at Hanoi University of Industry was attributed to four different factors, including students' effectiveness expectations, their efforts expectations, their attitudes towards online learning, and their technological skills. While the three factors obtain a positive influence on students' level of acceptance, the last factor, which is students' technology skills, negatively affects students' acceptance of online learning. Based on the results of the research, it can also be concluded that while students were fairly confident about their technological skills, they were still uncertain about their acceptance of online learning and did not want to lengthen the period of studying virtually. Therefore, in order to increase students' acceptance of online learning, lecturers and counselors need to help students recognize the efficiency of online learning before assisting them to develop their technology skills. There should be more studies in the future about how to boost students' acceptance of online learning, thus making their virtual learning more effective. However, this study was conducted at Hanoi University of Industry with freshmen only, so the scale of the research is quite small, which is a limitation of this study. Therefore, there should be more research on a larger scale to identify which factors affect Vietnamese students' acceptance of online learning.

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Preparedness for Online Learning in the Context of Monkeypox Virus: A Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

There are rising concerns about understanding the future effects of the Monkeypox virus on all life aspects, one of which is education. The authors argue that the old outbreak of covid-19 has changed teaching forever. The educational process had been changed dramatically, and policymakers have focused on e-learning, whereby education is undertaken remotely on online learning platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and Microsoft Teams. To understand the possible effect of Monkeypox on education, the authors rely on secondary data published recently regarding the same by research scholars, health centres, and international organizations to create a comprehensive discussion. A planned comparison shows that the classroom starts losing its monopoly on the environment of the learning process. Recent theoretical developments have revealed that shifting to online learning is not a concern because it escalates the retention of information. Furthermore, the effect of Covid-19 on the educational process has been made here to stay for the long run. Having this in mind, all educational institutions and related parties, such as teachers, students, ministries of education, and policymakers, already have enough experience to cope with any unexpected change in the learning process. Thereupon, the Monkeypox virus will not affect the educational process significantly like in the past three years, i.e., 2020, 2021, and 2022.

Keywords:

Monkeypox, Covid-19, e-learning, learning during Monkeypox

Introduction and Literature Review

In May 2022, a few countries reported escalating cases of the Monkeypox virus, such as the United States, United Kingdom, Israel, Benin, South Sudan, Singapore, and the United Arab Kingdom. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2022), most of the theories of Monkeypox are, however, focused on considering it as a viral zoonosis with similar symptoms to smallpox patients. The virus gradually appeared in 1970 in central and west Africa. Monkeypox has appeared recently in rural and modern areas all over the world. Even though Monkeypox is a risky viral virus, it stays underrecognized and underreported as a pandemic up

to date by the World Health Organization. It is a bit frustrating for people to wake up on Monkeypox. They do not want the same pattern of Covid-19 to repeat itself because their lives were significantly affected. It also shows how the world dealt with Covid-19 in a double standard policy in which developing countries could hardly offer their citizens vaccines (Nakoune E, Olliaro P., 2022).

For the past three years, one of the most popular ideas that irks scholars in literature is the possibility of relying on online learning in light of the shutdown of schools and educational institutions. One of the major topics to be investigated in this field is whether the globe is heading to another learning style and whether the continuation of online learning adoption persists post-pandemic of both viruses (Li and Lalani, 2020). E-learning is a digital program for delivering, scheduling, and monitoring courses over the internet. Keis et al. (2017) entail using innovative technological products to develop, organize, and transmit educational material and facilitate two-way communication among professors and students.

A recent work carried out by Potter et al. (2022) states that in 2021 there were only 15 countries reported Monkeypox cases. Based on the preceding, the risk of the Monkeypox virus is still not as risky as Covid-19. Therefore, it is not a massive concern for policymakers for the time being to force educational institutions to shut their doors.

Successful stories using online learning platforms come from all over the world. Recent literature shows that the educational institutions' quality and service succeeded in continuing the learning process at home. Face-to-face learning has become no longer the only mode of education, but online platforms have proved successful.

The standard strategy "learning from home" has been tuned to be effective and stop the transmission of any viral virus. Furthermore, it helped students and teachers continue learning safely and effectively (Yudiawan et al., 2021). Recently published studies (Pham, 2022) have shown that online learning can be effective in the learning process when students and teachers collaborate to maximize its benefits.

E-learning is mainly reported as an effective tool in emergencies to prevent infectious diseases from spreading and protect people's lives. Several recent studies considered technology the most successful and effective tool for teaching, learning, assessing, and communicating during unexpected events. The educational field shortens students' transportation expenses and time and provides them with available material access (Nguyen, 2022; Dung, 2020; Fatonia et al., 2020; Fidalgo et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2020; Mukhtar et al., 2020).

Design of the Study

This paper presents a brief overview of the preparedness for online learning in light of the context of the Monkeypox virus. This is a literature review paper that used secondary data to understand the future effects of Monkeypox on education. This kind of research is essential for the research field. It is considered a baseline and valuable reference for further research in the area. This kind of research is significant for collecting information and establishing a solid starting point for future research. The researchers used secondary data to complete this paper. They have reviewed the other published research work and used their results to discuss their views.

Discussion

In the past three years, researchers worldwide investigated the effect of e-learning on various fields during the COVID-19 pandemic. They came up with several results about its effectiveness, merits, and proofs. Implementing e-learning is closely related to the digital equity offered by governments. Basilaia & Kvavadze (2020) have connected the effectiveness of e-learning classrooms with the advanced countries. However, the opposite is in developing countries. In this section, the previous results of e-learning will be discussed from two points of view: the advantages and barriers. Students can get up a few minutes before the lecture time. In the same fashion, it offers students centred classrooms where they are self-controlled learners who learn synchronously anywhere and at any time (Mukhtar et al., 2020). Similar results are found in the literature that trained teachers can enhance students' engagement in online learning. They also can create autonomy-supportive online tasks to develop students' skills effectively (Ngo, 2022).

Moreover, students learn in a comfortable environment since they are not restricted to a specific place, time, or uniform. Students can turn off their cameras and attend their lectures in pyjamas on beds. Thus, this feeling of freedom motivates them to ask questions as if they are in a one-to-one classroom (Fatonja et al., 2020; Hussein et al., 2020).

Despite the previous results, e-learning is an unsatisfying educational tool in a few studies like Rachmah (2020) and Rahayu & Wirza (2020). Many reasons stand behind e-learning's ineffectiveness. Network instability is the most complaint from teachers and students, especially in developing countries and rural towns and villages, even in advanced ones. This issue causes voice delay. Another issue is the unilateral interaction from the teachers' side because most students feel boredom because of the lecture long time in addition to the poor technological skills among parents and students and the insufficient training among teachers (Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020; Purwanto et al., 2020; Putri et al., 2020).

Moreover, the poor technology infrastructure, the expensive internet costs, and the families deteriorating financial situation make the e-learning system not preferable in some poor communities (Rahayu & Wirza, 2020). Some studies revealed health concerns regarding prolonged staring at digital screens and the lack of body movement sitting behind the screens (Dung, 2020).

In conclusion, the effectiveness of e-learning is controlled by several variables. These variables are the digital infrastructure offered by governments (Wahab & Iskandar, 2020) and governments' financial position to provide educational institutions and students with internet (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020), paid platforms to design content, and modern mobile phones or laptops to attend lectures. In addition, teachers who experience e-learning can deliver exciting lessons via e-learning (Wisdom et al. (2020), as mentioned in Nartiningrum & Nugroho, 2020). Finally, the authors recommend controlling these variables to head the e-learning education to better results and acceptance at any future shift to e-learning.

Limitations

This paper has its limitations and shortcomings. Although it is a hot topic that not much research has been done, it is still a snapshot of online learning in light of the current situation of Monkeypox. Since there is not enough data up to date, it is early to consider the Monkeypox virus as viral or might cause a pandemic worldwide. As mentioned by the authors, this paper is a baseline for future studies regarding online learning effectiveness in light of any sudden change.

Conclusion

From the overview above, it is clear that “brick and mortar” classrooms are no longer obligatory for learning. Authors believe that online learning was already successfully used before the Covid-19 pandemic; thus, Monkeypox will not significantly affect the learning process. Another promising conclusion is that the term “internet” has made the learning process possible, and many researchers have proved that through their experimental findings. More generally, these primary findings are consistent with research showing that Monkeypox will not cause trouble for the educational process as Covid-19 did. In addition, these findings provide additional information about the effectiveness of online learning over face-to-face learning format. Despite the limitations, these are valuable in light of the Monkeypox virus because there is robust evidence to consider online learning platforms as an emergency method to use during any sudden pandemic. Overall, the conclusions of the paper’s results demonstrate a strong effect of online learning and encourage educators to consider the coming era as the stage of online learning.

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Students' attitudes towards teacher's use of Vietnamese in EFL classrooms at Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School

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ABSTRACT

The role of L1 in L2 classrooms has without any doubt been the hot topic of debates and discussions. In particular, some linguists and educators do not support the use of L1 in teaching L2, whereas others emphasize the importance of L1 in L2 classes. Although studies have been done on both teachers' and students' attitudes toward L1 use in the L2 classroom, it still remains the question of when and how L1 can become an effective supporting tool for L2. The goal of this research is to present the results on the functionality of L1 (Vietnamese language) in L2 (EFL) classrooms under students' perspectives. A survey questionnaire was designed to deliver to participants for the study: 126 students at the intermediate level of the General English program at Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School (VNU-IS). The study's findings indicated that the VNU-IS student participants were satisfied with their teacher's use of L1. L1 usage was also discovered to be preferred for the following purposes: language functionality, managerial functionality, effective functionality, and social functionality. Among them, language functionality is most favored by VNU-IS students. The results also revealed that Vietnamese should be considered as a backup rather than a barrier for Vietnamese teachers.

Keywords: *L1, L2, Vietnamese language, English language, VNU-IS, functionality, EFL*

Introduction

The importance of the mother tongue (L1) in the foreign language (L2) classroom has always been a debatable topic among educators, teachers, and learners. At first, the Bilingual Approach made its day with the prosperity of the Grammar Translation Method. Then, as a result of the widespread usage of L2, the Grammar Translation Method lost its popularity and was quickly replaced by other Monolingual Approaches including the Audio-Lingual Method, Communicative Language Teaching, etc. Initially, this new technique seemed to rule out the usage of L1 in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) environment.

With the passage of time, however, theories and discussions in the area of ELT came to justify the usage of L1 in an EFL classroom. There are ongoing debates about whether or not L1 should be utilized in an EFL course. A lot of studies have gone into determining whether L1 usage should be encouraged or discouraged. The perspectives of teachers, students, and administrators are investigated. It is now obvious that L1 has made a comeback in the EFL classroom.

Despite the belief in the benefits of using L1 in L2 classes sparingly, there does not appear to be a set of circumstances in which it should be employed. As a result, it is up to the language teacher to decide when, why, and how to employ it. Moreover, the situations in which L1 should be utilized in a foreign language lesson appear to be determined by the various characteristics of language classrooms.

Literature review

The history of language education has seen a variety of approaches and teaching methods that have viewed L1 usage in the L2 classroom positively or negatively. Protesters claim that using L1 in L2 classrooms makes it difficult for the target language (TL) acquisition, while supporters believe in the effectiveness of L1 in a foreign language lesson. Some academics, nevertheless, adopt a neutral viewpoint, stating that the use of the mother tongue should neither be prohibited nor promoted.

Support for Monolingual Approach

Proponents of the Monolingual Approach believe that the more exposure learners have to the TL, the better the learning outcome will be. This claim is seen as fundamental to the monolingual approach. One of the pioneers in advancing the Monolingual Approach was Krashen, who pushed for maximal exposure to the target language in the foreign language classroom. Krashen (1985) believed in the close relationship between L2 usage and language proficiency. The Monolingual Method and the Direct Method's core concept is that "second language learning resembles first language acquisition, requiring plenty of oral engagement, very little grammatical analysis, and no translation" (Brown, 1994, p. 21).

First, the maximum use of TL will create an artificial learning environment for learners to use it effectively. In real-life cases, learners have to use L2 when they have to communicate totally in L2 without any interpreter when they have to read a book without any dictionary to support them. Also, L2 learners do not have much time and environment to use L2 outside their classroom, so it is undeniable that the teacher should maximize the use of TL during class time.

According to Duff and Polio (1990), there is a widespread notion in a normal foreign language classroom that complete competence in the TL is obtained by the instructor offering a rich target language environment. L1 becomes a barrier, an interference in the learning process. Macaro (1997) discovers that teachers do not find any pedagogical advantage in employing the learner's first language and that it is "clearly something that gets in the way of L2 learning" (p. 29). This is the strength that native speaker teachers have over non-native ones because they successfully

create a standardized learning environment for their students, where TL is exposed, practiced, and absorbed.

Another advantage of the Monolingual Approach is added for classroom management purposes. If there is any chance for students to use their mother tongue, they will use it for non-academic purposes, too. To illustrate, they can have off-topic discussions or create useless noise in the EFL classroom. It is agreed among EFL teachers that the “English only” rule is really effective in shaping discipline for students. Ellis (1985) emphasizes the significance of employing the TL for both linguistics and classroom management purposes. He claims that the teacher desires to correct students' mistakes and misbehavior immediately with the support of L1 to reach the short-term objectives of the lesson; however, by doing so, they refuse the valuable L2 input.

Thirdly, the use of TL will boost students' confidence and encouragement to express themselves. Students will realize that they are losing many opportunities to practice their TL if they are interrupted by their L1. Littlewood (1992, p. 45) claims that if teachers stop using the TL in the classroom, students would lose faith in the foreign language they are studying as a viable form of communication. It is only after they have used it that they recognize its value. Apparently, Turnbull (2018) states that L1 use in the L2 classroom will make learners lazy and over-reliant. They cannot control their learning process without getting support from teachers or a dictionary. Things become worse when students do not want to listen to explanations because they know teachers will provide them with the equivalent meaning of the words, the phrases, or the sentence if there is any complaint about comprehension.

Moreover, the use of TL will surely improve learners' critical thinking skills. It is the fact that any direct interpretation or direct translation may lead to oversimplification, and that one word may have more than one meaning, one sentence may mean differently in the varied situation, and some words and phrases do not have their exact equivalence in their mother tongue. Proponents of the Monolingual Method argue that translating between L1 and L2 is risky because it reinforces the notion that the languages are comparable one to one, which is not necessarily the case (Pacek, 2003). Keeping L1 and L2 separate is therefore necessary to avoid any misunderstanding that may cause. Pham (2021) believes that while the variations in cultural and pragmatic elements that affect language use and translation are not sufficiently researched, errors in spelling, grammar, and lexical meanings may be produced by the negative interference of the source language.

To add to this, Phillipson (1992) states two comparable philosophies: "English is best taught monolingually," and "The ideal English teacher is a native English speaker" (p. 185). According to these viewpoints, a native speaker instructor can support learning better than a non-native speaker one.

Support for Bilingual Approach

Since the Monolingual Method has had apparent weaknesses and has been put under investigation and suspected of its efficiency, the push to promote the use of L1 in EFL classrooms has grown again. As a result, the bilingual strategy has evolved. It has been

acknowledged by studies throughout the years that the usage of L1 in the L2 classroom is a beneficial process. Educators and teachers believe that L1 is a useful tool and valuable source to approach foreign language acquisition.

First, the use of L1 is a natural phenomenon. In fact, switching from a foreign language to a native language happens naturally among all language learners, and translation is a natural procedure. L1 and L2 always exist simultaneously, so it is ideal to let them support each other to reach learning objectives. Cook (2001) proposes that teachers capitalize on the many L1-L2 connections that students naturally form in their heads by emphasizing the similarities and distinctions between L1 and L2. According to Turnbull (2001), maximizing the TL does not and should not imply that teachers should not use L1 in their lessons; instead, it means that the L1 and L2 may help at the same time. Cummins (2007) is convinced that L2 is an assistant, not an enemy of L1 proficiency, and exposure itself is not enough to reach learning objectives. The help of L2 will help the teacher and students realize the lesson's aims faster and more effectively. Learning a second language should enrich the learner's life rather than diminish their native language and culture. Allowing L1 usage would give students the impression that learning another language is enjoyable. They can have access to a valued resource that supports them, and they won't feel bad about doing what comes easily to them.

Second, L1 is a necessary tool for successful language acquisition. According to Krashen (1981), exposure to understandable material is essential for language learning. If learners are unable to comprehend what has been spoken, they will be unable to complete a task or remember it in their minds. He also claims that high-quality bilingual education gives learners knowledge and literacy in their native language, which helps them learn English in an indirect but strong way. Also, many complicated grammatical points are difficult to explain in TL. According to Pachler and Field (2001), L1 can help teachers present a great number of grammatical points, particularly through the use of physical or visual displays. Similarly, Mohebbi and Alavi (2014) investigated 72 Iranian EFL instructors and discovered that they utilize the learners' native language, Persian, to fulfill different purposes including presenting new words, teaching new grammatical structures, doing classroom management, and giving feedback. This study found that L1 is undeniably used in the classroom and identified its roles.

Thirdly, the use of L1 facilitates teacher-student, and student-student communication and relationship. It eases learner's anxiety and negative psychological issues. Exclusion of students' first language is a critique of the language, according to Nation (1990), this deterioration has a negative psychological impact on the learners. By citing favorable outcomes from recent research on L1 use in ESL classes, Auerbach (1993) argues that the bilingual strategy is not only successful but also required for adult EFL students. In her research, she discovered that using L1 had a positive effect on decreasing pupils' anxiety levels and other emotional obstacles. It is a common situation in an EFL classroom that students keep silent or do not dare to say, and there is tension between teachers and learners. Burden (2000) taught his lessons using the "English exclusively" rule but he admits that he felt "distant" from the pupils as individuals since there was little natural conversational engagement in English. However, if

EFL teachers could create a close relationship with their students by giving them a sense of comfort, and employing their real-life experience in their native language, they would be relaxed to express themselves and take their chance with English.

Additionally, integrating L1 into L2 classes encourages cooperative learning. Some discussions in the native language are necessary for pair work and group work, which will help students figure out the problems better and find the answers faster. When there is room for L1 to exist, students will be more confident to express their viewpoints, to support their friends which surely facilitates the learning process. The time saved by speaking in the mother language may be spent on more productive tasks. Gaebler (2014) said in research that teachers teaching advanced learners can use translanguaging simply to keep up with the flow of the conversation and make it apparent for the listeners to understand the message being conveyed, as well as to cope with a lexis deficit.

Research Questions

The following research issues will be addressed in this study:

Question 1: What teaching approach do VNU-IS students prefer, a monolingual approach or a bilingual approach?

Question 2: In what functionalities are the use of Vietnamese in ELT classrooms proved to be effective/useful?

Question 3: How much can students benefit from lecturers using Vietnamese in the listening, speaking, reading, and writing lessons?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

In Vietnam, currently, most schools and English teaching centers follow the model of a combination of foreign teachers (NEST) and Vietnamese teachers (Non-NEST), or foreign teachers (NEST) and Vietnamese teaching assistants (TA) in their EFL classrooms. At Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School (VNU-IS), this model has also been developed and applied to the General English Program. The NEST and Non-NEST ratio 1:4 which means one foreign teacher work with four other Vietnamese teachers to cover the teaching of reading skill, listening skill, speaking skill, and writing skill has been applied consistently since the foundation of the program at VNU-IS.

The consideration was done to discover the qualities of Vietnamese teachers with different functionalities of the teaching and learning process such as language functionality, managerial functionality, effective functionality, and social functionality.

The Preparatory Year Program at VNU-IS, where the research was conducted offers intense English classes to provide students with the English academic skills they will need to pursue their prospective majors at the university. Students take an English placement exam after being

accepted to university, which places them in courses based on their competence level: elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, or upper-intermediate.

The study was conducted on 126 first-year students at the intermediate level. These 126 students are studying in level 3 (out of 4 levels) of the General English program at VNU-IS.

Design of the Study

The goal of this study was to evaluate the attitudes of students about the usage of their teacher's L1 in an EFL classroom, hence a quantitative study approach was adopted. A systematic questionnaire was created to address the participant groups' ideas and experiences. The researcher employed a questionnaire to perform this study, which was handed to 126 students at VNU-IS. Several parts of the questionnaire were adapted from Kafes (2011) and Kohi and Suvarna Lakshmi (2020).

Data collection & analysis

The questionnaire was designed to collect quantitative data. It was based on two studies:

- 1) Hüseyin KAFES (2011). A neglected resource or an overvalued illusion: L1 use in the foreign language classroom.
- 2) Kohi, M. & Suvarna Lakshmi, G. (2020). Use of L1 in ESL/EFL Classroom: Multinational Teachers' Perceptions and Attitudes.

The participants were requested to complete a two-sectioned questionnaire. In the first part, they were questioned about their demographics, learning experiences, and their current language proficiency. A mix of multiple choice and five-point Likert scale questions was included in the second part. These statements fall into four categories that may be used to investigate the functionality of L1 usage: language functionality, managerial functionality, effective functionality, and social functionality.

Findings

Question 1: What teaching approach do VNU-IS students prefer, a monolingual approach or a bilingual approach?

Students' preferable approach



Chart 1. Preferable approach

A majority of students (92%) supported the bilingual approach in EFL classrooms with the use of both Vietnamese and English. They believed that the lecturers’ smooth combination and transition between L1 and L2 were beneficial for them in the process of learning the target language. Only 10 students (8%) believed that an English-only environment is better for them in mastering their English.

Why did the majority of surveyed students approve of the use of Vietnamese in EFL classrooms? The first reason is related to students' language proficiency. Their English is only at an intermediate level, and they were so familiar with the use of their mother tongue in all classes including EFL classes. Moreover, these students' target was to pass the Aptis exam at the B2 level. Aptis is a level test, which means on one exam you can score between A2 and C. The Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking parts have a similar structure while Grammar and Vocabulary go together. Students thought they benefited more from teachers using Vietnamese to provide an explanation, give feedback, or give exam tips. It was easier to understand and it saved time. Another reason that explains why VNU-IS students welcome the use of L1 is the result of differences in learning factors of L2. Hoang (2021) made a literature review of some studies on L2 learning to find out how people learn L2 differently and how the various aspects relate to one another. He made a conclusion that the effectiveness of L2 is affected by both external factors including communicative environment, comprehensive input, and internal factors such as age, gender, aptitude, emotion, or learning motivation.

Question 2: In what functionalities are the use of Vietnamese in ELT classrooms proved to be effective/useful?

Language functionality

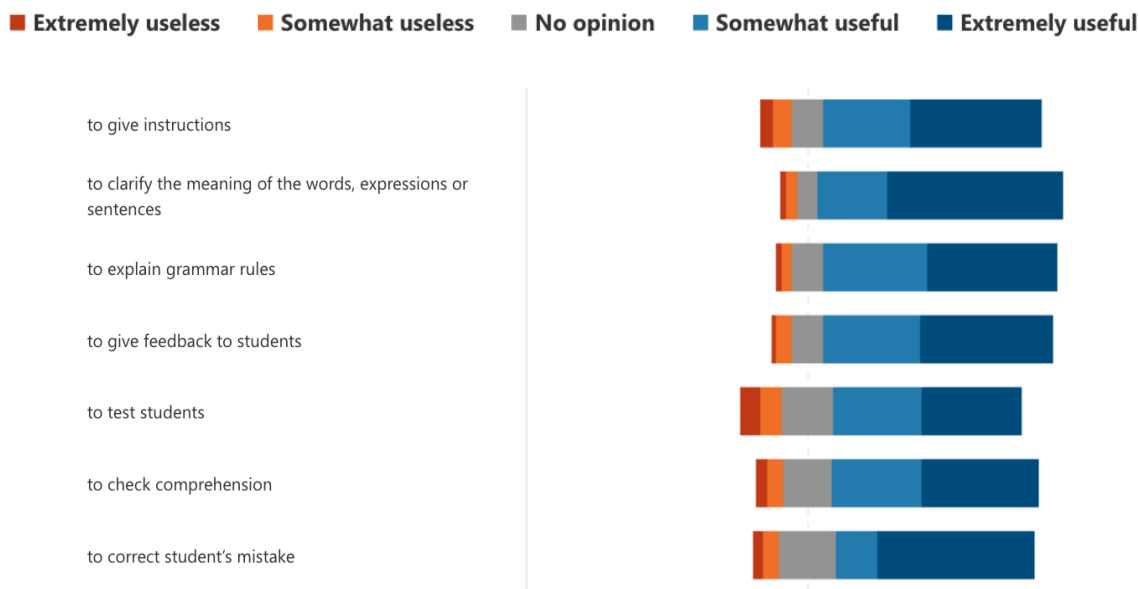


Chart 2. Language functionality

In comparison with other functions (managerial functionality, effective functionality, social functionality), language functionality is preferred the most with a large number of students

believing that the use of Vietnamese for language functionality is somewhat useful or extremely useful. Teachers utilize L1 to facilitate the language teaching and learning process. Among these language functions, it can be seen from the chart that clarifying the meaning of the words, expressions, or sentences, explaining grammar rules, and giving feedback to students are most highly appreciated by VNU-IS students. Using L1 to test students or to check comprehension; however, was not really of much use to these students. It was easy to understand because once teachers provided enough instructions, students could finish the task or the test without any trouble.

Different studies have indicated that teachers typically employ L1 to introduce or explain new words/phrases (Ching-Wen et al., 2014). Because teaching grammar is so complicated, students would have difficulty understanding the lesson without the clarification in L1, especially those at lower levels. Therefore, explanations in L1 are required in these circumstances to help students distinguish between L1 and L2. However, in another research carried out by Tian and Jiang (2021), teachers' use of L1 is mainly for vocabulary tasks, not for grammatical ones. It was explained in his study that the reasons come from students' high level of language ability, who expect to focus more on meaning than structure in the oral interactions.

Managerial functionality



Chart 3. Managerial functionality

The managerial functionality is the second feature that L1 users support. Teachers typically utilize L1 for disciplinary concerns and participation issues in the classroom, among which are to carry out pair and group work, do classroom management, draw students' attention, to inform students about important tasks or deadlines. It is most important for students to be informed about important parts or deadlines, so they highly appreciated the use of Vietnamese in this situation more than others.

Affective functionality



Chart 4. Affective functionality

The third type of application is for the goal of inspiring students and improving relationships. It is understandable that with the support of the mother tongue, teachers can go step by step closer to their students, encourage them to raise their voices, tell their stories and make them feel more connected in their class. Language can be not only a bridge to connect different students from different backgrounds but also a barrier to stop them from entering the world of knowledge if the teachers do not know how to use it wisely and flexibly. Students welcome their teacher’s use of Vietnamese to create a more student-friendly learning environment in EFL classrooms.

The language barrier is a shared concern among EFL students. They are not sure if the teacher can understand what they say or if they can understand what is being said, so the use of a little Vietnamese will surely ease their anxiety and misunderstanding between teachers and students. Polio and Duff (1994) considered the mother tongue as a crucial component of learner assistance if used correctly. The motivations for using a bilingual method might be divided into three categories: maintaining a pleasant classroom environment, promoting student comprehension, and making effective use of class time.

Social functionality



Chart 5. Social functionality

Finally, the participants' preference for utilizing L1 for social functions is at the bottom of the list. These are informal dialogues that take place outside of the classroom and are not intended to be one of the learning objectives. VNU-IS students welcome lecturers talking about off-classroom topics, especially the big headlines in the media and the hot topics at university. However, they seem to hold the point that greeting students in Vietnamese is not really useful.

It is mostly agreed by surveyed students in VNU-IS that they feel more worried in the lessons with the native speaker teacher than with the Vietnamese teacher, especially students at lower levels because the language barrier prevents them from having small talks in English and conveying their messages.

Question 3: How much can students benefit from lecturers using Vietnamese in the listening, speaking, reading and writing lessons?

Students benefit from lecturers using L1

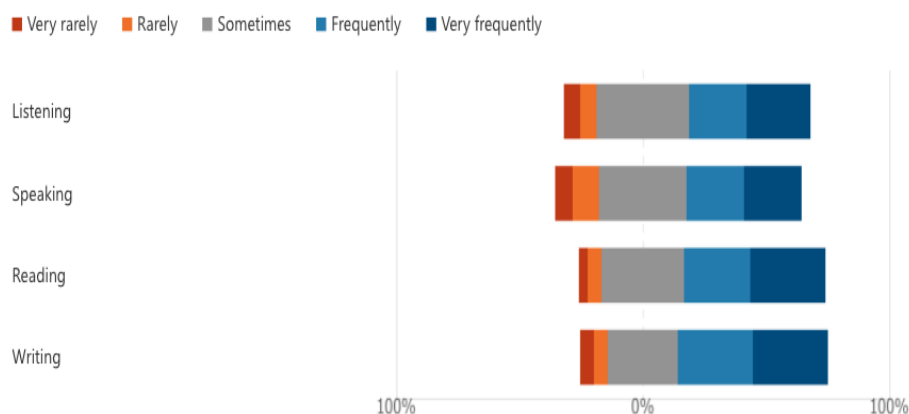


Chart 6. Students benefit from lecturers using L1

Chart 6 demonstrates the extent to which participants think students can benefit by using Vietnamese in each macro-skill. VNU-IS students thought that using Vietnamese provided no more than a 40% benefit for speaking and listening whereas, for reading and writing skills, they considered Vietnamese even more beneficial with 60% believing that Vietnamese should be used frequently/very frequently during class time. 53.5% of students being asked agreed that during the speaking lesson, the mother tongue should be used at the lowest frequency: very rarely, rarely, and sometimes. English language should be exposed as much as possible. 50.9% of students thought they didn't benefit much from lecturers using Vietnamese in listening lessons. Listening is the ability to accurately receive and interpret messages in the communication process, which is why the more English that students are exposed to, the better their listening skill is. Besides, VNU-IS students became more relaxed when it came to reading skill and writing skills. In general, participants seemed to agree that there is at least a 10-40% benefit from using L1 in all macro-skills, with a higher benefit for writing and reading.

Discussion

The results of this study shared many things in common with the previous studies. It can be seen that the attitudes of students in VNU-IS classes are the same as the views recorded by English language teachers in the study conducted by Kohi and Suvarna Lakshmi (2020). Kohi and Suvarna Lakshmi (2020) concluded that English language teachers hold a positive attitude towards different functionalities of L1, especially in teaching language and classroom management. It's agreed that a student's language proficiency is an important factor that decides

the effectiveness of L1 usage. Intermediate students in this study approve of their mother tongue use when necessary. Similarly, in another research done by Almohaimed & Almurshed (2018), it is revealed that advanced learners hold a negative attitude towards the use of L1 in their English classes, whereas elementary and intermediate learners generally perceive the judicious use of their L1 positively.

Although the mother tongue is favored by almost all surveyed participants, the use of Vietnamese in EFL lessons should be limited. In an English lesson, the native language should only be utilized when there are no other options. When it appears that certain students are having difficulty absorbing the desired input, Vietnamese may be a good option. However, it should only be used as a tool to help students overcome language hurdles, as English still remains dominant in the classroom. In pair and group work, Vietnamese can also be used to eliminate interruptions from participants. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) permits students to utilize their L1 in an L2 class so that they may speak confidently and clearly in conversations (Gibson & Chandler, 1988). According to Taşçı and Aksu (2020), an amount of 21-30% of classroom instructions in L1 is reasonable for Turkish EFL teachers.

In order to do so, teachers should take full advantage of their language proficiency as well as their pedagogical skills. A well-prepared lesson plan will result in a good performance in class and reaching learning objectives. A new word can be successfully presented with the support of flashcards, realia, and other visual aids. A grammatical phenomenon can be explained with the help of video clips, stories, and examples. If the teacher has to explain anything abstract or complicated, he or she should first try saying and reciting it in English before proceeding to Vietnamese.

When it is necessary for the Vietnamese language to play its role, it is advisable to use explanations instead of direct translations to minimize any bias caused by the various meanings of vocabulary in Vietnamese.

Findings by Mayni (2021) revealed that students show a positive attitude toward the use of L1 in L2 classrooms because they believe that their mother tongue can help them with understanding difficult concepts. However, EFL teachers at the English Language Department at Tehran Institute of Technology approve of an English-only policy to provide students with more exposure to the target language.

Conclusion

From the above findings, it is concluded that the Vietnamese language can become an effective tool in an EFL classroom once it is not overused by both teachers and students. Almost all student participants welcome the use of L1 in L2 classrooms.

Vietnamese high school students are not much exposed to the target language, and the traditional grammar-translation method is still commonly applied in most schools, with the aim of knowledge, not communication. Therefore, it becomes one of the main difficulties for them

when they have to move from Vietnamese speaking to an English only environment at universities including VNU-IS.

The outcome of the present study presents that the use of L1 in an EFL classroom can be beneficial to both VNU-IS teachers and students for the following purposes: language functionality, managerial functionality, effective functionality, and social functionality, among which language functionality is most favored by VNU-IS students (e.g. explaining new words, especially terminologies and abstract words).

Teachers use learners' L1 for a variety of reasons in the classroom. These reasons may be well clarified for certain instructors, while for others, the necessity may develop in specific teaching circumstances. Learners' views of the reasons for instructors' use of L1 in an L2 classroom may differ from their comprehension of the reasons. According to Auerbach (1993), the teacher and students should come to an agreement on whether or not L1 should have a place in L2 classrooms.

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Biodata

Le Hoai Thu is a lecturer at the Faculty of Applied Linguistics, Vietnam National University Hanoi, International School (VNU-IS) in Vietnam. She has got 14-year of teaching experience in General English and English for Academic Purposes. Her many interests include professional development, content and project-based learning, and technology in language teaching and learning, all of which require creative thinking. She has also taken some action research in her own class related to classroom management skills, teamwork skills, presenting skills, and study habits. She has received the Best Teaching Performance Certificate evaluated by VNU-IS in the academic year 2017-2018 and 2019-2020.


The integration of English conversation rooms and chatting to enhance English communication skills for EFL students at Van Lang University during the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: EFL students, English conversation rooms, English chatting, English communication skills.

This paper aims to investigate the impact of the integration of technological approaches, particularly English online conversation rooms on Google Meet and English chatting, in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) with particular reference to the enhancement of students' English communication skills. A mixed-method approach was adopted with 120 EFL freshmen at Van Lang University (VLU) participating in an experimental study, followed by an interview for some of them. A mixed method of both quantitative and qualitative was employed to collect data. The result is that learning Speaking via the Google Meet platform and English texting can substantially enhance their English communication abilities. In addition, texting in English and practicing with friends via the online-based app are effective ways to revise their English communication skills during the COVID pandemic with social distancing requirements.

Introduction

Recently, the importance of English communication skills has grown in parallel with the rapid speed of globalization. Regardless of whether it is a large corporation or a small business, English communication skills are the principal requirement for recruitment as well as a tool for employees to be well-performed at work (Clement & Murugavel, 2018; Aliyu, 2017). Furthermore, in Vietnam's recent labor market, English is growing important. People who work in the political, educational, human resources, and science sectors are expected to master English usage, as stated by Doan & Hamid (2021). There is also a greater probability of moving up the career ladder for ones with fluent English communication skills (Ting et al., 2017). According to Mr. Lundholm - Managing Director of Education First in Vietnam - it is believed that skillful and fluent English communication abilities are essential for Vietnamese students (Nguyen, 2015).

During the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic, the face-to-face practice was made impossible. The shift to remote learning also caused several issues for EFL students. EFL students at Van Lang University were not the exception, with their English communication skills being badly impacted. The paper "A study on collaborative online learning among EFL students in Van Lang University" (Bui et al., 2021) illustrated that the lack of face-to-face connections between students and lecturers might have detrimental influences on learners'

communication abilities. Feeling tired when studying for long hours before a screen is one of the notable drawbacks of e-learning, which has been investigated by Nguyen & Nguyen at Van Lang University (2021). The poor communication skills also stemmed from the unstable Internet connection, as found by Pham and her co-researchers (2021).

Based on the need for practical approaches to practice English communication abilities, this study aims to survey EFL first-year students to determine whether or not the implementation of English texting and online practice meetings on Google Meet can benefit their English communication skills. The reason for this preference is that these two approaches are common means of e-communication which were used to exchange news and knowledge during the lockdown. The article also investigates the advantages or disadvantages when experiencing English conversation rooms and English chatting.

With the rapid growth of technology, technological integration in learning, particularly in English learning, has become ubiquitous, like the study of Kukulska-Hulme & Viberg (2018) on collaborative language learning or the research of Godwin-Jones (2017) on Apple-inspired touchscreen smartphone on L1 and L2 literacies and learning. As a result, research related to technological learning methods will benefit The Faculty Management Board, lecturers, and even EFL students at Van Lang University when considering utilizing technology in English teaching and learning, especially when it comes to English communication skills.

Literature review

The concept and impact of technology in education

With the severe impacts of Coronavirus, people were required to stay indoors and do everything online, from working to studying. Therefore, various technological advancements were integrated into remote learning sessions to adapt to the current scenario. Technology in education was typically defined as a piece of technical equipment or tool used to improve instruction (Okojie et al., 2006; Dockstader, 2008). Lever-Duffy and colleagues (2005) defined modern gadgets as media, digital media, models, projected and non-projected visual, audio, and video. Nevertheless, the concept of technology in education has widened in this digital age. According to Hashim (2018), emerging technology applied in education could include cloud-based platforms (Google Apps, Youtube, Open Educational Resources - OER, etc.), mobile equipment (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.), digital games, virtual reality - VR (sounds, 3D images, movies) and so on.

Regarding the influence of technology on education, it has been proved that the more technological tools applied in class, the better interactive and excited students are (Raja & Nagasubramani, 2018). Raja and his co-author also stated that the use of technology in education supports learners to think faster and more creatively, and the education system becomes better and better when there is support from technology. Nonetheless, when technology becomes essential for our study, it will be a great financial burden to provide those high-tech gadgets to learners, as demonstrated by Tugun and colleagues (2020). In addition, as students and educators are accustomed to lecture-based teaching techniques, when integrating current gadgets in the classroom, a lack of technological understanding is a significant disadvantage (Tugun et al., 2020; Ibna Seraj et al., 2021).

Van Lang University was also severely influenced by the pandemic; the learning and teaching had been delivered online, providing an excellent opportunity for researchers to investigate the use of technology in online classes. In the study by Nguyen & Ngo (2021), they found that

EFL students use translation apps and grammar apps to develop their translation abilities or make use of self-learning apps to enhance their English speaking abilities, as demonstrated by Nguyen & Vo (2021). Ha & Ngo (2021) also investigated the influence of integrating the MS Team on improving the listening comprehension skills of EFL juniors. Alternatively, in the study of Pham and his peers (2022), they pointed out that when studying online, EFL students in VLU might be distracted by noises from the outside environment, unstable Internet connection, or suffer from eye-related problems due to long hours of working in front of a computer screen.

From the discussion above, it is undeniable that high-tech tools are rapidly becoming more prevalent in language classes and practices.

The benefits of integrating technology to enhance English communication skills

In the past, communication skills were defined similarly to English speaking skills, which is a process of using English to send and receive verbal messages or a way to express thoughts in English face-to-face, as stated by Al-Mahrooqi (2012). However, Halim and Hashim (2019) claimed that English communication abilities have swiftly altered since the COVID19 dilemma. They emphasized that rather than face-to-face dialogues, Web 2.0 technology and online platforms have served as an online learning environment where English teachers and students can communicate with each other.

Since there is a breakthrough in technology, researchers have also started to utilize it in classes with the purpose of developing learners' communication skills. Xiaoqiong and Xianxing (2008), in their study named "Using film to teach EFL students English language skills," have implemented a film with an accurate transcript to evaluate if this strategy may do wonders for students' language skills. The authors concluded that students had enriched their vocabulary by guessing words and using e-dictionaries. Next, the strategy enhanced EFL students' pronunciation abilities. Finally, EFL learners were able to use more academic idioms and phrases when communicating in English.

Nguyen and her team (2021) conduct a mixed-method study on 400 students (EFL and non-EFL) about integrating English self-learning applications to improve students' speaking performances. The findings showed that participants practicing English speaking abilities on English self-learning platforms had increased their confidence in speaking English and self-study skills. The expansion of vocabulary range was also regarded as merit.

According to Kasapoğlu-Akyol (2010), all of the attendees in her study felt that integrating educational technology tools positively impacted their language and communication skills. The research also emphasizes some learning ways that 6 ESL students used to practice English on a daily basis, including (1) Using e-dictionaries, those with translations in their mother tongue, to enrich their vocabulary range; (2) Reading English websites, articles, or contents from international organizations are beneficial for the use of grammar; (3) One of the students used a digital camera to observe her lips' movements as well as recorded her voice by "Media Player"; in this way, she was able to have some improvement in terms of pronunciation and communication skills. Another common approach to better communication abilities is listening to the radio or watching English-subtitled TV programs.

Herlina and her team (2014) have similar statements. Their paper suggested several proper technology-based learning techniques that can be utilized to enhance English speaking skills. The first method is to operate a radio; by uploading their voice recordings on some websites, students may immediately identify their weaknesses in speaking styles or pronunciation thanks to comments from other users. Another efficient option is a conversation room. The

young nowadays can spend a whole day chatting with their friends, so motivating them to use English instead of their native language when chatting in the conversation room is crucial, enhancing their proficiency in using this foreign language. Last but not least, students can attempt the “Interview and Role Play” method, which means that they can pick a random topic to discuss with their mates, and it is preferable if they record the dialogue so that they are able to identify errors in pronunciation or word usage. In the same line with that, Walker (2005) shared his view that by encouraging English learners to record their voices while practicing, learners have been motivated to be more self-confident in giving feedback to themselves and their peers, thereby advancing their pronunciation.

Another study is by Kallinikou & Nicolaidou (2019). In this work, the author uses the technique called “digital storytelling,” which includes the integration of “text, images, audio, music, and video” with the involvement of forty Russians who have just learned Greek as a second language. The result reveals that the digital storytelling approach not only helps their Greek-speaking abilities witness a significant development but also inspires them in the learning process. Furthermore, Dewi and teammates (2017), through classroom action research, reveal that at the beginning of the study, learners seem to be shy and find it challenging to share their opinions or thoughts; besides, the lack of new vocabulary is also one of the obstacles preventing participants from enjoying the game. Nonetheless, at the end of the survey period, students felt more motivated and self-possessed; their results in speaking skills also witnessed a tremendous advancement.

It is also discussed that the utilization of technologies in English communication classes could better students’ pronunciation and other advantages. According to the paper “Effects of podcast-making on college students’ English speaking skills in higher education” undertaken at a Taiwanese institution with the involvement of 77 non-English freshmen. It was found that the participants report having improved their accuracy and proficiency in English speaking. They also avoided pauses during conversation and rarely made mistakes in mispronunciation.

In addition, the application of web-based activities is supported in blended learning due to its assistance in developing learners’ communication proficiency, learning motivation, and engagement, as demonstrated by Ginaya and her colleagues (2018).

The challenges of integrating technology to enhance English communication skills

On the other hand, the integration of technological methods into enhancing English communication skills also has downsides. It is highlighted from the study by Nguyen et al. (2019) that the difficulties in finding suitable companions to practice English, together with the diverse pronunciations of different teachers, have been the impediments to strengthening English communication skills.

Another concern is the financial barrier. As a matter of fact, when high-tech gadgets and the Internet become the primary contributors to the learning process, it seems to be impossible for low-income students to afford them (Lai & Kritsonis, 2006; Vi, 2005). In addition, apps used for English learning, especially translation apps or speaking-practiced apps, have limitations (Lai & Kritsonis, 2006; Stankevičiūtė et al., 2017; Daniele, 2019), such as Google Translation with errors when translating idioms, phrases, and especially slang words. These translation errors could cause misunderstandings for users.

In line with that, Sari and Sugandi (2015) highlight some drawbacks of applying movies in teaching English in their research. Firstly, learners are quickly bored due to extended hours of watching movies. Following that, the time for other activities is limited due to the dominance

of movies. Last but not least, learners' mental growth could be badly influenced by scenes such as smoking, fighting, etc.

In the study "A Study on Collaborative Online Learning among EFL Students in Van Lang University (VLU)" by Bui et al. (2021), they have investigated the attitudes and feelings of EFL students from freshmen to seniors when changing from interactive classes to online classes. The research has been done with the participation of 60 students through the form-filling procedure. In the end, the authors highlighted the indispensable role of peer-to-peer interactions; without this factor, EFL students quickly got bored and distracted by social media and outside factors. Moreover, the low and unstable Internet connection might negatively impact speaking classes, leading to misunderstandings during conversations.

Safitri and Khoiriyah (2017) have researched utilizing English vlogs (video blogs) to enhance students' speaking skills. This qualitative research aims to investigate the students' perception of the use of English Vlogs to improve oral performances and how EFL students acquire this skill by viewing English blogs. The authors pointed out that the principal problem users have to encounter is cultural differences; for example, some Indonesian participants admitted feeling uncomfortable when bloggers mention "unsuitable words." Additionally, the lack of interaction is the next problem since learners cannot get immediate responses to their concerns like in classes. The Internet limitation is also the next contributor since videos can just be accessed via the Internet.

Related Studies

Fakhrudin (2018) applied the video conferencing app Google Meet to teach English communication skills and received positive outcomes. The author stated that students had shown improvements in their communication level in terms of grammar, pronunciation, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary since the integration of Google Meet. They were no longer shy or made mistakes when using English.

Or in the study of Baron (2020), the author investigated that together with Zoom, Google Meet was used by most English learners, especially in practicing dialogue and sharing learning materials discussed in the conversation, due to the attractive appearance and user-friendly layout. It was also recorded that this video-conferencing platform benefits teachers as well as learners in terms of giving direct feedback and discussing corrected assignments.

In the same line with that, Nehe (2021) also claimed that online meetings on the Google Meet platform gave EFL students the feeling that they were studying in face-to-face classes where peer-to-peer or student-lecturer interaction was not limited. All attendants showed confidence and happiness when speaking in English in front of the camera. And the best thing was that students could receive immediate feedback from lecturers whenever they made any pronunciation or grammatical mistakes.

About chatting, the study by Ainun and colleagues (2020), they have stated that the integration of voice chatting in speaking classes has helped EFL learners release a load of stress and anxiety. Attendants also state that they have more interest in the class thanks to this technological practicing method.

Belinda and co-authors (2018) share the same ideas that the use of online chatting is proven to enhance students' fluency when communicating in English. Furthermore, the freedom in choosing speaking topics is another vital factor; with the right to choose the topic they want to discuss, students show greater confidence and willingness.

Overall, it is stated in previous studies that the implementation of online conversation meetings and chatting in speaking classes truly develops students' communication abilities. However, most of the papers were conducted in foreign countries where students are used to blended or online learning. There are still limited papers mentioning the impacts of these two technological practicing methods on the practice of English communication skills in Vietnam, and virtual learning has just been introduced to students since the outbreak of COVID19. Besides, peer interaction which is considered the most essential factor in learning communication skills has not been deeply investigated in those researches. Therefore, this paper can be an effective material for people to consider when applying conversation rooms and web-based chatting to learning English communication abilities.

Research Questions

This paper aims to address two questions:

- a. What benefits do EFL students in Van Lang University gain when integrating English conversation rooms and chatting into learning English communication skills?
- b. What challenges do EFL students in Van Lang University deal with when integrating English conversation rooms and chatting into learning English communication skills?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was carried out during the first semester of 2021-2022 at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University. Van Lang University is one of the most prestigious private tertiary institutions in Vietnam ranked number 45 in the Webometrics Ranking of World Universities (2020). Moreover, with more than 25 years in the educational field, the university's reputation has won more engagement in the country and the nearby areas.

At the beginning of the semester, EFL first-year students were required to work on an online platform instead of a face-to-face one, a learning method considered new to deal with the contemporary lockdown due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Besides, according to the Faculty's curriculum, in the first semester of the study year 2021-2022, EFL freshmen would practice speaking skills in the conversation situation, which is a suitable technique to measure communication abilities.

Of the participants, there were 120 first-year learners participated in this experimental study. They were divided into four groups - two experimental groups and two control groups, each group had 30 students. To research these students, the authors had asked permission from lecturers and two of whom had agreed. After knowing the results of their post-test, students were required to fill in the questionnaires under the supervision of the researchers. Following that, two EFL first-year students from each class were chosen based on their speaking test results, particularly the ones with good results or great development in their communication abilities, to participate in an interview.

Design of the Study

This research was carried out to study if practicing with peers via online meetings on Google Meet and texting in English via online meetings could have a positive impact on EFL learners' communication abilities. The reason for this preference is that these two technological learning approaches greatly help maintain the peer-to-peer interactions between EFL students, which is considered a crucial factor in improving their English communication

skills (Saniboo & Sinwongsuwat, 2016; Bui et al., 2021; Bagheri & Zenouzagh, 2021). In addition, during the COVID19 pandemic, these two approaches seemed to be the most popular means of communication to exchange news and information.

A mixed-method approach was adopted with 120 EFL freshmen at Van Lang University (VLU) participating in an experimental study. Two close-ended questionnaires were employed to collect quantitative data about the application of technology in chatting rooms and English texting and to investigate whether these two kinds of e-communication could make a big difference in terms of English communication abilities between the control group and the experimental one.

Structured interviews were also utilized in the study to collect qualitative data. The benefits of this research method have been mentioned in previous studies. Lune and Berg (2017) stated in their book that the questions used in a standardized interview are brief and easy for respondents to understand, and it is also the best method for getting interviewees' responses, feelings, or attitudes about study-based matters. Similarly, Qu and Dumay (2011) pointed out that compared to the unstructured interview method, which has no standardized interview questions, researchers applying the structured interview method can yield a significant amount of data and save time spent on data analysis.

Procedure

Before investigating, the researchers had asked permission from lecturers in the Faculty to let them do research on their classes and two of them agreed. 120 first-year students were categorized into two classes called class A and B to study speaking skills with the conversation model. By checking the results from the speaking entrance test provided by two lecturers, the authors could ensure that their levels were equal. The entrance test was in a conversation model in which the lecturers would discuss with their students some situations in daily life.

On the one hand, 30 students from each class were instructed to use English online practice rooms and English texting. These two experimental teams were labeled A1 and B1. During the study, each pair would be asked to practice communication abilities via online meetings on Google Meet, each practice needed to be at least 15-30 minutes. The reason why the author chose the Google Meet platform is due to its great support which has been investigated in several previous studies. According to Heggart & Yoo (2018), Google Meet is found to improve students' collaboration and engagement; thereby, developing study outcomes. In the same line with that, Daud (2016) determines that this website offers users a verbal chat feature as well as video-based discussion which are ideal to conduct online meetings.

These practice meetings were under the researcher's supervision. Instructions and practice topics would be nearly the same as the ones they worked on at school. If students were too shy to use English, they could text in English via the chat box provided by the website. Furthermore, they were encouraged to have other practices in pairs in their spare time without the researcher's supervision but still applied the same procedures.

On the other hand, the remaining sixty students of the control groups, named A2 and B2, still followed their learning methods without the intervention of the author.

During the first five weeks of the speaking course, EFL students in both groups could practice English communication skills in their own way. In the 6th week, EFL students would take the midterm test (pre-test). The purpose of taking the pre-test results was to compare them with the results of the latter test so as to figure out whether or not the implementation of English conversation rooms and chatting could help them to improve this skill or not. After the pre-

test, the experimental groups started to apply English conversation rooms and English chatting to their practices under the observation of both researchers. The final term test (post-test) would be conducted in the 15th academic week. Overall, EFL students experienced English online meetings and English chatting to practice their communication skills for 8 weeks from the 7th week to the 14th week. In both tests, EFL students were required to talk about a topic; then, their performance would be assessed from 1 to 10 on the criteria of vocabulary, grammar, peer-to-peer interactions, problem-solving abilities, and so on. The score ranges from 0 (the lowest) to 10 (the highest). The grading standards and scale were provided to the researchers by the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The author collected marks from these two tests to evaluate the effectiveness of two technological learning methods.

The grading standards

Assessment criteria	Grammar Vocabulary and ideal	Fluency	Appropriacy (using the correct words for issues)
Poor (4-5)	Use less relevant grammar and vocabulary.	Too many pronunciation errors, and hesitation, cannot deliver the message.	Do not know how to choose suitable words for a certain situation.
Marginal (over 5-6)	Too many language errors.	Unclear pronunciation, still hesitant.	Do not use a wide range of vocabulary, sometimes use inappropriate structures.
Average (over 6-7)	Fewer language errors.	Better pronunciation, less hesitation.	Use flexible vocabulary, and use some appropriate structures.
Good (over 7-8)	Nearly correctly apply linguistic knowledge.	Show confidence, clear pronunciation, sometimes hesitating.	Use vocabulary and structures that are nearly appropriate for the context.
Excellent (over 8-9)	Correctly apply linguistic knowledge.	Show confidence, clear pronunciation, and no hesitation.	Demonstrate understanding and subtlety in word choice and structure.
Outstanding (over 9)	Correctly apply linguistic knowledge, and use advanced vocabulary and grammar structure.	Show confidence, good and clear pronunciation, and no hesitation, good intonation.	Demonstrate understanding and subtlety in word choice and structure.

After the post-test, the author conducted private structured interviews with eight students (two students from each small group) via the Internet due to the outbreak of the Omicron strain. To conduct these interviews, the author first needed the students' permission. Before interviewing, the researcher would spend a few minutes asking about the interviewees' information. After assuring that the subject was entirely at ease, the researcher began introducing the study's topic, purpose, and other vital information.

Data collection and analysis

On the one hand, the questionnaire for A1 & B1 includes four main sections. The first section, including 7 questions, aimed to collect personal information, such as gender, speaking test scores, class, and so on. The second one, which included 13 questions, was mainly about the students' perspectives on the integration of technology in improving English communication skills; this part included yes/no questions and multiple-choice ones. The third one, having 2 questions, focused on the frequency that students apply technology to practicing English communication abilities in their free time, and used the five-point Likert scale to collect data, including Very rarely, Rarely, Occasionally, Frequently, and Very Frequently. The last one, having 2 questions, involved the pros and cons of technological integration in English communication skills practices.

On the other hand, there are three main parts in the form of the control group (A2&B2). The first section is the same as the first section of the one for the experimental group. The second part with a question to investigate challenges that EFL learners of control groups met when not using technology to study English communication abilities. The last part with one question was about the frequency of applying technology to practicing communication if they had already done it before; this part was also designed based on the five-point Likert scale like in the questionnaire of the experimental group.

After having the results of the post-test, the authors conducted online meetings in which the participants would fill in the form under the supervision of two authors. The students might complete the forms based on their opinions and what they had experienced so far, which took them around 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

In addition, the author conducted private structured interviews with eight students via the Internet due to the outbreak of the Omicron variant. To conduct these interviews, the author first needed the students' permission. Before interviewing, the researcher would spend a few minutes asking about the interviewees' information. After assuring that the subject was entirely at ease, the researcher began introducing the study's topic, purpose, and other vital information. Then the author started to ask eight questions respectively, the first six of which were designed to investigate what other kinds of technological learning approaches they utilized in their learning process, the time spent on each practice, and their feelings after practices. The last two questions aimed to give the author an insight into the role of peer-to-peer interactions in improving English communication abilities.

The author started analyzing after gathering all of the necessary data. The quantitative data gathered from close-ended questionnaires would be assessed via SPSS 22 and performed in tables. Besides, the author would listen to interview recordings and transcript them into Word documentaries which would support answering the research questions.

Results/Findings and discussion

This section aimed to perform analytical data collected from the questionnaires. The Statistical Package for Social and Science (SPSS) version 22 was used to evaluate the data which was then displayed in tables. This chapter was separated into four sections: (1) results from experimental groups, (2) results from control groups with figures like minimum, (3) the structured interview, and (4) discussion. In this section, analytical numbers such as maximum, mean, frequency, percentage, ANCOVA, and St.derivation (SD) will be performed. There are also headings, like demographic information, the integration of technology, English conversation room, and chatting, to clarify the findings.

Demographic information

Table 1. Summary of the demographic data of EFL learners

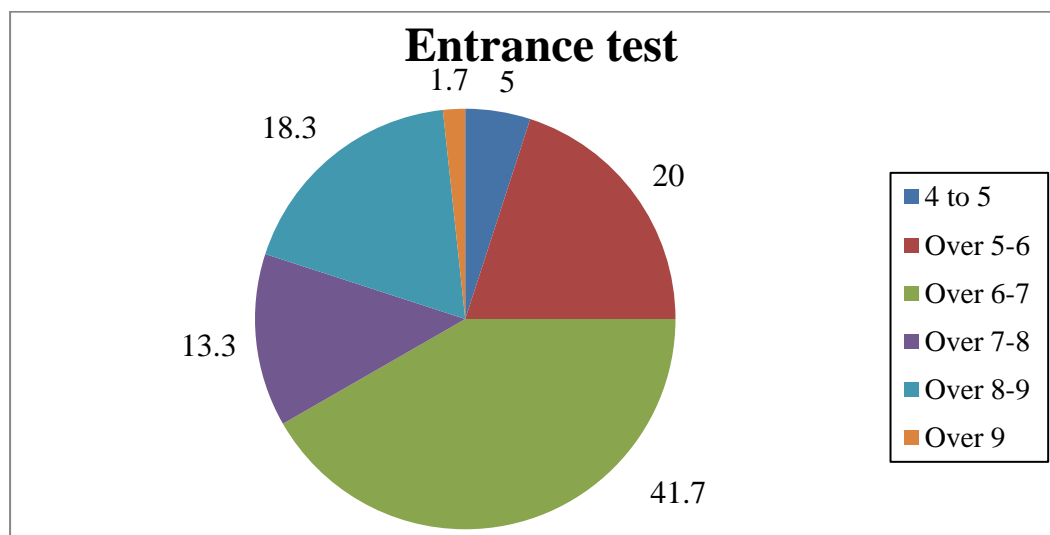
Group	N	Gender	
		Male	Female
Experimental group	60	24 40%	36 60%
Control group	60	19 31.7%	41 68.3%

Table 1 illustrates participants' demographics from both groups regarding gender. 60% of the students in the experimental group were female, while the remaining 40% were male. 19 students were male in the control group, accounting for 31.7% of the total number; the other 68.3% were female. Furthermore, from this table, we can find that the majority of participants were female EFL first-year students.

Results from the entrance test

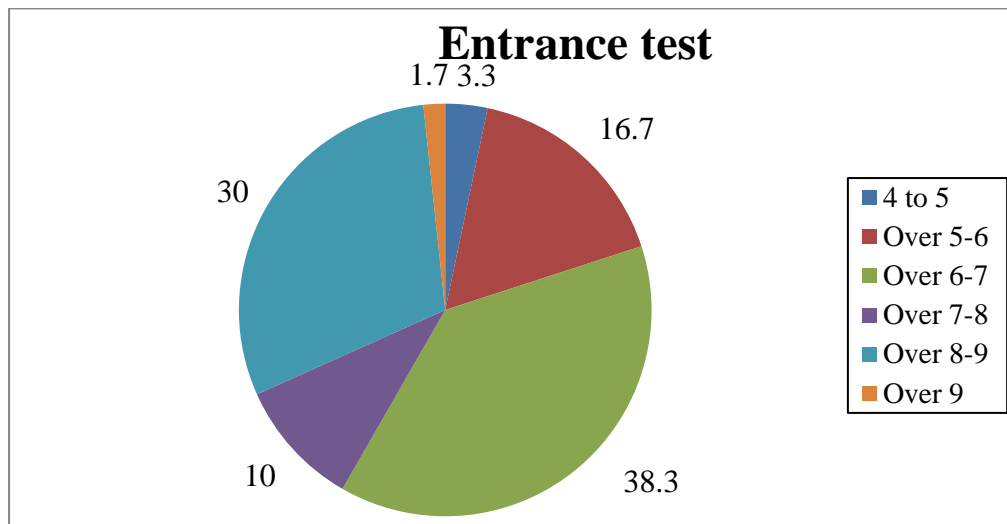
The experimental group

Chart 1. The percentages of mark groups of the entrance test (SPSS 22) N=60



The control group

Chart 2. The percentages of mark groups of the entrance test (SPSS 22) N=60



Overall, when comparing pie charts 1 and 2, we can see that the level of English speaking abilities of both groups was quite equal. Most of the EFL first-year students received average grades for their skills, which were 41.7% and 38.3% respectively. In both teams, the outstanding mark groups accounted for the same proportion which was 1.7%. While one-third of the control group had excellent grades, the figure for it the experimental group was just 18.3%.

The percentages of good score groups in both groups were 13.3% and 10%, respectively. While 20% of EFL first-year learners in the experimental group got marginal grades, just 16.7% of their counterparts in the control group received the same results. At 5%, the percentage of students with poor results was higher than that of the control group which was only 3.3%.

Results from pre-test and post-tests

After the pre-test in the fifth week, EFL students in the experimental group were divided into 30 pairs. Each day, five pairs would take turns to practice English communication skills via Google Meet under the supervision of the researchers. Each week, a practice topic would be assigned to them based on the course’s curriculum.

In the first experimental week, each pair would practice the topic “*destinations for the summer holiday.*” Each pair would join a meeting on the Google Meet platform and work on this topic together, with roughly 2 minutes to prepare. Overall, the authors could observe that the students were not well-connected and shy when communicating with each other at first. To solve this problem, for the next practice session on the second experimental week, the author gave them a few minutes to break the ice when they kept working on this topic. This change brought positive results; students became more friendly and confident. However, several EFL students claimed that sometimes they did not understand what their peers were saying, making it impossible to respond. Therefore, for the next practice session on the third practice meeting, where they would discuss the topic “*healthy diet,*” the authors encouraged them to turn on the subtitle function of Google Meet to understand their peers better. Although sometimes the subtitles were incorrect, EFL students could nearly guess what their friends meant.

In the fifth practice week, EFL learners practiced on the topic “*study-life balance*” and some students commented that this topic was beyond their levels. Hence, a two-minute preparation period was not long enough for them to brainstorm the topic, making their conversation less logical. As a result, the authors decided to expand the preparation time to 3 minutes, which brought some positive changes. They kept practicing this topic the following week. The researchers noticed that with some pairs turning on the camera to interact and observe peers’ emotions, they maintained a more stable conversation. It could be concluded that capturing others’ expressions while communicating is crucial.

During the last two practice weeks, the authors assigned the experimental group the topic “*social media addiction.*” During these weeks, the researchers observed that some students would sometimes text their ideas in the chat box rather than speak themselves. The reason was that by texting, they had more time to brainstorm their ideas while keeping the conversation going. Besides, students could double-check their ideas when texting, making their ideas more logical and reasonable. Hence, it is clear that texting in English gives learners time to think about more ideas.

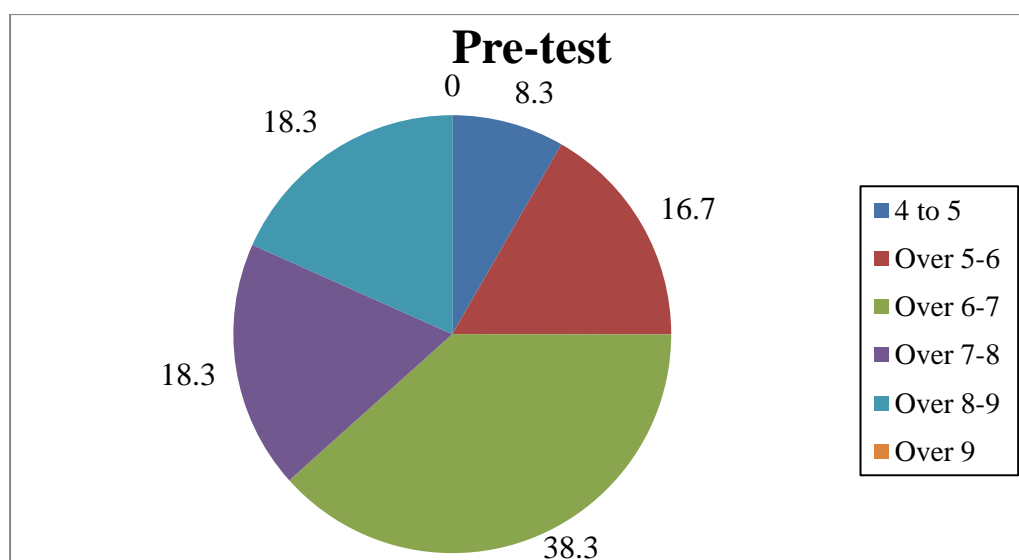
The experimental group

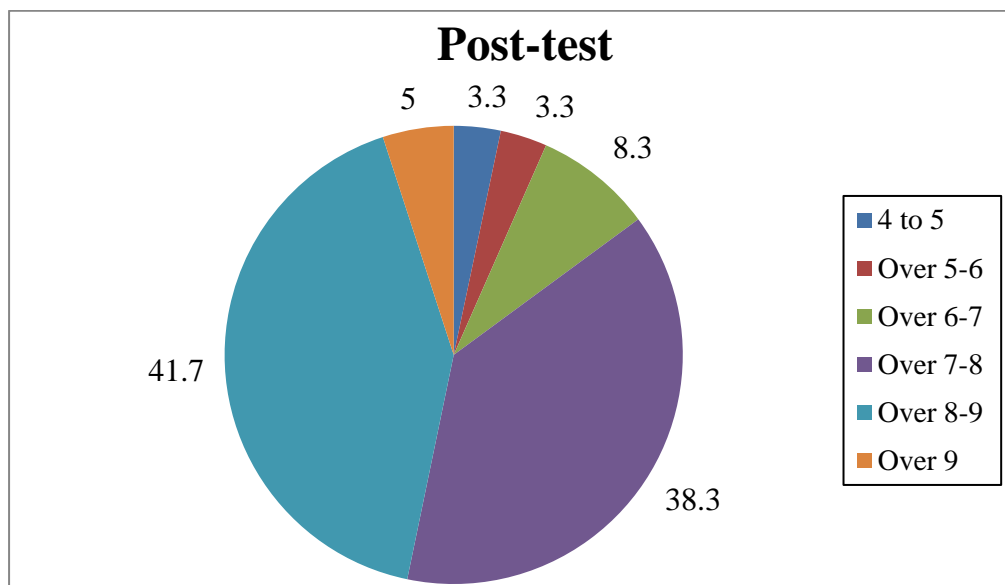
Table 2. Descriptive statistics of results from exams (SPSS 22)

Questionnaire items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	60	4	9	6.99	1.15
Post-test	60	5	10	7.75	1.04

Students were assigned a topic in the English-speaking tests and were required to discuss it in pairs. Table 2 shows that the mean scores for the pre-test and two post-tests were 6.99 and 6.99 and 7.75 respectively. The researcher opted to categorize them into six groups based on the grading scale of Van Lang University, including Poor (4-5), Marginal (over 5-6), Average (over 6-7), Good (over 7-8), Excellent (over 8-9), and Outstanding (over 9).

Chart 3 and 4. The percentages of mark groups of the pre-test and post-test (SPSS 22) N=60





In the pre-test, more than one-third of the participants (38.3%) obtained average grades, and no one received a score of 9 or higher. Furthermore, several EFL students (18.3%) had good scores, which was the same as the figure for “over 8-9”. However, 8.3% of the respondents had poor grades, and the proportion of those obtaining marginal grades was 16.7%.

In the post-test, there is a dominance of higher scoring groups accounting for 38.3% and 41.7%, respectively. The figure for the "over 6-7" group witnessed a twofold drop while the "4-5" and "over 5-6" groups accounted for the same proportion. The most noticeable figure is one of the outstanding grades which saw a threefold rise, and there was even one student obtaining a 10.

Overall, the percentage of high-scoring groups (over 7-8, over 8-9, and over 9) between the pre-test and post-tests rose sharply while the figure for poor and marginal grades witnessed a slight decrease.

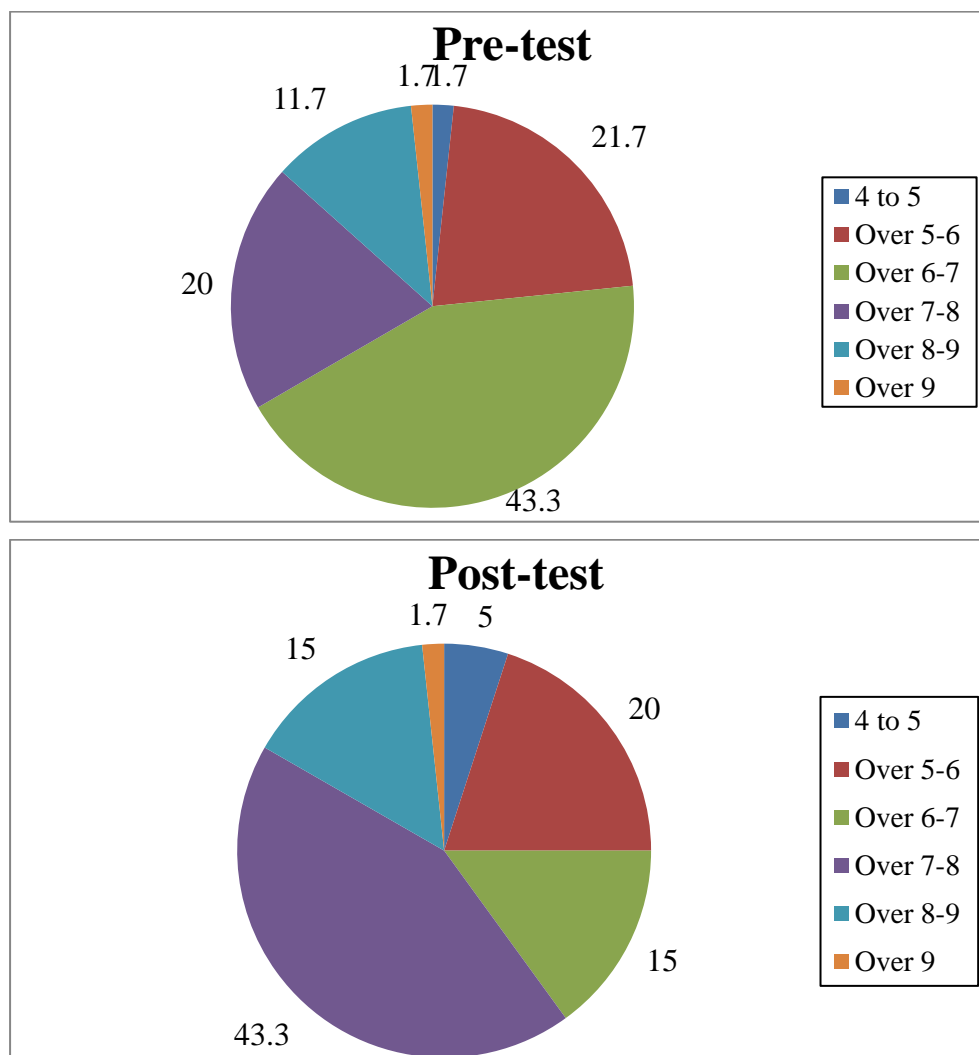
The control group

Table 3. Descriptive statistics of results from exams (SPSS 22)

Questionnaire items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	60	4.5	9.3	6.96	1.04
Post-test	60	4	10	7.28	1.18

The mean scores were 6.96, and 7.28, sequentially. These data were also classified into six groups, including Poor (4-5), Marginal (over 5-6), Average (over 6-7), Good (over 7-8), Excellent (over 8-9), and Outstanding (over 9).

Chart 5 and 6. The percentages of mark groups of the pre-test and post-test (SPSS 22) N=60



We can observe from this table that the majority of students had marginal (21.7%) and average (43.3%) grades in the pre-test. Only 1.7% of 60 first-year students obtained poor marks in the pre-test, and a student received a grade of over 9. Students with good or excellent grades accounted for 20% and 11.7%, respectively.

Nine of all respondents were given excellent grades in the post-test. Even though the number of EFL students receiving poor grades increased marginally to 5%, there was one student (1.7%) gaining a ten. The proportion of respondents getting average marks was 15%. Nearly half of them (43.3%) received good grades, and 20% obtained marginal scores.

Overall, from the table, we can see a rise in the number of students of "4-5", "over 7-8", and "over 8-9" grade groups, while the reverse was true for the "average grades" group.

Differences between the experimental and control groups in the post-tests in relation to the implementation of English conversation rooms and English chatting?

To check whether the integration of technology could help to develop English communication skills in the experimental group or not, the author used an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

Table 4. ANCOVA analysis for the post-test results after controlling the pre-test effects

Group	Variable	F	Sig. (2-tailed)
Experimental (N=60)	English communication skills	79.365	.000**
Control (N=60)			

**significant at .05 level

Table 4 shows that there were great differences between the experimental and control group in the post-test in relation to the utilization of English online conversation rooms and English chatting [$F=79.365$, $p=.000$] at the level of $p<.05$. The significant gaps in the EFL students' post-test support the statement that using these technological approaches to practice English communication skills can greatly develop this English ability.

Results from the questionnaire of the experimental group (A1&B1)

The integration of technology in classes

Table 5. EFL students' opinions about the implementation of technology in English-speaking practices (SPSS 22)

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Do you think the application of technology in practicing English motivates you to study harder and better?	Yes	55	91.7%
	No	5	8.3%
Do you think the application of technology in practicing English is beneficial for your study?	Yes	57	95%
	No	3	5%

Table 5 shows EFL students' perspectives on technology application. 91.7% and 95% of them totally agreed that the technological integration in practicing English communication skills not only motivated them to study harder and better but also benefited them. Those disagreeing with these views were 8.3% and 5%, respectively.

English conversation rooms and chatting

Table 6. EFL students' ideas about English conversation room and chatting (SPSS 22) N=60

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Does texting in English help improve your English communication skills?	Yes	55	91.7%
	No	5	8.3%
Does practicing with friends through online meeting apps improve your English communication skills?	Yes	57	95%
	No	3	5%

According to this table, almost all EFL students, which were 91.7% and 95%, respectively, agreed that the recommended learning techniques - English conversation rooms and English chatting had a favorable impact on their communication skills. However, 8.3% and 5% of the respondents stated that they did not believe these strategies helped them improve their speaking and listening skills.

Table 7. EFL students' desire for English conversation room and chatting (SPSS 22) N=60

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Is it a good idea if you continue to use these methods to practice English communication skills?	Yes	56	93.3%
	No	4	6.7%
Will you recommend the methods to your friends?	Yes	47	78.3%
	No	13	21.6%

When asked whether or not they would like to continue these technological learning approaches for further practice, 93.3% of 60 EFL learners showed their willingness to do so, with only 6.7% refusing to do it. Moreover, more than half of them (78.3%) suggested recommending these two methods to their friends, whereas 21.6% were unwilling to do that.

Advantages and disadvantages of English conversation room and chatting

Table 8. Benefits of English conversation room and texting (SPSS 22) N=60

Questionnaire items	Frequency	Percentage
Be more confident in English conversation.	49	81.67%
Have more ideas.	48	80%
Have grammar and vocabulary checked by friends.	44	73.3%
Learn more vocabulary from friends.	43	70%
Get used to English usage.	42	68.3%
Make new friends	29	48.3%
Practice accent	40	65%
Practice reflection	45	73.3%
Revise topics	38	61.7%

As highlighted in Table 8, EFL students realized numerous benefits from using online speaking meetings and chatting to practice their communication abilities. The majority (81.67%) agreed that frequent practice with technology helped them gain confidence in speaking English. They could also trigger their imagination and have more ideas for their speech (80%). 73.3% of 60 participants claimed that through these two technological learning methods, they had a chance to practice their reflection on using English and had their grammar and vocabulary checked by peers. EFL respondents claimed to learn new words

from peers and become accustomed to English usage in proportions of 70% and 68.3%, respectively. The figure for EFL learners practicing their accents was 65%, while it for revising topics was 61.7%. Besides, only 48.3% of them were able to make new friends.

Table 9. Drawbacks of English conservation room and texting (SPSS 22) N=60

Questionnaire items	Frequency	Percentage
Unstable Internet connection.	40	66.7%
Feel difficulty in expressing feelings in English.	33	55%
Feel too shy to talk.	28	46.7%
Have difficulty getting along with unknown friends.	18	30%
Be afraid of making errors.	37	61.7%
Having grammar and vocabulary checked by friends makes them shy	29	48.3%
Consume too much time	8	13.3%
Lack face-to-face interactions	6	10%

We can observe from the chart above that an unstable Internet connection and unpleasant feelings while making mistakes were the two most significant disadvantages of the methods, accounting for 66.7% and 61.7%, respectively. Additionally, the proportion of students struggling with expressing emotions online was 55%. Up to 48.3% of them were shy when peers corrected their grammar or vocabulary, and 46.7% of respondents mentioned the same challenge when they needed to talk in English. Half of the EFL learners had difficulty getting along with their peers. Time consumption and the lack of face-to-face interactions, on the other hand, just accounted for 13.3% and 10%, respectively.

Practices after classes

Table 10. Descriptive figures for English practices in leisure time (SPSS 22)

Questions	VR%	R%	O%	F%	VF%	Mean	SD	Decision
How often do you text in English with friends for leisure?	5	18.3	28.3	36.7	11.7	3.32	1.06	F
How often do you practice speaking English with peers after classes?	6.7	11.7	33.3	36.7	11.7	3.35	1.05	F

Overall, the mean scores range from 3.32 to 3.35, in the medium evaluation (2.5-3.49), with 48.4% of 60 participants claiming that they often chatted in English with their friends for leisure. The same percentage was true for EFL students who frequently practiced English communication skills with peers after classes.

*Results from the questionnaire of the control group (A2&B2)***Table 11.** Descriptive frequencies of students' opinions about practicing English communication skills without the help of technology (SPSS 22) N=60

Questions	Answers	Frequency	Percentage
Without the support of technology, do you meet any difficulties in practicing English communications?	Yes	56	93.3%
	No	4	6.7%

EFL research participants could use their preferred learning strategies in the control group, whether technological or non-technological. From Table 11, it can be seen that almost all students (93.3%) in the control group struggled with English-speaking practices when there was no support from the technology. In comparison, just 6.7% of them met no difficulty without applying technology.

Table 12. The frequency of implement technology into English practices (SPSS 22), N=49

Questions	VR%	R%	O%	F%	VF%	Mean	SD	Decision
How often do you implement technology into English communication practices?	2	4	29	51	14	3.71	.841	F

Table 12 displays that the mean score is 3.71. More than half of 49 EFL students said they utilize technology to practice their English communication skills on a regular basis, while 29% of them just occasionally use it. The percentage of students who very frequently integrate technology into their English speaking practices was 14%. Besides, some students (4%) rarely did it, and 2% of respondents replied that they very rarely used technological learning methods to improve their English communication skills.

*The structured interview***Table 13.** The personal information of interviewees

Name	Class	Gender	Pre-test score	Post-test score
Student 1 (Huy)	A1	Male	6	7
Student 2 (Vy)	A1	Female	5.2	7.5
Student 3 (Khanh)	B1	Female	7.6	8
Student 4 (Huong)	B1	Female	7	7
Student 5 (Duyen)	A2	Female	8.5	7.4
Student 6 (V.Hung)	A2	Male	8	7
Student 7 (My)	B2	Female	8	7
Student 8 (P.Hung)	B2	Male	7.9	7.5

As shown in Table 13, there were eight students participating in the interview, three of whom were males, and the remaining were females. The author chose students with good grades or with great advancement in communication skills to participate in the interview.

What kinds of technological learning methods or apps did you use for practicing English communication skills?

With this first question, the majority of EFL students from the experiment group claimed that to improve their English communication skills, besides English conversation rooms and English chatting, they also watched English movies without subtitles, listened to English music, and used English self-learning apps.

Aside from these standard practice methods, they also utilized new technological learning approaches. Student 2 (Vy) once said she usually watched videos on Youtube about daily conversation, or Student 3 (Khanh) claimed that she preferred reading online English newspapers and articles and singing English songs. Besides, as a gamer, Student 8 (P.Hung) said he learned many useful terminologies from games.

Table 14. The frequency of practicing English communication skills by using technology

How often do you practice English communication skills by using technology?	Frequency	Percentage
In my free time	1	12.5%
Sometimes	1	12.5%
Everyday	3	37.5%
Twice a week	2	25%
6 times a week	1	12.5%

In response to this question, three EFL students stated that they integrated technology into their daily practice. Besides, one-fourth of EFL students claimed they did it twice a week. A student reported that she had a very hectic schedule, so she just practiced English communication skills with the support of technology in her leisure time. A student employed technology in his practices six times a week, as he did use his smartphone frequently on a regular basis. Besides, the last student said that she just sometimes did it.

Table 15. Time spent on each practice

How long is it for each practice?	Frequency	Percentage
About 30 minutes	4	50%
Over 1 hour	2	25%
5-10 minutes	1	12.5%
Undefined	1	12.5%

When asked how much time they spent on each practice, half of them said they spent roughly 30 minutes practicing their English communication skills. Student 1 (Huy) even added a detail

that although his average practice time range was 30 minutes, sometimes, when he was highly focused on it, his practice could last 1 hour. Moreover, 25% of them reported it took them at least 1 hour to practice this skill, while there was one student whose practice time was only from 5 to 10 minutes. On the other hand, Student 3's response was unique; she claimed that she could not identify how long she spent on her practice, as she did it naturally as if it were a regular habit.

Table 16. Participants' feelings after each practice

How do you feel after your practice?	Frequency	Percentage
Happy	3	37.5%
Improving	1	12.5%
Confident	2	25%
Satisfied	2	25%

Most of the participants felt happy after each practice, as with the support of technology, they found it motivating. There were two students who felt very confident in using English after their daily practice; in addition, Student 7 (My) indicated that she had this feeling because she could speak English more naturally and fluently than she ever could before. Student 6 and Student 8 both expressed satisfaction after each exercise, claiming that they had gained new knowledge. Student 5 (Duyen) also reported that she could notice a development in her English communication skills after practicing. Student 5 clarified that technology allowed her to practice regardless of time or geographical distance and helped her enhance her communication skills, particularly in terms of native sayings and proper grammatical usage.

In what aspects does technology help to improve your English communication skills?

62.5% of EFL first-year students confirmed that their language grammar had been significantly improved, while half of them witnessed tremendous improvements in terms of vocabulary range. The percentage of students who claimed the enhancement in their communication abilities was 2%; Student 1 (Huy) even specified that he could be more confident in speaking in English thanks to technological learning styles. With the support of English apps, Student 5 (Duyen) and Student 7 (My) all admitted that they no longer mispronounced words, and Student 3 (Khanh) could have a better intonation. Besides, Student 8 (P.Hung) revealed that he could speak English fluently and even mastered the use of lexical resources.

Would you like to recommend technology in your friends' English practice?

Eight interviewees all agreed that they would like to encourage their peers to incorporate technology into their English practice, particularly speaking ones. Student 1 (Huy) explained that he made this decision since he noticed that most of his peers enjoyed playing and learning at the same time. While Student 3's idea was quite intriguing, she stated that learning theoretical lessons such as grammar and vocabulary could lull her and her friends to sleep. As a result, they needed to incorporate technological advancements into their learning (online flashcards with illustrations or videos on YouTube) to make it more fascinating and motivating. Additionally, Student 4 (Huong) shared the same viewpoint as Student 3 (Khanh), and she even believed that other peers would think like her.

Student 2 (Vy) believed that her friends should do that, as she found it highly beneficial in strengthening her communication skills. Student 8 (P. Hung) gave out his opinion that he was willing to introduce his friends to the idea of incorporating technology into their English-speaking practices because it would assist in saving time when reviewing and revising knowledge.

Do you consider peer-to-peer interactions important in learning English speaking skills?

All EFL interviewees expressed agreement with diverse points of view in response to this question. In the case of Student 1 (Huy) and Student 4 (Huong), they emphasized peer-to-peer interactions in their English-speaking studies; without this factor, they found it hard to capture peer interactions, thus leading to misunderstanding and confusion. Furthermore, Student 2 (Vy) and Student 3 (Khanh) claimed that they recalled and understood teachings more in-depth when there were peer-to-peer discussions. In Student 5's case, she said that she did not feel bored when practicing English speaking with her friends, and they even encouraged her to learn harder and better.

Do you think English conversation rooms on Google Meet and English chatting help to maintain good peer-to-peer interactions?

Despite the fact that seven participants, even those belonging to the control group, reported that they fully agreed that English conversation rooms on Google Meet and English chatting significantly contributed to maintaining good peer-to-peer interactions, one student from the control group expressed a contrary view.

Student 1 (Huy) claimed that by using these two strategies, he was able to maintain good face-to-face connections effortlessly. In particular, he could motivate and help his friends brainstorm ideas by using a microphone; turn on the camera to observe others' emotions more easily. Sometimes, when he did not have any ideas for his turn, he would like to text as it gave him more time to brainstorm but did not interrupt the talk. Subsequently, the conversation went very well. About Student 2 (Vy), she thought that these two technological learning approaches could be very convenient and time-saving. In the same line as Student 2, Student 3 (Khanh) asserted that she and her mates would teach each other something new, intentionally or unintentionally. After ten weeks of experience, Student 4 (Huong) concluded that nothing was better than English conversation rooms and English chatting. These technological learning approaches provided students with an interactive space to connect and learn together. Despite being in the control group, Student 5 (Duyen) still gave these two learning ways a try and had the same thought as Huong.

Student 2 (Vy), on the other hand, claimed that she just partly agreed with this view and explained that although these methods were ideal for keeping good connections between individuals, somebody was still hesitant to talk or communicate with strangers. If they applied English texting instead of talking, they might sometimes not know what to say.

Overall, it can be concluded that English chat rooms and English chatting assisted in maintaining good peer-to-peer interactions. Nonetheless, these two tools did not appear to be suitable for the shyer students.

Discussion

Question 1: What benefits do EFL students at Van Lang University gain when integrating technology into learning English communication skills?

In order to assess the efficacy of English online practices and English texting, the author analyzed the outcomes of both exams for two groups. Tables 2 and 3 show that the experimental group's pre-test (M=6.99) and post-test (M=7.75) mean scores are higher than those of the control group (M=6.96 & M=7.28). Furthermore, there is a substantial difference between the experimental and control groups in the percentages of EFL students receiving good and excellent grades. These score groups of the experimental group also witness significant increases in the proportions of EFL learners. From these statistics, the author can conclude that these two technological learning approaches effectively develop English communication skills and that many students (N=47) advocate them for use.

The benefits of English online meetings and English chatting have been proved clearly in Table 8 and structured interviews that most aspects of English communication skills, such as pronunciation, vocabulary range, intonation, and many others were positively influenced. Moreover, these technological learning methods gave them an ideal space for practicing speaking topics and English accents, and their confidence became better, too. The improvement in English speech and communication abilities corresponds to the statements of Hall (2008) and Nalliveetil et al. (2016). Hall also supported the use of English chatting to enhance their English competence, and this aspect was also demonstrated in this paper. Furthermore, the findings of this study correlate with those of Kasapoğlu-Akyol (2010), who claims the enhancement in students' informal English thanks to the use of English chatting. The paper also shares the same view with the findings of Choi (2004), who indicates that English texting contributes to greater confidence in English conversation.

Maintaining stable peer-to-peer interactions is also considered essential by Van Lang EFL students in applying technology to their English practices. They reported that without it, they were more prone to encounter misunderstandings and get easily puzzled. Indeed, thanks to English online practices and chatting, they could be encouraged by their peers, which has also been investigated in the research of Warni et al. (2018). Additionally, they could even widen their circle of friends, as highlighted in the research on using Discord to improve students' conversation skills written by Prasojo et al. (2021).

Question 2: What challenges do EFL students at Van Lang University deal with when integrating technology into learning English communication skills?

Regarding this question, Table 9 displayed a whole host of problems that EFL students in the experimental group had to tackle when experiencing English conversation rooms and English chatting. Most EFL first-year students had difficulty maintaining a stable Internet connection (N=40), and this factor is also considered the biggest challenge for EFL learners in the study of Bui et al. (2021) and Chartrand (2016). According to Table 9, EFL first-year students also found that they were unable to express their emotions clearly through English chatting (N=33). The feeling of fear when making errors throughout the talk sometimes prevented them from communicating (N=37). In addition, it might be challenging for introverted EFL learners to communicate with a strange partner via online conversation rooms (N=28), and peers' feedback about their grammar or vocabulary sometimes makes them feel embarrassed (N=29). Other drawbacks include the impossibility of getting along with unknown mates (N=18), the lack of face-to-face interactions (N=6), and the high time consumption (N=8).

Conclusion

This paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of integrating technology into practicing and enhancing English communication skills for VLU's EFL students in the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022. Through employing the questionnaire method with 120 EFL first-year students and interviewing eight of them, the research concludes that English online conversation rooms on Google Meet and English chatting through Google Meet's chat box positively affect the English communication abilities of EFL first-year students in terms of vocabulary range, pronunciation, intonation, accent, grammar, English usage, and many other benefits.

Nevertheless, there are still huge boundaries that must be taken into account. In particular, shy EFL first-year students need to be motivated by their peers as well as the instructor to have better engagement in practice; the time spent on each practice session also should be allocated more reasonably in order not to bore them. With the purpose of making each practice more exciting and developing students' engagement, the author believes some features, like Kahoot, role-playing, or vocabulary quizzes should be integrated into their practice sessions.

Regarding their emotions after each practice, EFL students also expressed positive feelings, such as happiness, confidence, and satisfaction about incorporating technology into the practice of English communication abilities. With the utilization of technology in practicing English abilities, students feel delighted when they can learn, play, and even engage with their peers face-to-face. Additionally, there is no more misunderstanding or confusion in practice rooms when they can turn on the camera and microphone to better capture their mates' emotions. Most EFL learners also agree that to gain the best outcomes, each practice session should take at least 30 minutes to an hour, and it is critical to practice communication skills every day or at least twice a week.

According to the statistics collected from the experimental team's pre-test and post-test, it is shown that the majority of them got average grades (N=23) in their pre-test; nevertheless, their grades improved with the help of online English online speaking rooms on Google Meet and English chatting, and more people received good grades (N=23) and excellent grades (N=25) in their post-test, with one student receiving a 10. Additionally, the number of EFL students with lower grades is low. In contrast, although those in the control group followed their own learning ways and achieved good results, several students obtained marginal grades. According to the mean scores of the experimental group (M=6.99 & M=7.75) and the control group (M=6.96 & M=7.28) and the ANCOVA data [F=79.365, p=.000 < 0.5], the authors can conclude that applying English conversation rooms on Google Meet and English texting truly supports the enhancement of English communication skills for EFL students.

Implications

It is revealed from the findings that the communication skills of EFL learners are at a good level (from 7 to 8 points); they even make an effort to improve this skill through each practice. As a result, to bring this ability to a higher level, it is recommended for The Faculty Management Board to consider establishing a weekly speaking club where EFL students at all levels can join and practice their English communication abilities. To assist those with commuting difficulties, it would be preferable if the club was delivered both offline and online. Regarding the club's host, the author believes that senior students, particularly those majoring in English teaching with excellent English communication abilities, will be ideal candidates. This preference may be due to the fact that senior EFL learners are not as professional and knowledgeable as lecturers but are still as young as other EFL students,

allowing them to create a welcoming practice atmosphere in which others can freely contribute their views. Nevertheless, these hosts need to be well-trained by lecturers and professors in order to maintain a positive face-to-face engagement and deliver the speaking topics seamlessly and professionally. Furthermore, the topics and questions for each club's day should be checked and reviewed by professors and lecturers so as to guarantee good quality. It is also noticeable that due to the hectic learning schedule of EFL first-year learners, it will be ideal if this weekly speaking takes place on weekends when they have much time to spare.

The research also proves that the more students practice, the better their communication skills are; therefore, if EFL students wish to achieve better outcomes, they should take more time to practice English communication skills, especially with technology integration.

Recommendations

The author suggests that further research should apply other technological learning methods, like watching movies, listening to podcasting or music, online chatting apps, and many other ones, to investigate their effects on the communication skills of EFL students at Van Lang University. It is also highly recommended that future studies do research about how technology integration can disrupt students' learning processes and how to effectively employ technological advancements in the classroom or which technological learning methods are most popular among EFL students. Furthermore, more research may be done to see how technology-assisted learning approaches affect other language abilities, including Listening, Reading, and Writing.

At the same time, future investigations should be conducted offline in order to accurately observe and supervise objectives.

Limitations

Despite the positive findings, there are still some limitations that need to be considered for better research in the future. As stated above, this study was conducted when Ho Chi Minh City was in lockdown, so all of the observations and data collections were delivered via the Internet; as a result, the author did not have the opportunity to witness the emotions of students in the experimental group when implementing English online meetings and chatting into practicing communication skills face-to-face. Additionally, the objectives of this paper are limited to 120 EFL first-year learners, so does not provide a comprehensive picture of the level of communication abilities among other EFL students of different years.

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Biodata

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Appendix 1

Questions in the questionnaire of the experimental group

1. Do you think the application of technology in practicing English motivates you to study harder and better?
2. Do you think the application of technology in practicing English is beneficial for your study?
3. Does texting in English help improve your English communication skills?
4. Do you text in English with your friends after classes and practices?
5. Does practicing with friends through online meeting apps improve your English communication skills?
6. Do you practice English with friends through meeting apps after classes?
7. Do you think that thanks to applying the methods you become more confident in tests?
8. Do you have any challenges during the tests? If yes, what is it?
9. Is it a good idea if I continue to use these methods to practice English communication skills?
10. Will you recommend the methods to your friends?
11. How often do you text in English with friends for leisure?
12. How often do you practice speaking English with friends after classes?
13. Advantages of English online conversation practices and English texting
14. Disadvantages of of English online conversation practices and texting in English

Appendix 2

Questions in the questionnaire of the experimental group

1. Do you meet any difficulties without the integration of technology in practicing English communications? If yes, what is it?
2. How often do you implement technology into English communication practices?

Appendix 3

Questions in the structured interviews

1. What kinds of technological learning methods do you use for practicing English communication skills?
2. How often do you practice English communication skills by using technology?
3. How long is it for each practice?
4. How do you feel after your practice?
5. In what aspects does technology help to improve your English communication skills?
6. Would you like to recommend technology in your friends' English practice?
7. Do you consider peer-to-peer interactions important in learning English speaking skills?
8. Do you think English conversation rooms and English chatting help to maintain good peer-to-peer interactions?

Applying Writing Feedback Orientation and Self-Regulated Learning Writing Strategies to EFL Students at Van Lang University During COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between Writing feedback orientation (WFO) and self-regulated learning (SRL) Writing L2 strategies in online teaching during COVID-19. 200 EFL students from Van Lang University in Vietnam were recruited to participate in this study from a variety of courses (98 first-year students and 102 second-year students), using the questions from Jian Xu's study as a guide (2021). Data from this study are examined using qualitative, quantitative, and theoretical studies methodologies. Evidence from experiments has been gathered and categorized a number of guidelines that students follow when exercising in writing with a focus on feedback and self-controlled learning Writing techniques to develop their writing abilities. The findings revealed that EFL students had developed an optimistic response toward written corrective feedback (WCF), which is related to SRL strategies; at the same time, the teachers' and students' online interactions are also associated with teachers' feedback, which has created a confident academic online space for students accomplishing further tasks during COVID-19.

Keywords: Writing feedback orientation, Self-regulated learning (SRL) writing strategies, EFL students

Introduction

After more than an extended year of the COVID-19 pandemic, various aspects of human life are affected, including education. Most schools gradually change the teaching and learning methods from traditional to online to deal with this circumstance in the world in general and in Vietnam in specific. However, learning online is considered a matter which leads to several troubles in the interactions between teachers and learners, especially in receiving feedback on some complicated subjects such as the Writing of EFL students.

The online teaching method, widespread worldwide even before the breaking out of the COVID-19 pandemic, is not a new method to students these days, especially to students in developed countries. It shows several remarkable features to other countries and concurrently attracts those countries to employ this teaching method. Some studies on the issue of online learning have been launched, such as the study "Factors Influencing Freshmen's Acceptance of Online Learning: A Study at Hanoi University of Industry" (Trinh et al., 2022) or "Preparedness for Online Learning in the Context" of Monkeypox Virus: A Literature Review" (Ismail & Dawoud, 2022). However, it may cause some disadvantages for L2 learning, especially writing,

because of the barriers to interactive progress, imparting knowledge, and feedback orientation to EFL students. Giving L2 writing feedback orientation can help students increasingly refine their products, even in collaborative writing and individual writing (Guasch et al., 2013). Additionally, Trung (2021) investigated that by collaborative writing, students improved more in accuracy, which showed a good impact of receiving peer feedback after writing. At the same time, in an online learning environment, Alvarez et al. (2012) identified the importance of feedback in enhancing collaborative writing assignments. Furthermore, Robb et al. (1986) carried out a study to point out the importance of error feedback with the aim of improving L2 writing quality. In 2010, Parr et al. investigated that both the qualities of teacher's feedback for learning and students receiving feedback from teachers in writing progress are really important. Waller and Papi (2017) analyzed the data from participants and concluded that learners who had background knowledge of writing theories and always sought feedback writing could guess orientation toward written corrective feedback (WCF) easily. Moreover, Miao et al.'s study (2006) pointed out that students prioritize teacher input above peer evaluation and recognize the importance of peer input due to instructors' proficiency. In addition, Jian Xu (2021) also demonstrated that students having a positive attitude towards online WCF in online teaching could help them improve their writing even during COVID-19. So, feedback orientation is one of the important factors which can help students form self-regulated learning strategies in L2 writing. Through receiving feedback, students proceed to do their own self-regulated learning writing strategies. Several studies found that this is an effective method for writing. According to Scott G. Paris & Alison H. Paris (2001), analysis and discussions of learning strategies can help students of all ages get the benefit. Furthermore, MacArthur, Philippakos, and Ianetta (2015) discovered that the overall quality of writing in a persuasive essay and the article's length had substantial benefits. Additionally, SRL is encouraged to utilize online teaching more and more in the future. According to speculation, the result of Jimmerman et al.'s study (1986) proved that students who used SRL in writing progress got greater achievement than others. In 2011, Zumburunn et al. found that SRL help students become lifelong learners, even online and out of the classroom. According to Teng et al. (2018), the successful implementation of SRL in EFL students' writing performance is predicated on motivational control. Additionally, Tran (2021) proved that using SRL strategies in writing is possible, although the students' writing achievements didn't enhance much as expected at first, and both teachers and students had to spend more effort in using this method. Therefore, we can conclude that SRL significantly contributes to students' L2 writing (Sun et al., 2020). Thus, feedback orientation and SRL strategies in L2 are widely used in writing to raise the ability of students' writing all over the world increasingly.

Nowadays, in Vietnam, several researchers are steadily getting the importance of L2 learning feedback orientation and SRL for EFL students. However, applying these methods in L2 learning effectively, especially L2 writing, made both students and teachers get challenges. According to Luu (2014), students' writing skills are one the destitute skills because it has not been focused on since they were still studying in general education. Therefore, students face many difficulties when learning writing skills at university. Students not only feel agonized but also discouraged and not making progress from receiving some traditional feedback methods such as pointing out and correcting faults just from their teachers. Also, in this study, the author has shown that receiving comments from classmates will help students develop more writing skills. With the same opinion, Nguyễn (2016) said that although the feedback from classmates is still incomplete and specific, if it is properly and carefully oriented, it will help students advance their writing skills. Students taking ownership of their learning and being more engaged in the learning process without relying on the teacher's remarks is another benefit of assisting students in delivering feedback to help one other. According to Nguyễn (2013),

through peer feedback, learners can realize their own writing's strengths and weaknesses and know how to complete writing better. The author also considered that professors should make sure that students understand the goal of feedback and the role of respondents, who should be critical readers rather than "hunting error" people. In reality, online learning asks students to have a strong self-study ability to deal with L2 subjects, especially L2 writing, which is a difficult subject for EFL students. After receiving feedback, students adjust their self-determination to accomplish their writing the best. Self-determination shows the motivation of self-control has numerous positive attitudes in learning progress (Bùi, 2010). Students can understand the topic clearly and durably by spending time for self-study, which also helps them train will and the ability to creative activity (Lê, 2019). According to Nguyễn and Trần (2008), through every period of the evaluation process and feedback, students would know how to adjust to learning writing step by step. To maximize the self-study and self-research capacity of students, teachers must always take students' learning as the central object and find a way and a way for students to self-understand and apply knowledge (Truong et al., 2015). In a word, feedback orientation and SRL strategies in L2 writing are steadily applied by most universities in Vietnam to help students improve their writing the best.

This study aims to investigate EFL students' L2 writing feedback orientation, present the effects of writing feedback orientation and SRL writing strategies on the learning process, and set up SRL writing strategies for them, especially for Van Lang University's EFL students, in receiving revisable feedbacks and applying SRL writing strategies in L2 writing online class in the COVID-19, and simultaneously helping them improve Writing skills in particular and academic achievement in general. In addition, this study may release a number of other studies with the same purpose and topic.

Literature Review

The definition of Writing feedback orientation

Writing feedback orientation is the process of receiving evaluations, comments, feedback, and ideas about one's writing from teachers and friends via online learning on concerns such as grammar, word choice, spelling, etc. Individuals can then create their own lessons, as well as edit and enhance their writing skills. Furthermore, individuals can draw their own lessons as well as correct and enhance their writing ability. The feedback content is based on research that analyzed the effect of teacher feedback on collaborative writing in online environments and has four types of feedback: corrective feedback, epistemic feedback, suggestive feedback, and epistemic + suggestive feedback, according to Alvarez et al.'s (2011) study.

The definition of Self-regulated learning writing strategies

The term Self-regulated learning (SRL) was created to distinguish it from learning with the regulation from teachers. SRL, according to Zumburunn et al. (2011), is a process that assists students in managing their thoughts, behaviors, and feelings in order to optimize their learning experience and, as a result, achieve academic achievement. SRL occurs when the student's purpose is to acquire skills or knowledge by themselves. The authors also mentioned that SRL models are divided into stages. Three phases are included in one of the most common circle models: foresight and planning, performance monitoring, and performance reflections. In another study, Teng and Zhang (2017) show that SRL is the most effective process that helps students achieve learning goals by trying to regulate, monitor, and control the students' motivation, behavior, and feeling by themselves. Based on the information above, the SRL can be simply known as an effective process that assists students in controlling their study environment.

It is a cyclical process that is divided into phases: planning, monitoring their performance, and reflecting on the outcome.

Theoretical studies method

The theoretical studies method, according to Nguyễn (n.d.), is the activity of gathering scientific knowledge based on investigating various texts and materials with the same issue to obtain objective results. This method aids researchers in gaining a broad understanding of any new issue and exploring previous studies' tendencies to obtain valuable guidelines for their further topics. On the other hand, it also organizes scientific papers into a coherent, logical structure that allows the researchers to understand the issues deeply. For example, Nguyễn et al. (2008) pointed out the impact of peer feedback on learning by introducing theoretical difficulties and then allowing students to enhance their abilities. Also, Bùì (2010) gathered the necessary information from previous studies and demonstrated the meaningful aspect of theory in learning. Furthermore, Zumburunn et al. (2011) and MacArthur et al. (2011) proved that encouragement and self-regulated learning could help students get great achievements by applying self-regulated learning strategies, especially in writing, by using theoretical frameworks.

Product approach

As the name indicates, the product method compels the writer to concentrate on the completed text, or the product of writing, rather than the techniques and steps that led up to it. What important is that you complete the task quickly, efficiently, and all at once. The Product-based approach is acceptable by most writing teachers because of its general advantages in writing classes. Students can easily learn how to write parts of English using sample techniques, particularly rhetorical samples in English, through reported speech, description, and persuasive sentences. Product-based writing has been shown to improve L2 writing in terms of grammatical and syntactic structures (Tangpermpoon, 2008). Furthermore, when models are appropriately included in the content of the writing process, they become effective instructional tools, according to Eschholz (1980). They can help students become more conscious of writing elements, including style, language, organization, and structure. (Saeidi et al., 2011). On the other hand, Murray (1980) claims that using model texts in L2 writing programs has a number of downsides, the most prominent of which is that model texts impede L2 learners' creativity. In brief, the product approach helps learners have a general view of new topics in L2 writing so that they can easily accomplish challenging tasks.

Process approach

Process writing is an approach to writing that enables both teachers and students to gain knowledge more efficiently via activities such as teaching. It is also a type of writing in which EFL students concentrate on the process of creating their written goods rather than the finished results. Sun et al. (2009) concluded that a process approach to teaching writing should include several stages, including prewriting or invention activities (brainstorming, group discussion, assessing ideas); drafting; seeking feedback from peers or the instructor; revising on the whole-text level (looking at the overall focus, reconsidering organization, determining whether the revision is necessary); and revising on the whole-text level (looking at the overall focus, reconsidering organization, determining whether the revision is necessary); and revising on the whole-text (looking at the overall focus, reconsidering organization, deciding whether there is a need for revision). In other words, the process approach to writing teaching places a greater emphasis on the writing process than on the final product. Additionally, according to Myles (2002), the process approach to writing is only appropriate when students are given the opportunity to receive feedback on their written work, and it also encourages students to reflect

and seek input as their intentions, ideas, and language change as a result of providing opportunities for learners to receive feedback. Besides that, Sutikno (2008) investigated that the process-based approach is more effective than the product-based approach since it allows students to experiment with and develop their own unique writing style. Otherwise, according to Tangpermpoon (2008), students must spend a significant amount of time in the classroom to create a complete piece of writing. To sum up, the process approach helps students elevate their minds in L2 writing through activities in the studying process and achieve further achievements.

Previous studies

Plenty of relevant research claims that the process of acquiring the written language ability of EFL students is closely related to the recognition of written feedback orientation. Many studies showed that students who use Writing Feedback Orientation techniques are more engaged in their future writing practices.

Students' questionnaires were obtained from a legitimate sample in the study "Chinese University Students' L2 Writing Feedback Orientation and Self-Regulated Learning Writing Strategies in Online Teaching During COVID-19" after unfinished responses were eliminated using an Internet survey tool with 311 Chinese university students aged 18 to 21 years old (Xu, 2021). The result shows that students have many positive expressions about receiving feedback orientation. In particular, the main benefit of teacher criticism is that it aids students in seeing the logical flaws that the instructor identified in their work. Some students who were questioned indicated that their instructors' criticism helped them grasp what makes a good composition and led them to work hard on the proper path. Furthermore, the efficacy of feedback was boosted during COVID-19, as professors provided more tutorials and feedback to assist students in identifying writing issues and improving their writing, even if they studied in class but otherwise did not. Generally, students saw online English writing feedback as generally favorable, and they exhibited a feedback-seeking bias toward written corrected comments in the majority of cases.

In another study on feedback orientation, "Feedback to writing, assessment for teaching and learning and student progress" Parr et al. (2010), data regarding 59 teachers' ability to give feedback for students' writing papers from six schools were collected for research. After researching, the authors discovered that the link between teacher feedback and students' writing scores is quite tight and that the better a teacher's ability to provide excellent feedback, the better the student's writing results. In addition, the study "Feedback from peers regarding writing: from theory to practical application" (Phản hồi bài viết từ bạn học: Từ lý luận tới thực tiễn áp dụng) of Nguyen (2013) also shows the relationship between students' writing and their school fellows' feedback. The author said that school fellows' feedback has certain influences on students' writing. This is considered a very useful activity effect so that both teachers and all students in a class can discuss problems with each other in responding to writing assignments. It also helps students identify and solve the problems in writing by themselves. Also, in "The value of feedback in improving collaborative writing assignments in an online learning environment" (Alvarez, Espasa & Guasch, 2012), after dividing 83 students into 16 work groups and giving them two weeks to complete an assignment with the help of technical tools, the researchers discovered that students' responses are more active and constructive when teachers provide feedback with more comment and suggestion than simply correcting the fault.

Also, in the study of Jamshidi et al. (2021), the researchers have chosen 12 of the total 18 EFL learners from a sixteen-week Writing course (once class a week) in the first semester of 2019-2020 at Poldokhtar University to investigate. This paper aims to explore peer interaction (or peer feedback) to create facilities for the quality of peer feedback dynamics and the quality of

EFL learners' English writing. The result showed that EFL learners' English writing was actually improved through peer feedback dynamics factors (such as motivation, interaction, awareness, comfort, competition, confidence, cooperation, correction, creativity, techniques, role, nature, and opportunity). Because of these factors help, students get more chances to work together and share ideas with each other in the process of writing to produce good articles. Otherwise, peer feedback dynamics also accidentally make an invisible responsibility to each student. Due to this responsibility, more motivations are created to encourage students to learn writing harder not to affect the process of peer writing. In addition, in "Effect of corrective feedback on revision through computer-mediated instruction: the Pakistani EFL context" (Hassan et al., 2021), they explored how EFL learners provided feedback to their peers and its impact on revision. Also, this study investigated the factors that influence students' writing feedback and how they respond to their peers by using computers. The researchers picked 20 EFL students (male and female) in the third semester of BS English at Khwaja Fareed UEIT who were 16 to 18 years old and learning English as a foreign language. These students were given a number of materials to help them develop their reading and writing abilities as well as analyze, evaluate, and critically think about the feedback actions of their peers. The results show that EFL students use feedback based on their needs and stay focused on the content. Particularly, Peer feedback has no direct impact on revisions; similarly, the findings revealed that peer evaluation had a significant impact on the length of the essay but almost no effect on the communication's goal. Various elements influence peer feedback writing, including the characteristics of writing tasks and language proficiency, which make the process rather sophisticated and require an intermediate computer to supplement the oral peer response. Ultimately, students' attitudes and enthusiasm to write in English as a foreign language seemed to increase as they learned how to utilize word-processing language tools.

At the same time, SRL is implemented in many schools throughout the world because it plays an essential role in the development of L2 abilities, particularly writing skills, by fostering relationships with students' feedback orientation. This relation occurs when students receive feedback, they will have the motivation to correct their writing, and the self-regulated learning strategies will assist them in controlling their thoughts, including motivation better, so students can work with their writing more effectively.

In "Encourage Self-Regulated Learning in the Classroom" (Zumbrunn, Tadlock, & Roberts, 2011), the authors show that SRL assists students in controlling their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions to be successful in learning. Furthermore, SRL teaches students how to get knowledge and skills by themselves, which is very extremely for subjects that require high perseverance, such as writing. In the study "Self-Regulated Strategy Instruction in College Developmental Writing" (MacArthur, Philippakos, & Ianetta, 2015), an experiment involving 13 instructors and 276 students from 19 developmental writing classes at two universities found that teaching SRL curriculum for a full semester in 9 classes and comparing it to a normal condition in the others improved overall quality of writing on a persuasive essay and length, but not grammar. It also helped students develop their skills for setting goals, managing their efforts, and reflecting on their work.

In their study "Effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance: a mediation model of self-regulated learning of writing in English as a second/foreign language," Teng and Zhang (2017) discovered that motivational regulation has an impact on both students' writing performance and their reported use of SRL strategies. The results of self-report questionnaires and English writing tests completed by 512 undergraduate students in mainland China show that motivation regulation can assist EFL writers in becoming more active in extending their

learning efforts and using various strategies to develop their cognitive, metacognitive, and social involvement in completing learning tasks in EFL Writing.

Previous studies have found a link between writing feedback orientation, self-regulated learning practices, and students writing abilities. Writing feedback orientation and self-regulated learning methodologies, in fact, have a favorable impact on writing ability by assisting students in actively developing their writing abilities.

Methods

Research context

Here and now, the COVID-19 disease is becoming more and more serious and causes several effects on people in general and students in specific. Therefore, setting up online classes for learners, especially university students, for long-term development is really urgent and necessary. For this particular context, this study aims to investigate EFL student's L2 writing orientation feedback and present the learning process of EFL students of Van Lang University, which is proceeded in the form of online courses to help students catch up with the academic program and complete it on time to help them set up SRL writing strategies. However, most students consider that their learning process and achievements are reduced, especially in writing which is an essential skill for EFL students to help them accomplish advanced studying programs in each major and academic research better. Lack of setting suitable SRL strategies in L2 writing and interaction with classmates and teachers with the orientation of seeking feedback to correct their writing is the main reason for the feeling of dissatisfaction about learning Writing online. Students need to focus on establishing suitable SRL strategies since these strategies can help them point out the important details of each subject, and then, they can exactly solve the problems and get good results. In addition, WFO is also a helpful solution that can help students have a chance to learn from their writing faults after receiving classmates' and teachers' feedback to prevent usual errors and improve their following writing. To find out a suitable solution for the issue that makes students confused, researchers have created appropriate questionnaires, which are based on the reality of EFL students of Van Lang University, according to Xu's (2021) framework, and have continued online surveys to collect and analyze data from 200 EFL students, who are first-year students and second-year students. At the same time, researchers have also invited 20 students, 200 total, to get further interviews about the mentioned issue and to receive more feedback and wills in learning L2 writing online.

Participants

In total, after excluding incomplete responses for three weeks in August, 200 questionnaires were collected from 200 students aged 18 to 21, all of them studying in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University. In the number of participants, there are 131 (65.5%) female, 65 (32.5%) male, and 4 (2%) others; 98 (49%) are freshmen, and 102 (51%) are sophomores who participated in the study for three weeks. All the survey participants are currently or have completed at least one online writing course in the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University. Academic English writing is a compulsory class for students who have majored in English for more than two years of their four-year undergraduate study. At the time of the study, all participants were engaged for at least one semester in an obligatory English writing course, which demanded them to have good writing talents, a wide variety of knowledge, and a strong self-learning mindset. Out of those 200 volunteers, 20 people agree to participate in a follow-up interview. This group has 7 males, and 13 females, of which 16 are first-year students and 4 are second-year students.

Research design

Quantitative method

Quantitative methods will probably have specific numbers throughout statistics. According to Aliaga and Gunderson (2002), research entails collecting quantitative data and evaluating it using quantitatively based approaches to explain events (in particular statistics). Muijs's (2004) research on "doing quantitative research in education" has been excellent, and it also pointed out that there is many the foundation of the quantitative research method. If we tend to take a pragmatic approach to analysis strategies, we must first determine which types of questions are best answered with quantitative rather than qualitative methods (Muijs, D., 2004). Much research has looked at the L2 writing feedback orientation in conjunction with other factors such as academic performance, stress, and so on. Many studies use the quantitative technique to get the result of SRL writing strategies. The majority of studies were done with university or college student populations and relied on questionnaires or self-report measures to gather data. Sun et al. (2020), for example, underlined the importance of using writing SRL methods in learning English as a foreign language since they have a significant relationship after completing surveys in university writers' areas. Additionally, Parr et al. (2010) and Teng et al. (2017) used the quantitative technique to obtain relevant results from writing feedback for education and learning, as well as SRL tactics on writing performance.

This research paper uses quantitative methods by using a questionnaire according to Xu's (2021) framework. This questionnaire will be sent to 200 EFL students from Van Lang University (98 students from first-year, and 102 students from second-year) through an online form to collect data, and then the researcher will analyze the topic. The time for this questionnaire will last 3 weeks. Students will be asked about their favorable feedback orientation, their reactions about creating their own self-regulated learning strategies in writing, what they would do to seek feedback and carry suitable strategies for L2 writing, and so on during teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 time. The researcher will use this information to identify which writing feedback orientation and self-regulated learning procedures will help EFL students improve their writing abilities and accomplish their goals.

Qualitative method

The researcher will use this information to assess which writing feedback orientations and self-regulated learning procedures will help EFL students improve their writing abilities and successes. "Qualitative" denotes a sketch of phenomena, but "quantitative" denotes a quantity or numerical value, implying that qualitative research is also identified. In qualitative research, linking descriptive, interpretative data, and numerical indices together is frequently suitable — even desired — for comprehending a phenomenon (Damico, Simmons-Mackie, Oelschlaeger, Elman, & Armstrong, 1999; Ragin, 1987). When observing and analyzing reality with the goal of generating a hypothesis that would explain what was observed, the qualitative naturalistic method is applied (Newman, I., & Ridenour, C., 1998). A lot of research has identified and assessed feedback orientation and SRL writing using qualitative methodologies, according to a review of the literature. For example, after interviewing, Nguyễn (2016) detected that using peer feedback and teacher feedback in writing helps students realize their errors and develop their accomplishments. Moreover, during COVID-19, Xu (2021) used an interview technique to learn about students' thoughts about online English writing classes, online instructor WCF, and their personal SRL writing approach.

This study uses qualitative methods by interviewing 20 EFL students at Van Lang University (16 students from the first year and 4 students from the second year) according to Xu's (2021)

framework and takes advantage of the students who were a volunteer and pleased to participate in the study. These interviews will last two weeks to collect information in full and usefully. During teaching and learning online during the COVID-19 time, students will be asked about their preferable feedback orientation, their responses to producing their own self-regulated learning strategies in writing, what they would do to seek feedback and carry appropriate strategies for L2 writing, and so on. The researcher will use this information to identify which writing feedback orientation and self-regulated learning techniques will help EFL students improve their writing abilities and accomplish their goals.

Instruments

Under the influence of the COVID-19 disease and the government's social distancing directives, using the online questionnaire and online interview is the safest and most effective way to collect data from EFL students of Van Lang University as participants for this study.

The questionnaire is designed into two clear and specific parts to analyze the WFO and SRL strategies in learning L2 writing. The questions in both two parts of the questionnaire would be divided into different categories with multiple-choice answers. These answers were given to help participants get the problem and answer in more detail. In this way, the data would not only be collected scientifically and systematically but also would avoid having ambiguous answers. Furthermore, it could help participants understand the questions more clearly and choose the most suitable answers for themselves, improving their ability to learn L2 writing. And the most important thing is that the questionnaire has the ability to collect the most data in the shortest time through a Google form which is sent to the EFL students of Van Lang University at student groups on social networking sites.

Online interview is chosen as the second way to collect data from participants for this study because of two main reasons below. The first reason is this method helps researchers to gather reliable data because these data sources have been well-verified as first-year and second-year EFL students of Van Lang University. In addition, researchers can understand the general situation of problems that each student has experienced in the learning process of L2 writing. Therefore, many previous studies have also applied this form in the research process. Also, the interview is not too dependent on the default questions, so it would be flexibly changed depending on the situation that could appear during the interview process for each student. Therefore, researchers could explore more aspects of the problem and have the opportunity to see more problems that have not been mentioned before. The second reason is the interview could help researchers investigate the information deeply, which may be missed in the questionnaire method. Additionally, by interview, participants can express their difficulties and desires in the learning process of L2 writing in terms of WFO and SRL strategies. For the above reasons, the combination of both the questionnaire and interview methods in conducting this study is extremely necessary and useful for this study.

Procedures of data collection

The survey, which includes two questionnaires and an interview, is based on the framework of the research paper "Chinese University Student's L2 Writing Feedback Orientation and Self-Regulated Learning Writing Strategies in Online Teaching During COVID-19" by Jian Xu (2021). The questions have been summarized and edited with some content to suit the context of Vietnam and EFL students of Van Lang University during the Covid pandemic. These questions will be sent to 200 students (including first- and second-year students) of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University via community groups as students' forums on the social network on the internet. The purpose of this way is to select random volunteers to

participate in the survey and give more objective survey results. After collecting enough responses and eliminating sketchy response forms by 3 weeks, the survey system will be closed a week after the survey form submission date begins, or it may take one more week to collect enough data. After collecting, the researchers would select 20 forms that could extract more information and proactively contact the owners. Researchers will conduct interviews, which will take place individually based on the Zalo platform, with an estimated time of an hour for each person. The content of the interview can be changed flexibly depending on the situation, the interviewer, and so on.

Data collection and analysis

According to Jian Xu's approach, the study was done using data from surveys and interviews for the feedback orientation questionnaire (FOQ) and writing strategies self-regulated learning questionnaires (WSSRLQ) (2021). The goal of this decision is to investigate the internal structure of these surveys for practical application and to verify that they both produced the expected findings.

Results

This study aims to figure out the effect of WFO and SRL strategies in L2 writing on EFL students during online learning time due to COVID-19's influence, especially on Van Lang University's EFL students. Besides, applying WFO and SRL strategies would help students learn to write more productively and obtain good achievements. The following data is collected from 200 participants from Van Lang University EFL students.

Writing Feedback Orientation

Quantitative results of Writing Feedback Orientation

Table 1. Writing feedback orientation

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	I communicate to my teacher online when I don't comprehend his or her critiques on my English writing.	Agree	120	60	60.1
		Hesitating	31	15.5	
		Disagree	14	7	
2	I appreciate it when my English instructor corrects all of my errors (grammar, content, organization, spelling, and punctuation).	Agree	136	68	
		Hesitating	18	9	
		Disagree	11	5.5	
3	I read all of the remarks attentively when I receive my English writing assignments.	Agree	124	62	
		Hesitating	32	16	
		Disagree	9	4.5	
4	I strive not to repeat the English writing faults that my instructor has pointed out to me.	Agree	121	60.5	
		Hesitating	36	18	

		Disagree	8	4	
5	I appreciate it when my English instructor asks me questions on my writing paper to help me think about what I'm writing (not just gives me the answer).	Agree	100	50	59.33
		Hesitating	46	23	
		Disagree	19	9.5	
6	I dismiss my teacher's comments on my English writing work when I don't grasp what he or she is saying.	Agree	81	40.5	
		Hesitating	27	13.5	
		Disagree	57	28.5	
7	I only consider the grade after I receive my English writing assignments.	Agree	6	3	
		Hesitating	45	22.5	
		Disagree	114	57	
8	I don't care whether I get criticism on my English writing assignments when I get them back.	Agree	8	4	
		Hesitating	17	8.5	
		Disagree	140	70	
9	In my English writing work, I appreciate it when my instructor merely puts a grade and no remarks.	Agree	4	2	
		Hesitating	25	12.5	
		Disagree	136	68	
10	My classmate's remarks on my English writing work are never looked at after peer review.	Agree	10	5	
		Hesitating	25	12.5	
		Disagree	130	65	
11	I'd want to hear exclusively on the things I performed well in my English writing paper.	Agree	7	3.5	
		Hesitating	23	11.5	
		Disagree	135	67.5	

Table 1 presents the survey results of 11 questions about the orientation of receiving feedback from first- and second-year students at VLU's foreign language faculty. According to the findings, the majority of students have developed their own understanding of the need to obtain criticism in order to enhance their writing abilities. At the same time, the survey findings suggest that in the process of learning to write in L2, students place a high value on instructor feedback. The factors related to the response to the feedback from teachers all reached over 50% agreement. The students also had a positive attitude toward feedback-seeking oriented. The pupils, on the other hand, were less engaged in feedback avoidance activities.

Qualitative results of Writing Feedback Orientation

Three themes were generated based on the responses of the students in the interview, which are attitudes towards learning writing online, applying SRL, and the orientation to receive feedback

while learning writing online. Regarding students' attitudes towards online learning, most students have a positive attitude toward learning writing online, especially during the Covid-19 epidemic. Some students said that learning to write online helps them have more autonomy in learning (time and place, can review lessons by the storage functions, and so on). Furthermore, teachers can help their students in time through online channels such as messages or email. On the other hand, others argue that online learning has drawbacks, such as a lack of connection between lecturers and students throughout the teaching and learning process, and that students are easily distracted when learning online by external elements such as phones, noise, and so on. However, learning online during the covid epidemic is inevitable. Most students have already gotten used to learning writing online. Learning writing online also affects the orientation of students when receiving feedback. Students said they enjoyed getting feedback from their teachers even while learning online because it helped them realize their faults in writing and improve their skills. The students interviewed also commented that they would rather receive teacher feedback at the end of each writing than just grade it. Otherwise, unlike receiving feedback from teachers, the interviewed students said that although they liked to talk with their friends during the writing process, they were not very interested in receiving feedback from their classmates. They think that feedback from classmates is affected by their level and knowledge, so classmates' feedback may be wrong, and they still have to give it back to the teacher for feedback again. In general, the students have a positive attitude towards learning writing online and are oriented to receive feedback in learning writing.

Writing Strategies for Self-Regulated Learning

Quantitative Writing Strategies for Self-Regulated Learning

Self-regulating learning methods play a vital role in strengthening students' writing abilities, especially for foreign language students. That is proven through the data collected from table 2 to table 10, which indicate the students' enthusiasm and sense of self-study at some different stages: Goal-Oriented Monitoring and Evaluating (GME), Idea Planning (IP), Text Processing (TP), Course memory (CM), Peer Learning (PL), Feedback Handling (FH), Interest Enhancement (IE), Motivational Self-Talk (MST) and Emotional Control (EC).

Table 2. Goal-Oriented Monitoring and Evaluating (GME)

When I learned writing, I ...	Number	Percent (%)
Set up goals for me to direct my learning activities.	140	70
Make sure I'm on track to meet my goal by checking in on my progress.	137	68.5
Examine my understanding of the concepts and abilities gained in writing classes.	98	49
Keep track of my progress in writing courses.	106	53
Remind me to stick to my strategy.	100	50
Set a learning objective for me to better my writing skills.	130	65

In table 2, more than 65% of students spend time setting learning goals and routinely evaluating their progression when learning writing skills to ensure they can get directly to their learning activities and achieve those previous targets. Due to a lack of supervision from their professors, students, on the other hand, have little interest and find it difficult to measure their proficiency

in the knowledge and experience taught in writing courses. Unfortunately, only 49% claimed that they are conscious and capable of measuring their own competence while learning. Only half of the students could convince themselves to stick to their schedule since self-motivation to continue and sustain their habit is challenging.

Table 3. Idea Planning (IP)

Before writing, I ...	Number	Percent (%)
Read similar articles to aid my planning.	137	68.5
Use the internet to look for relevant facts to assist me in planning.	176	88
Consider the key characteristics of a successful composition that I've learnt to assist me in planning.	107	53.5

Furthermore, before beginning to practice a new essay, students find the internet to be a remarkable and incredibly valuable tool because up to 88% of students claim that relevant material can be found on this platform presented in table 3.

Table 4. Text Processing (TP)

When writing, I	Number	Percent (%)
Apply certain literary tricks to make the work more intriguing.	101	50.5
Check for grammatical errors.	171	85.5
Make sure your spelling and grammar are correct.	152	76
Make sure the structure is logically sound.	146	73
Examine the cohesion or relationship between sentences.	141	70.5
Examine if the topic and substance have been presented clearly.	127	63.5

However, in table 4, about 70.5% to 85.5% of students say that they want to check their writing before submitting in regard to grammar mistakes, spelling, punctuation, cohesiveness or connection among sentences, and structure for logical coherence. They consider these steps as crucial milestones in developing their writing abilities. Furthermore, half of the students generally employ literary strategies to make the essay more engaging, and they double-check the subject and substance to verify that they have been conveyed correctly.

Table 5. Course memory (CM)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	To assist me recall useful terms and idioms learned in writing classes, I write them down.	Yes	186	93	71.8
		No	14	7	
2	To assist me recall useful terms and expressions learned in writing classes, I say them out loud.	Yes	88	44	
		No	112	56	
3	To assist me recall my class notes and course information, I read them over and again.	Yes	157	78.5	
		No	42	24	
		Others	1	0.5	

According to the 3 given questions in table 5, a number of students obviously have a sense of self-study and self-directed learning. Most students, in particular, like to jot down valuable phrases and idioms learned in writing classes in order to remember them. In addition, re-reading class notes and course materials were also their preferred method. However, approximately 60% of the students said they were not in the habit of memorizing useful words and expressions taught through speaking out.

Table 6. Peer Learning (PL)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	I talk with my classmates to get new ideas and get them to assist me to write.	Yes	171	85.5	85.5
		No	29	14.5	

Regarding peer learning, table 6 shows that 85.5% of students want to discuss with their friends to gain more ideas and help enhance their writing.

Table 7. Feedback Handling (FH)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	I'm open to receiving feedback on my work from others.	Yes	185	92.5	94.6
		No	15	7.5	
2	In my writing, I am willing to accept teacher critique.	Yes	199	99.5	
		No	1	0.5	
3	Based on peer comments, I aim to enhance my English writing.	Yes	174	87	
		No	26	13	
4	On the basis of instructor criticism, I aim to enhance my English writing.	Yes	199	99.5	
		No	1	0.5	

Table 7 also revealed that over 90% of children are open to students and teachers' feedback. By allowing students to get the teacher's and peer comments, they may be able to improve their English writing skills and avoid repeating the same errors in subsequent writings. Furthermore,

they rely on these elements to remind themselves to keep writing while also looking for strategies to control their mood when they want to stop.

Table 8. Interest Enhancement (IE)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	I'm always looking for new methods to make learning to write more enjoyable.	Yes	140	70	71.5
		No	60	30	
2	To practice writing, I chose fascinating themes.	Yes	134	67	
		No	66	33	
3	To pique my interest, I make a connection between the writing assignment and my own life.	Yes	144	72	
		No	56	28	
4	I make an effort to link the writing assignment to something I'm passionate about.	Yes	154	77	
		No	46	23	

In terms of Interest Enhancement, more than 70% of them are looking for ways to make writing more interesting by integrating their writing work with their real and tangible hobbies to pique their interest and enthusiasm. Surprisingly, according to the findings in this table 8, 33% of students do not wish to practice writing on their favorite topic, which shows their interest and effort in developing writing abilities.

Table 9. Motivational Self-Talk (MST)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	I remind myself how critical it is to achieve high grades in writing classes.	Yes	164	82	66.9
		No	36	18	
2	I persuade myself that practicing writing will help me surpass my classmates.	Yes	155	77.5	
		No	45	22.5	
3	In writing classes, I compete with other students and push myself to achieve better than they do.	Yes	108	54	
		No	92	46	
4	I motivate myself to put in the effort necessary to increase my writing abilities and knowledge by enrolling in writing classes.	Yes	116	58	
		No	84	42	
5	I remind myself that I need to keep taking writing classes to improve my writing skills.	Yes	126	63	
		No	74	37	

The majority of students believe that motivation is a key part of the Self-Regulated Learning approach. Specifically, they instinctively remind themselves of the importance of achieving good marks or the necessity of practicing writing in order to outperform their classmates in

online writing classes. Nevertheless, up to 46% of students do not want to compete nor to challenge themselves to do better than their other classmates in writing courses.

Table 10. Emotional Control (EC)

No.	Items	Answer	Number	Percent (%)	Cumulative percent (%)
1	When I'm doing a written exam or answering questions in a writing class, I tell myself not to be concerned.	Yes	167	83.5	86.5
		No	33	16.5	
2	When I want to stop writing, I persuade myself to keep going.	Yes	179	89.5	
		No	20	10	
		Others	1	0.5	
3	When I'm about to give up, I find strategies to keep my emotions in check.	Yes	173	86.5	
		No	27	13.5	

The final table mentioned students' emotional control; moreover, half of them claimed they told themselves they had to keep writing or looking for different strategies to regulate their moods when they wanted to give up.

Qualitative Writing Strategies for Self-Regulated Learning

The 20 interviewed students had a common view of self-regulating learning through its positive and negative effects. In terms of the positive side, students acknowledged this is an extremely effective method for developing writing skills. Before commencing an essay, they reported that it allows them to have more time to brainstorm ideas and find references, so they could have more opportunities to discuss with their peers about their assignments or build a good outline in the online classroom environment. When applying this strategy throughout the writing period, they can conveniently look up the meaning of words and synonyms by using dictionaries or avoid common faults such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. After finishing an assignment, they can use some online websites to check for faults that make their writing perfect before submitting it to the teacher. On the other hand, this learning method makes students passive in creating their writing compositions. The proof is that the teachers provide all students same layout, and they only need to change some necessary information. As a result, when given a new topic that has never been discussed before, some students often find it challenging to develop and analyze it into a complete text. Furthermore, some pupils may not receive a specific technique in how to write effectively owing to a lack of instructor training from the start. Every time they do their assignments, they just start writing and submitting them immediately without following the accurate sequences. Overall, SRL strategies have certain impacts and enormous contributions to improving students' writing skills via the virtual classroom.

The Association between WFO and SRL strategies in L2 writing

The qualitative findings reveal that the majority of the students interviewed thought SRL was directly connected to receiving feedback when attempting to write in L2. Students can learn how to write a decent writing assignment and then send it to teachers for feedback by implementing appropriate SRL tactics in the L2 writing process. The SRL strategies in L2 writing also motivate the students to write and self-correct to improve other assignments. Additionally, SRL strategies make the motivation for students to exchange with friends to create more fitting strategies. Besides, reading each classmate's writing can also help correct faults

and learn good ideas. This result presents the interaction between SRL strategies in L2 writing and WFO to create good achievements for students' learning-to-write process.

Discussion

In the implicated situation of COVID-19, all EFL students are ready to learn online, including writing. By learning online, they can actively attend classes and review the previous at any time by using teaching applications (such as Microsoft Teams, E-learning, and other applications). Therefore, students all get full awareness of online learning's advantages to their learning process. And it is obvious from the collected data that students have created their own awareness about the orientation of receiving feedback to improve writing skills which is the same as the study of Jian Xu (2021) that demonstrated positive attitudes towards online writing feedback orientation. Approximately 68% of students want the teachers to point out their writing faults and correct them (for example, grammar, content, organization, and so on.). Pointing out writing errors and correcting them aims to help students know the core of each error. Because of that, most students take the initiative to try to remember these faults, and then they would not get the same faults in the following writings. Moreover, the first- and second-year students are interested in creative and thought-provoking studying methods such as giving questions or broaching subjects by teachers, and then, they would have a chance to handle the subjects themselves. About half of the participants are interested in this studying method, which is considered as a new modern studying method for students and also leans more toward active than passive. By this method, students would keep knowledge in mind longer and apply it for L2 writing easily after they research and learn by themselves. Otherwise, around 60% of students prefer talking directly to their teachers to get the points well when they do not understand any subjects clearly. It shows the initiative of students in seeking feedback orientation for writing and improving writing skills through this studying method, as the previous study of Guasch (2013) has dealt with writing feedback and showed results that giving writing feedback orientation actually helps students clarify their products. In the 'receiving feedback' process, around 124 to the total of 200 students choose reading feedback carefully and accurately to improve their writing skills, which shows they totally understand the essentiality of teachers' feedback. And, as Alvarez et al. (2012) had investigated before, another encouraging sign is considered from the table that more than half of students appreciate writing feedback orientation in learning writing courses. It also implies that students gradually have a good vision of feedback orientation and handle it as a part of learning writing strategies to get good achievements.

Almost all students realize the importance of feedback orientation and are willing to receive peer and teachers' feedback for writing, as the study or Parr et al. (2010). None of them ignore teachers' feedback or learn more about misunderstanding issues. Each student assumes that each teacher's feedback will help them pay attention to these issues and get better results in writing. Therefore, most students prefer getting scores with teachers' feedback in detail to getting scores without caring about the feedback of their errors. This shows the students' will need their teachers to point out the errors in writing products to know their weaknesses to reduce and correct them. From 57% to 60.5% of participants are aware that the score is not the only thing they need to focus on because it does not tell them what their faults are and what they need to do to correct them. For that reason, these students prefer receiving papers back with feedback or comments to receiving papers back with only scores. Referring to the faults and congratulating the rights are what students want to be received from teachers in writing courses. Besides, students are also willing to get more comments or feedback from peers to advance

their writing later. Nearly 65% of students believe that peer feedback is useful and can give them more new experiences. This shares the same result with the study of Luu (2014), which is about peer feedback will help students enhance writing skills, and the study of Nguyễn (2013), which demonstrates that obtaining peer input allows kids to recognize their strengths and flaws. As a consequence, if students know how to clarify accurately, peer feedback is one of the good strategies to assist them in building their writing abilities.

Self-regulating learning methods play a vital role in strengthening students' writing abilities, especially for foreign language students. In general, most students have a sense of self-study and self-directed learning to improve their writing skills. Many students try to remember and apply the knowledge they have learned in class to practice writing skills. For example, many students chose to write down useful words and expressions or read them over and over again to memorize them. To feedback from teachers and peers, most students choose to communicate with classmates to improve their writing. There is a difference with the result in "Chinese University Students' L2 Writing Feedback Orientation and Self-Regulated Learning Writing Strategies in Online Teaching During COVID-19" (Xu, 2021). According to Xu (2021), the students said that they do not usually communicate with their peers when writing. But about receiving feedback from peers, both studies share the same result that students do not really want the feedback from peers since it is often affected by the level; additionally, it is often a positive comment, which is not really useful in developing writing skills. The volunteers, on the other hand, believe that the teacher's comments motivate them to practice and improve more. This is similar to the results examined in this study. Most students agree that they usually use feedback from teachers when writing and try to improve their writing based on teachers' comments. So, it can be seen the important role of receiving feedback from teachers in developing writing skills. The participants also reported that they often find ways to make writing more interesting on their own by choosing topics they find interesting to practice or relating themselves to the paper. Besides self-direction and self-motivation, most students remind themselves of the importance of practicing writing skills. They usually reminded themselves to get good grades in writing; however, they did not insist on competition in learning. Not many students said that they want to compete with others for self-improvement. Instead, the students are more self-motivated individually. Also, in self-motivation, students said that they would encourage themselves to continue practicing when they want to give up. Nevertheless, there are still a few who think that giving up or continuing depends on their emotion at that time. It is clear that self-motivation has a direct impact on L2 learners' writing abilities. This is similar to the research result of Teng and Zhang (2017) in "Effects of motivational regulation strategies on writing performance: a mediation model of self-regulated learning of writing in English as a second/foreign language", they demonstrate that Chinese EFL students are willing to put up a significant degree of effort in order to complete a writing task. Thus, most students generally apply SRL in using feedback from teachers and friends to practice their writing skills at L2.

Regarding the association between WFO and SRL, it is demonstrated clearly through the results and analyses of this study. WFO is a directive supporting method for both students' learning Writing process and SRL strategies. In particular, by applying SRL strategies in L2 writing and seeking WFO effectively, students could get good achievements. In the students' learning writing process, they need WFO's help to correct faults and complete faults to improve their writing. Besides, it helps students know their strengths and reach their full potential. Thus, this study aims to help students determine the general vision of WFO and SRL strategies and the importance of WFO and SRL strategies in L2 writing to support their writing well.

Conclusion

This study has investigated and promoted WFO and SRL strategies in L2 writing to EFL students. Otherwise, it also has explained more about how to be aware of and apply WFO in using SRL strategies in L2 writing effectively. After collecting and analyzing the data, the results showed that WFO and SRL strategies have a close relationship and an influence on each other in the process of students' developing writing skills. WFO helps students get direct orientations and the right awareness after receiving feedback and applying them effectively, and then it will create more motivations and bases to help students set up and use SRL strategies to manage the process of learning L2 writing. SRL strategies also construct good qualities in writing when teachers develop a suitable teaching environment that encourages students to seek challenges and shows their improvement to make them feel proud of their achievements. In general, students have gained knowledge and good attitudes about WFO and SRL strategies; however, they haven't applied these methods well and have needed more teachers' instruction. In conclusion, by these results and findings, the authors hope that other researchers could apply this study to the educational environment in suitable ways for more learners, especially in L2 writing. Moreover, the authors also hope that this paper could help researchers develop more studies with a similar topic to find out more optimal solutions.

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Biodata

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Vu Le Uyen is an undergraduate of Van Lang University's Faculty of Foreign Languages in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She discusses the reality of Van Lang University students' L2 self-regulated learning writing strategies in online teaching during COVID-19 and these techniques' effects on students' performance.

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Appendix A

Writing feedback orientation items

Adapted items	Sources
1. When I do not understand my teacher's comments on my English writing, I talk to him/her online.	Waller and Papi (2017)
2. When I do not understand my teacher's comments on my English writing paper, I ignore them.	Waller and Papi (2017)
3. I like when my teacher corrects all of my English writing mistakes (grammar, content, organisation, spelling, punctuation).	Waller and Papi (2017)
4. When I get my English writing papers back, ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I read all of the comments carefully. • I only look at the grade. • I don't care about receiving feedback on my English writing papers. 	Waller and Papi (2017)
5. I remember the English writing mistakes my teacher points out to me and I try not to make them again.	Waller and Papi (2017)
6. I like when my teacher ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writes questions on my English writing paper to make me think about my writing (not just gives me the answer). • only writes a grade and not comments on my English writing paper. 	Waller and Papi (2017)
7. After peer review, I never look at my classmate's comments on my English writing paper.	Waller and Papi (2017)
8. I would like to be told only what I did right in my English writing paper.	Waller and Papi (2017)

Appendix B

Descriptive statistics of the Writing Strategies for Self-Regulated Learning Questionnaires (23 items)

Items

Text Processing (TP)

1. When writing, I...
 - use some literary devices to make the composition more interesting.
 - check grammar mistakes.
 - check spelling and punctuation.
 - check the structure for logical coherence.
 - check the cohesiveness or connection among sentences.
 - check whether the topic and the content have been clearly expressed.

Course memory (CM)

1. I write useful words and expressions taught in writing courses to help me remember them.
2. I speak out useful words and expressions taught in writing courses to help me remember them.

3. I read my class notes and the course material over and over again to help me remember them.

Idea Planning (IP)

1. Before writing, I ...

- read related articles to help me plan.
- use the internet to search for related information to help me plan.
- think about the core elements of a good composition I have learned to help me plan.

Goal-Oriented Monitoring and Evaluating (GME)

1. When learning to write, I ...

- set up goals for myself in order to direct my learning activities.
- check my progress to make sure I achieve my goal.
- evaluate my mastery of the knowledge and skills learned in writing courses.
- monitor my learning process in writing courses.
- tell myself to follow my plan.
- set up a learning goal to improve my writing.

Peer Learning (PL)

1. I discuss with my peers to have more idea and help me write

Feedback Handling (FH)

1. I am open to peer feedback on my writing.
2. I am open to teacher feedback on my writing.
3. I try to improve my English writing based on peer feedback.
4. I try to improve my English writing based on teacher feedback.

Interest Enhancement (IE)

1. I look for ways to bring more fun to the learning of writing.
2. I choose interesting topics to practice writing.
3. I connect the writing task with my real life to intrigue me.
4. I try to connect the writing task with my personal interest.

Motivational Self-Talk (MST)

1. I remind myself about how important it is to get good grades in writing courses.
2. I tell myself that it is important to practice writing to outperform my peers.
3. I compete with other students and challenge myself to do better than them in writing courses.
4. I persuade myself to work hard in writing courses to improve my writing skills and knowledge.
5. I tell myself that I should keep on learning in writing courses to become good at writing.

Emotional Control (EC)

1. I tell myself not to worry when taking a writing test or answering questions in writing courses.
 2. I tell myself to keep on writing when I want to give it up.
 3. I find ways to regulate my mood when I want to give up.
-

Adapted from Teng and Zhang (2016)

 Appendix C


Interview Questions	Sources
1. What did you think of teachers' online English writing teaching activities during the COVID-19?	Jian Xu (2021)
2. Do you think the online teaching and learning of English writing during the epidemic is different from that during the non-epidemic?	Jian Xu (2021)
3. In online teaching during the epidemic, how did your English writing class work and how did your teacher give you written feedback on your composition? How do you feel?	Jian Xu (2021)
4. After receiving and reading the teacher's feedback on your writing, how did you react to and how do you think about the feedback? Why?	Jian Xu (2021)
5. How would you deal with the feedback from your teacher on your English composition?	Jian Xu (2021)
6. What kind of impact did the teacher's feedback on your English composition have on your English writing study? In what ways?	Jian Xu (2021)
7. In online teaching during the epidemic, how did you learn or practice English writing in and out of class?	Jian Xu (2021)
8. Can you describe your writing experiences on your computer (online)?	Jian Xu (2021)
9. When you wrote online, what did you usually pay attention to?	Jian Xu (2021)
10. When you write online, what writing strategies do you generally use to help you write better? Can you give specific examples?	Jian Xu (2021)
11. What strategies do you use pre, during and after the writing process?	Teng and Zhang (2016)
12. Do you plan before writing and revise after writing? If yes, please explain the process.	Teng and Zhang (2016)
13. Can you monitor and evaluate your writing process and performance in the writing course?	Teng and Zhang (2016)
14. When you wrote online, how did you ensure the quality of your composition?	Jian Xu (2021)
15. What factors do you think affected your online English writing? Please be specific.	Jian Xu (2021)
16. Have you ever worked with classmates to complete a writing task in traditional teaching and online teaching? Can you describe it?	Jian Xu (2021)
17. Would you seek help from others in the learning-to-write process?	Teng and Zhang (2016)
18. How do you motivate yourself in the composing or learning-to-write process?	Teng and Zhang (2016)
19. Do you think teacher's feedback has a great influence or improvement on your online English writing? Why?	Jian Xu (2021)
20. How do you view your English writing abilities? Do you think your English writing abilities can be improved?	Jian Xu (2021)
21. How do you solve learning challenges in the writing course?	Teng and Zhang (2016)
22. Regarding the above questions, do you have anything else to add?	Newly added


Using English Discourse Markers to Enhance Speaking Skills: A Case Study at Van Lang University

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ABSTRACT

Vietnamese learners of English have paid little attention to English discourse markers (DMs) although DMs play a significant role in the speech of native English speakers. Furthermore, few studies of DMs used by Vietnamese learners have been carried out. This research aims at identifying the participants' perceptions of making use of DMs in conversational English and the ways they apply DMs in English conversations as the initial stage to prepare them for a plan of action that could fill the research gap. By means of audio recordings and questionnaires conducted in an English major class of 30 first-year students at Van Lang University (VLU), this research discovers that most of the participants acknowledge the vital roles of DMs in conversational English such as facilitating general communication and indicating the speaker's attitude. The research also finds that a plurality of the students is very limited in their use of DMs when making conversations. Therefore, as a recommendation, speaking courses should include DMs instructions. These results make a contribution to more studies on how to instruct DMs in conversational English so that the English-speaking skills of the students at VLU could be enhanced.

Keywords:

Speaking skills,
discourse markers,
DMs, perceptions

Introduction

These days, it is obvious that English plays a pivotal role in cross-cultural communication. Furthermore, Vietnamese people study English not only to obtain knowledge but also to develop a solid command of language skills so that they can communicate with outsiders, particularly native English speakers, in communication across cultures. Increasingly, Vietnamese students are learning English in order to move overseas to work, live, and study in English-speaking nations or to get positions with foreign firms or organizations based in Vietnam.

Having been teaching English at VLU for an academic year, the researcher realizes that many students have a key difficulty while speaking English: they fail to avoid extended periods of silence in a conversation, which hinders fluency and communication. Another issue is that native-speaker lecturers can be difficult to be understood at times owing to redundancy. Native English speakers use DMs to reduce long silent periods (long pauses) in speech and to manage

their talks for effective face-to-face communication, but students at VLU seldom employ these in their English-speaking courses, most likely due to a lack of knowledge about DMs or incorrect usage of the DMs. For native speakers of English, DMs are natural and powerful tools for fluency in oral and face-to-face communication. This study focuses on finding detailed knowledge gaps regarding the students' perceptions of DMs in conversations and the ways they use DMs in speech. Accordingly, some recommendations for teaching DMs in speaking courses at VLU are given to deal with the student's problems.

Literature review

Communicative Competence and Communicative Approach

The goal of the communicative approach or CLT (communicative language teaching) is to assist students in developing communicative competence. For Muller (2005, p. 18), there is a close relationship between communicative competence and DMs. Grammar competence is the foundation for all communication and is one of the four pillars of communicative competence. The usage of DMs also demonstrates other characteristics (sociolinguistic, strategic, and discourse competency). Sociolinguistic competency, in particular, is critical for negotiating the connection between the speaker and the hearer in a conversation, which may be accomplished through the use of phrases such as "*you know*" and "*well*". In addition, discourse competency entails knowledge of establishing coherence in discourse, which may be carried out via DMs. Furthermore, strategic competence is demonstrated when non-native speakers use DMs to demonstrate challenges in vocabulary choice (choosing the suitable word to pronounce) and to draw the audience to understand.

Discourse Markers' definitions and functions

According to Carter and McCarthy (2006, p. 208), DMs are words or phrases that operate to link portions of the discourse in various ways that reflect the speaker's decisions to organize and manage the discourse. Single words like *so, well, fine, like, okay, right, anyway* and phrasal items such as *for a start, I mean, you know, mind you, as I say* are the most prevalent DMs in casual everyday spoken English. The theory is absolutely crucial for VLU students to arrange and control their face-to-face English dialogues.

DMs, for Fung (2011, p. 233), are words and phrases that organize and regulate the progression of a piece of text. In spoken English, the most typical DMs are *you know, right, I mean, actually, well, so, and*. DMs are used to identify the beginnings, and endings of a conversation and the boundaries of topics at a global level. At a local level, DMs hold ideas together in a conversation and highlight the links between idea units (continuation, sequence, contrast, and conclusion). In addition, DMs can convey the speaker's feelings. Fung's views are also the foundation for resolving the above-mentioned student concerns.

According to Fox Tree (2010, p. 278), DMs play a critical role in assisting communicators in gaining a grounding in unplanned or spontaneous communication. Grounding means the process by which individuals check for comprehension when they speak with one another in order to guarantee that the communication's present goals are met (Fox Tree, 2010, p. 276). In this perspective, it is critical to employ DMs engaged in spontaneous conversations, particularly

in face-to-face dialogues. To manage a conversation, Fox Tree (2010, p. 271) claims that DMs are one method of responding to an initial message. According to Fox Tree, DMs are inserted; other means include juxtapositions, changes, and concomitants (body language and facial expressions). Generally, DMs serve as a technique for controlling interactions.

DMs help the text receiver to realize coherence relations which hold various portions of the discourse together, according to Taboada (2006, p. 567). They aid in the organization and linking of the discourse or communication in general. Wei (2011, p. 3456) illustrates how DMs (or pragmatic markers) contribute to discourse coherence through interpersonal and textual functions. DMs use textual functions to connect diverse portions of the discourse, whereas interpersonal functions focus on the relationship between the speaker and the listener and smooth the interlocutor interaction.

Liu (2013, p. 153) states that DMs perform interpersonal and textual roles. The textual roles include introducing a new turn, marking transitions (topic shifting), initiating or terminating a digression, presenting a reason or explanation, introducing self-correcting, direct speech, floor holding, and fillers. The interpersonal roles are composed of conveying an attitude or reaction, showing the speaker's reluctance, and achieving sharing and cooperation between the speaker and the listener (saving face, expressing and checking comprehension, and verification).

Obviously, DMs play crucial roles in a conversation. It might result in pragmatic and semantic problems if the speaker fails to employ or misuses DMs (Polat, 2011, p. 3745). According to Wei (2011, p. 3457), to achieve English proficiency, learners have to be capable of using DMs as a component of their linguistic skillset. As a result, it is quite essential to consider DMs while training speaking skills.

Teaching English Speaking skills

According to Thornbury (2005), speaking requires more than the capacity to compose and pronounce grammatically accurate phrases. Speaking, in reality, demands the mastery of certain sub-skills such as the management of turn-taking and numerous types of knowledge namely phonology, sociocultural knowledge, pragmatic awareness, and the knowledge of discourse (Thornbury, 2005, p. 1 & 11). Furthermore, for Luoma (2004, p. ix), speaking is frequently accomplished in actual time, necessitating the speaker's capacity to organize, process, and produce the second or foreign language. The speaker, in particular, must be capable of processing and delivering speech with little hesitation as well as responding correctly to attain or sustain communicative goals and amicable connections. In terms of the assessment of speaking, Luoma (2004, p. ix) claims that face-to-face encounters in actual time are typically used to assess speaking capacity. The theory consolidates the significance of employing DMs in the skill of speaking. Consequently, teaching DMs at VLU's English-speaking classes appears to be unavoidable.

In relation to teaching English-speaking skills to Vietnamese students, Huynh (2020, p. 45) recommends that lecturers of English should pay more attention to teaching students the use of oral communication strategies when they cannot find the appropriate words during their conversations and provide them with useful idiomatic expressions and collocations to help them manage oral communication successfully. This is closely related to teaching DMs in speaking

courses so that the Vietnamese students at VLU, who are in similar circumstances, can better their speaking performance in English.

In two examples from daily face-to-face interactions, Jung (2008, p. 1-4) contrasts the usage of *but* by a learner from Korea, a non-native English speaker (NNS), and a native English speaker (NS). The researcher discovers that the NNS simply contrasts two opposing notions, with no meaning of interaction. However, instead of being a corrector, the NS utilizes *but* to express himself politely as a person who cares about his mate's feelings. The discoveries of Jung support Thornbury's theory, which is discussed below.

For Thornbury (2005, p. 27), second or foreign-language speaking is not the same as first-language speaking. Consequently, the author proposes a knowledge foundation that is necessary for non-native English speakers: fundamental grammar, a crucial vocabulary with 1000 high-frequency items, formulaic methods to implement popular acts of speech, a key list of multi-word units, a good command of pronunciation features, context factors and, particularly, several popular DMs for effective conversational English speakers as follows:

Discourse markers	Meanings or Functions
<i>Well</i>	This marker is a popular technique to start a turn and relate it to the one before it, frequently to denote the start of a contrast, such as a difference of opinion.
<i>Oh</i>	<i>Oh</i> is used to begin an utterance or to respond to the preceding speaker's remark, and it commonly conveys astonishment.
<i>You know, I mean</i>	These DMs are employed to draw the listener's shared knowledge (<i>you know</i>) and indicate that some form of explanation would follow (<i>I mean</i>) to gain and keep the attention on the speaker.
<i>And, or, but</i>	These three DMs are employed to link ideas <i>and</i> show continuity, <i>or</i> suggest an alternative, and mark a difference.
<i>Because, so</i>	These two DMs are utilized to imply that what comes after is the cause (<i>because</i>) or the outcome of what came before (<i>so</i>).
<i>Then</i>	<i>Then</i> is employed to indicate an inference on the basis of what has been spoken by the interlocutors.
<i>Now, right, anyway</i>	These three DMs indicate the start or the end of a speech section.

To make the knowledge base ready for application in face-to-face talks, it is imperative for English lecturers to increase the student's understanding of the goal knowledge, assist the students to integrate the desired knowledge with their current understanding, enhance the student's ability to prepare the knowledge for communication in real-time (Thornbury, 2005, p. 40). Furthermore, according to Fox Tree (2010, p. 273), DMs must be studied not only in the native tongue but also in the second language. As a result, DMs really need to be taught in speaking courses, to some extent.

Research Questions

The researcher intends to learn about VLU first-year English major students' perspectives on DMs and to investigate their usage of the markers in order to enhance their speaking skills and help them communicate successfully in English. Two research questions have been posed:

1. What are VLU first-year English major students' perceptions of employing discourse markers in English conversations?
2. How do the first-year English major students at VLU employ discourse markers in their

English conversations?

The researcher's actions regarding novel teaching methodologies or programs will be guided by the answers to the research questions (including DMs teaching in speaking lessons as an example). This research is noteworthy since it studies the usage of DMs in Vietnamese non-native English speakers' speech. The study will be beneficial to VLU students by teaching them how to utilize the markers successfully and helping them to improve their overall speaking skills. This also aids Vietnamese learners in being more conscious of DMs in the skill of speaking, facilitating their English communication across cultures.

Methods

Action research

For Hinchey (2008, p. 4), action research is a study undertaken by members of an organization or institute for a better insight into empirical concerns or challenges, to prepare steps to ameliorate the circumstances. This research belongs to the category of action research because it was conducted by a VLU inside lecturer to comprehend the students' empirical issue of failing to avoid extended pauses in conversation, which is linked to DMs, to organize and implement the actions of teaching to better their speaking ability.

Population and sample of the study

There are over 12 first-year English major classes at VLU every academic year, and they are the population. This research takes a class as the sample. Convenience sampling is the basis for choosing this class. The class is composed of 30 adult Vietnamese students who major in the English language. The students were surveyed in the second term of the first academic year 2020-2021. It took approximately three months to design this study and to collect and analyze the data (April 2021 – June 2021).

Tools of data collection

The tools of data collection used in this study are questionnaires and audio recordings.

Questionnaires

The questionnaires aim at getting VLU first-year English major students' perceptions of DMs in English conversations including 6 statements (S1 – S6) utilizing a Likert scale of five points. The statements focus on the most basic functions of DMs in oral communication such as showing the speaker's attitude or oiling the general communication wheels.

Audio recordings

This research tool is essential for addressing the second research question. According to Hinchey (2008, p. 84 & 85), audio recordings can capture specific phrases, emphases, or pauses. Consequently, audio recordings assist in clearly demonstrating the students' use of DMs in oral communication. 15 pairs of students were formed from 30 participants. Each pair had a short conversation within 2 or 3 minutes about "*Activities on your Tet holiday*". By using an audio recorder, 15 short conversations were recorded. Then all the conversations were transcribed for analysis.

Data collection procedures

Step 1: The researcher asked the participants for permission, and then the audio recordings were made.

Step 2: The participants were asked to answer the questionnaires completely with clear instructions.

Data analysis

The recordings were transcribed so that the participants' use of DMs can be analyzed. The transcriptions of the audio recordings were analyzed on the basis of Thornbury's suggested list of DMs in spoken language.

The questionnaires were processed and then analyzed by the researcher.

Findings and discussion

Findings

Research question 1: *What are VLU first-year English major students' perceptions of employing discourse markers in English conversations?*

Table 1. Results of the questionnaires

Perception Statements	Frequency (N=30)				
	<i>totally agree</i>	<i>agree</i>	<i>not certain</i>	<i>disagree</i>	<i>totally disagree</i>
1. DMs can show the speaker's attitude. (S1)	13	8	6	2	1
2. The sequencing of the speaker's ideas may be clearly illustrated by using DMs. (S2)	6	8	14	2	0
3. Without DMs in the discussion, the speaker-listener relationship could sound more distant. (S3)	4	13	6	3	4
4. Responding with DMs might have a facilitative and softening impact. (S4)	11	12	3	4	0
5. The conversation could be incoherent if DMs were not present. (S5)	8	13	6	2	1
6. DMs can oil the communication wheels in general. (S6)	13	10	4	2	1

It can be seen that most of the students (13/30, accounting for 43.3%) fully acknowledged the pivotal roles of DMs in showing the speaker's attitude and easing general communication.

Secondly, the majority of students agreed that if no DMs are used in the conversation, the relationship between the listener and the speaker could sound more distant (13/30 or 43.3%), that showing replies with DMs can lead to a facilitative and softening effect (12/30 students or 40%), and they also agreed that the conversation would be incoherent if there are no DMs (13/30 participants or 43.3%).

However, approximately half of the participants (14/30 or 46.6%) were not aware of the roles of DMs in displaying the sequence of the speaker's ideas.

The above findings reveal that the participants were aware of the fundamental functions of DMs in spoken language (showing the speaker's attitude, facilitating communication, or making the conversation coherent). Nevertheless, they lacked the knowledge of further roles of DMs in speaking, which made them fail to avoid long silence or redundant pauses in speech.

Research question 2: *How do the first-year English major students at VLU employ discourse markers in their English conversations?*

After transcribing the audio recordings of 15 short conversations, DMs that were used by the participants are listed as follows:

Table 2. DMs used by the participants

Conversations	DMs used
1	oh, then, and, so, because, you know
2	oh, and, so, because
3	so, because, and, or, oh
4	and, so, but, because
5	because, and
6	so, oh, and, or, because
7	because, and
8	so, because, and, but
9	because, so, or, but, and, then
10	and, because
11	so, because, and, well
12	and, because
13	so, and, oh, because
14	so, because, and, oh
15	and

The data shows that DMs used by the participants were different in the conversations. Some conversations appeared up to 5 or 6 DMs while several others used only 1 or 2 DMs. This means that the students' use of DMs in speech varied considerably. Nevertheless, all or nearly all of the conversations contained *and*, *because*. Table 3 gives a closer look at the frequency of the DMs used by the participants.

Table 3. Frequency of DMs used in 15 conversations

Discourse markers	Frequency (N=140)	Percentage
and	54	38.57%
because	44	31.42%
so	22	15.71%
oh	9	6.43%
but	4	2.86%
or	3	2.14%
then	2	1.43%
you know	1	0.71%
well	1	0.71%
I mean	0	0%
right	0	0%
now	0	0%
anyway	0	0%

Firstly, it is clear that almost all of the participants used **and** (54 out of 140 times in all the conversations) and **because** (44/140 times) in their short conversations to link the ideas and give the reasons. In other words, the first-year English major students at VLU can use these two DMs well when making conversations in English.

Secondly, most of the participants could use **so** (with a frequency rate of 15.71%) and **oh** (6.43%) to indicate the results and show their surprises. Particularly, **so** and **oh** were used in 10 and 6 conversations respectively.

Thirdly, **or**, **but** and **then** appeared in 2 or 3 talks (with the frequency rate of 2.14%, 2.86%, and 1.43% respectively), which means that the students were really limited in using DMs to indicate an option (**or**), to signal a contrast (**but**) and to mark an inference based on what interlocutors have mentioned (**then**).

However, **you know** and **well** were employed in one conversation only, and they were used only once. This proves that almost no participants could use **you know** for drawing the hearer's shared knowledge and **well** for initiating a turn or signaling the beginning of a contrast.

Finally, compared to the list of common DMs (Thornbury, 2005), the students did not employ these 4 DMs: **right**, **now**, **anyway**, **I mean**. This proves the fact that the students lacked the knowledge of using DMs to signal the beginning and closing of a turn (**right**, **now**, **anyway**) and to demonstrate clarification (**I mean**) in a conversation.

Discussion

Through the research findings, it can be concluded that VLU first-year English major students perceived the basic roles of employing DMs in English conversations (showing the speaker's attitude, facilitating the communication, or making the conversation coherent), but they would need much more knowledge of this language aspect for fluent English. It could be explained that formulaic expressions and set phrases are undervalued when teaching English in the Vietnamese context (Tran, 2021, p. 38). To bridge the students' knowledge gap of further functions of DMs in speaking, teaching DMs in speaking courses at VLU could help.

In addition, the results reveal that the participants could use **and**, **because**, **so**, and **oh** to a certain degree, but most of them could not employ other DMs, which limited their fluency and face-to-face communication. In fact, the participants showed a lot of redundant pauses and silence while making English conversations, and this made them feel so embarrassed at being the face-to-face conversations. In other words, the first-year English major students at VLU employed DMs restrictively in their English conversations. Due to the lack of DMs used, their conversations were not performed fluently and naturally, leading to the fact that they failed to avoid extended periods of silence in the conversations. This can be explained that native speakers or bilingual users employ DMs in communication with ease, but it is difficult for non-native speakers of English to use DMs (Pham, 2021, p. 65).

Last but not least, there have been no studies on Vietnamese learners of English related to using DMs in speech. However, a relevant study by Pham et al. (2022, p. 39) on factors influencing English-majored students' speaking performance showed that the highest rate was pressure for well-organized speech, particularly coherence and cohesion, spelling, grammar, and accuracy.

The result is similar to that of the present research in terms of students' lack of fluency in speech. Consequently, teaching DMs in speaking would contribute significantly to solutions to the problem because the need for teaching and learning to use DMs in speech as well as the roles of culture and society in language communication are recognized (Pham, 2021, p. 70).

Recommendations for teaching DMs in speaking courses

It is proposed that DMs training be included in English-speaking classes, particularly in conversations, at the university. Although the students were aware of the functions of DMs to some extent, their use of these DMs was apparently limited. Among 13 DMs in Thornbury's list, they used just two DMs well, and two other DMs were employed relatively well. As a result, most of the students spoke English with a lot of unnecessary hesitations or long pauses, which limited their oral communication. Therefore, teaching English speaking skills to Vietnamese students at VLU should change in some ways. Firstly, it is essential for lecturers at VLU to impart sociocultural knowledge, discourse knowledge, and pragmatic awareness to the students. This also applies to a curriculum and course syllabus modification. More importantly, DMs must be taught in speaking lessons by increasing the student's awareness of DMs, assisting them in understanding these markers' functions in conversational English, and developing their capacity to use DMs in face-to-face conversations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study aims at finding the answers to the research problems mentioned. When speaking English, the students fail to avoid extended periods of silence in a conversation, which hinders fluency and communication. At the same time, native-speaker lecturers sometimes difficult to be understood owing to redundancy (using DMs in speech). Native speakers of English employ DMs to reduce long silent periods or redundant pauses in speech and to manage their conversations for effective face-to-face communication, while students at VLU seldom use these in their English-speaking courses. Two research questions are raised to help find the answers.

As a result, for the first research question, the findings show that the participants fully recognized the significant functions of DMs in face-to-face interactions such as showing the speaker's attitude and oiling the general communication wheels. They also agreed that using DMs in the conversation could create a closer relationship between the speaker and the listener, a facilitative effect when showing responses, and a coherent conversation. However, a large number of them were not aware of the functions of DMs in sequencing the speaker's ideas (and many other roles). This can be concluded that due to the significant lack of DMs knowledge, the students could not find a way to avoid long silence or redundant pauses in speech, and it was sometimes difficult for them to understand native-speaker lecturers when DMs were used in native speech.

In terms of practice, for the second research question, the participants were able to use several DMs (*because, and, oh and so*), but they were almost unable to use other DMs (including *or, but, and then*), meaning that most of them were really restricted in the application of DMs in oral communication. Particularly, no or few participants could use *you know, I mean, well,*

right, now, anyway when holding their conversations. Consequently, necessary steps should be taken so that the students' speaking skills can be enhanced. To begin with, explicit instructions for DMs need to be done in speaking classes at VLU. Accordingly, the course syllabus should include new relevant contents, namely sociocultural knowledge, and discourse knowledge because this language aspect is closely related to culture and society. It is expected that the situations will be ameliorated after the DMs teaching which has been ignored in speaking courses at VLU.

This study took a small sample of 30 students in only one class, so the results cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, the findings can serve as the first stage to prepare students in similar circumstances for an action plan so that they are able to employ DMs for better English-speaking skills. It is recommended that further studies on how to instruct DMs in face-to-face conversations at VLU be done to improve the speaking skills of the students. These studies will form a scientific basis for adopting effective methods of teaching DMs which are suitable for VLU's students.

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Biodata


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Commitment to Core Values in Professional Development in ELT Contexts: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

commitment, core values, professional development, ELT

The need to continue professional development will increase in all professions. Recent studies have been conducted in an effort to emphasize the role of core values in guiding action steps in teachers' professional development plans. This paper focuses on the exploration of commitment to core values in professional development in the local ELT context in HCMC, Vietnam. The results were based on the qualitative data from the six interviewees who were the exemplars previously selected for their long service of more than five years to establish an insight into the faculty's core values. The findings are recommended as the basis for building standards of professional conduct in the local ELT context.

Continuing professional development in ELT

In order to enhance professional learning, researchers propose the creation of professional learning communities with the suggestion that the focus is not just on individuals' learning but on professional learning for collective knowledge and growth, i.e., professional learning communities help teachers enhance their own and their school's development (Stoll, 2010). The concept of professional learning was further developed by Hallinger & Liu (2016) as the continuous acquisition of new knowledge and enrichment of the teaching profession. In the teaching context and the corporate one alike, if teaching professionals have opportunities to learn to improve excellence and understanding of learners' needs, they may improve their teaching practice and help learners better. Lezotte (2005, p. 182) "concluded that school reform could be neither successful nor sustainable unless it was embraced by the teachers, administrators, and support staff that define the professional learning community." Sparks (2005, p. 156) asserts, "Successful professional learning communities clearly demonstrate what is possible when teachers learn and collaborate within their schools as part of their daily work." In the same manner, numerous researchers stress the importance of professional development activities, such as workshops, conferences, action research, team teaching, and so on, thanks to which schools learn by listening to teachers' ideas for innovations (Timperley, 2008; Vescio, 2008). Curwood (2015) added the modes of workshops, conferences, and sharing sessions for professional learning, which could be delivered face-to-face or virtually using conferencing technology.

There are also empirical studies in the context of ELT with similar conclusions about creating professional learning communities to enhance professional learning among teachers as the ultimate goal for the sustainability of a language school (Richards & Farrell, 2005; LaRocco,

2009; Murray, 2010; Lorimer, 2012; Donaldson, 2009). In practice, there have been many professional learning projects implemented in local ELT institutions in Vietnam, such as British Council, RMIT, ILA, British International School Hanoi, etc. to name some. Professional learning has stepped beyond the context of higher education to prove itself a meaningful practice at all academic levels from primary to high schools (Senge et al., 2018).

Roles of core values in professional development

Leading people has been causing headaches for leaders all over the world, especially in the new economy when people are increasingly demanding. Leaders in the flat world are aware of the human capital, which they find the most difficult to gain and the most difficult to sustain. Bolman (2008, p. 117) is right to say: "Our most important asset is our people." Reality shows that it is the way people are treated that really matters, not just the money. Many organizations nowadays, both business and educational, are more successful just because they know how to treat people so that they will contribute their best (Effron, 2003; Donald, 2007; Senyucel, 2009). Cases of such models consider teachers to be the most important and offer them the environment to work with pride (Bolman, 2011). After all, leaders' efforts are to make employees 'satisfied' and thus decide to stay. Successful employers, therefore, are those who know how to manage and lead employees by providing them with regular professional development activities (Seyfarth, 2001; Richards & Farrell, 2005; Timperley, 2008).

In most organizations, professional development is not easy, which could be attributed to cultural factors that may affect commitment (Senyucen, 2009). In the field of ELT, although teachers are aware that teaching is lifelong learning and they need opportunities to engage in the improvement of their practice over time, they would adhere to standards of professional conduct and, therefore, core values as long as they perceive embedded principles of professional learning (Lezotte, 2005; Timperley, 2008; Stoll, 2010). Tomlinson (2013) stipulated that professional conduct should be instilled through the core values that organically reflect the organization's vision and mission statements. Educational leaders in ELT are expected to know how to build professional learning environments in their schools through which core values are effectively communicated so that teachers are well-prepared to continue their professional development (Mann & Mohammad, 2016; Kouze, 2010).

Commitment to core values in professional development

Literature shows the alignment between professional development and core values. Leaders communicate core values in order to enhance perceptions of professional learning among their employees, who will eventually continue professional development (Elmore & Burney, 1997; Elmore, 2002). Since teaching is a knowledge profession, continuing professional development is even more critical. Life changes so fast that we lag behind if we stay the same (Sparks, 2001; Brandt, 2004; Senge, 2010). Thus, those who continue professional development will, and vice versa, demonstrate adherence to standards of professional conduct, which are commonly built in alignment with the core values of an institution (Mann & Mohammad, 2016; Ulferts, 2021). In the big picture, employees' commitment to core values positively affects their professional development plans and, eventually, their career advancement over the long term. Many researchers have already confirmed this alignment based on the universal fact that core values are, by nature, basic human needs. One of the classic presentations of the alignment between core values and human needs is Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs. In the new economy, Ashmos (2000) and Covey (2006) provide a conceptualization of core values based on human

needs with a focus on ‘*spirit*’. Covey (2006) visually presents core values in the whole-person development paradigm below (**Figure 1**):

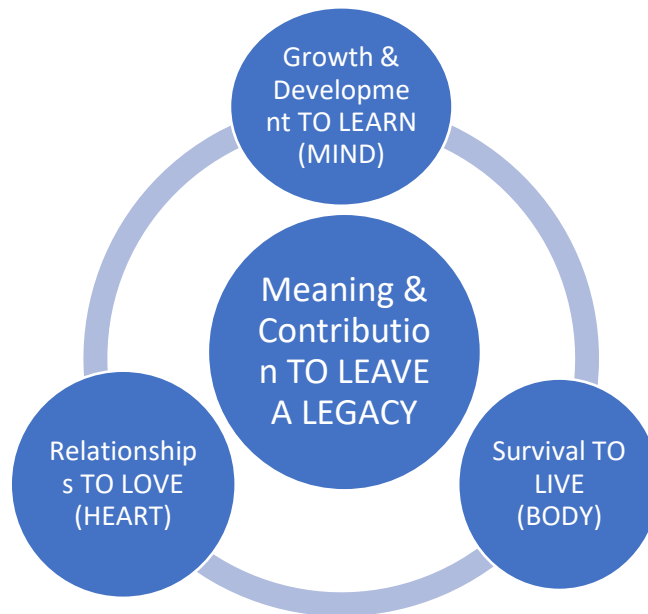


Figure 1: Whole-person development (Covey, 2006)

According to the paradigm, employees today need to have opportunities to use all four parts of their nature: body, mind, heart, and spirit. By placing spirit in the center means, Covey (2006) means that leaders today need to take more care of employees' needs and that when employees are paid fairly, treated kindly, and used creatively, they are able to develop as a whole person and willing to adhere to core values and thus contribute.

Russo (2010, p. 18) gives sound examples of such commitment in the corporate world: “This is one reason why Bill Gates still works, why Warren Buffett and Steve Jobs come to work. There is just no denying the importance of ego and no shame in acknowledging that it is the basic human need to want some strokes now and then.” In the context of schools, Bolman (2008, p.196) stresses the importance of commitment in terms of agreement and harmony, which the author states “are easier to achieve when everyone shares similar values, beliefs, and cultural ways”. Bolman (2011) introduces a symbolic view of schools with a focus on building institutional culture through inherited values, i.e., those in the schools whose behaviors are shaped by the culture are expected to make a commitment to the values in order to continue professional development and eventually grow in their career.

The conceptual framework

The conceptualization of commitment to core values in professional development can be visually presented in the diagram below (**Figure 2**):

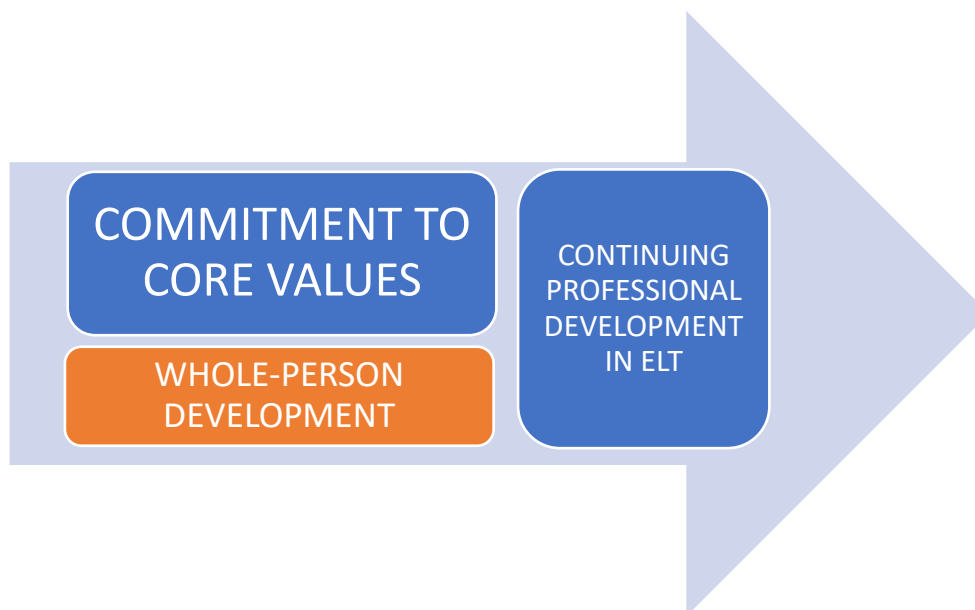


Figure 2: The conceptual framework

Aim of the study

There has been a myriad of studies in the field of professional development. However, there have not been enough empirical studies in the local context providing insights into the role of core values in professional development in ELT. This paper seeks to contribute to the literature on the issue, which aims to explore ELT professionals' commitment to core values in continuing professional development. To achieve the aim, the following research questions are to be answered:

1. How do ELT professionals perceive core values in professional development?
2. What are the outcomes in line with the core values that they expect to achieve?

Methodology

Research design

The study used a case study design and a qualitative approach. There was initially a survey to identify exemplars among teachers at the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, HCMC, Vietnam, who were expected to give their responses to the research questions. Besides this key question, the researcher asked some other questions to clarify some information.

Participants

The researcher sought to mitigate any bias by including teachers across the faculty, where the researcher has been working for more than 20 years, and thus not only has adequate knowledge of the faculty but also easier and official access to the participants. In this study, all the teachers of the faculty were invited to participate in a survey to confirm their perceptions of professional learning in the context of the faculty and accordingly identify the exemplars, which formally produced quantitative data as part of the case study evidence. All of the six interviewees selected have been staying at the faculty for more than five years.

Data analysis technique

The researcher applied the four steps suggested by Creswell (2003). In STEPS 1 & 2, all the responses were transcribed, and meaningful quotes were highlighted to obtain a general sense of the information from the interview and taken into properties. Step 3 involved packaging those properties into a small number of categories, each of which was labeled with a code. Step 4 was the most important one. The themes were carefully considered to be used to answer the research question in light of the reviewed literature as the output of the findings. Below is a sample tabulated analytical procedure:

Table 1: A sample tabulated analytical procedure

PROPERTIES	CATEGORIES	THEMES
I <u>have heard</u> of the core values of the faculty, but I <u>just don't remember now</u> .	Knowing the core values	Perception of core values in professional development
Core values <u>must be aligned with goals</u> set to achieve	Understanding the roles of the core values	
Understanding the core values helps proactively innovate teaching methods, which <u>eventually improve my expertise</u> .	Growth & Development (EXCELLENCE)	Expected learning outcomes in line with core values
Understanding the core values helps <u>confidently conduct research</u>	Research (FLEXIBILITY)	
Understanding the core values helps <u>get access to opportunities for career advancement</u> .	Survival (ASPIRATION)	
Understanding the core values helps <u>develop cooperation among colleagues</u>	Relationships (INTEGRITY)	
Understanding the core values helps <u>develop relationships with others</u>	Meaning & Contribution (RESPONSIBILITY)	

Discussion of the results and findings

Perception of core values in professional development

According to the properties obtained, it can be concluded that all the participants well perceived the five core values of the faculty, namely Excellence, Flexibility, Aspiration, Integrity and Responsibility (EFAIR). Specifically, *first*, all the teachers expressed their awareness of the core values on continuing professional development. *Second*, most of them properly understood the core values and their roles in professional development though some of them did not clearly remember the name of each. *Last but not least*, all the interviewees well perceived the core values in terms of what a teacher needs to or must adhere to and accordingly achieves professional development goals.

Expected learning outcomes in line with core values

The respondents all shared the learning outcomes one would expect to achieve when continuing professional development. Interestingly, the outcomes were well aligned with the core values of the faculty and the human needs presented in the whole-person development paradigm (Ashmos, 2000; Covey, 2006).

- Growth & Development – EXCELLENCE

Most interviewees, when asked about expected learning outcomes when making a commitment to the faculty's core values, were consistent with similar responses to the need for excellence in professional development. They clearly stated they chose to belong to the faculty and adhere to its core values because they needed to improve their knowledge. T1 (T stands for teacher hereinafter) clearly stated that “The core values are the guidelines for meeting learners’ needs”, accordingly, he added that the core values expect ELT professionals to develop habits of mind towards self-actualization, confirming Maslow’s conceptualization and the findings of contemporary researchers, such as Lezotte (2005), Donaldson (2009, Mann & Mohammad (2016) and so on. In the same manner, T2 asserted the importance of properly understanding the core values in professional development, which encourages English language teachers to proactively improve their knowledge and teaching methods.

- Research – FLEXIBILITY

The qualitative data shows that most interviewees are aware of the importance of being flexible in order to gain confidence in conducting research. T2 and T5 confessed they gained such confidence thanks to attending regular research workshops held by the faculty. T5 added that “It was at such workshops that I had exposure to and gradually perceived the Faculty's core values, one of which I like most is flexibility”. Obviously, this professional development activity is apparently an effective one in communicating the core values and raising teachers’ awareness of flexibility so as to enhance their research capacity, which stresses the importance of teachers’ engagement in order to be open to change for improvements, as stated in literature (Sparks, 2001; Lorimer, 2012; Senge, 2010). Furthermore, all the interviewees exhibited their pride of owning research publications, both nationally and internationally. T5 & T6 mentioned the Faculty's International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICELT) as a forum for exposure to the core values and at the same time, presenting research achievements.

- Survival – ASPIRATION

The results from the responses to this core value are quite significant. Individual and collective success is always a topical issue to discuss among experts, educational leaders and teachers when it comes to the critical concept of survival (Barendsen, 2006; Betts, 2009; Senge, 2010). When asked about the expected learning outcomes in line with this core value, T4 addressed, “When an individual continues professional development, he or she may inspire others”. T5 gave a clearer description that specifies, “Individual achievements contribute to collective success and collective success is attributed to individual achievements”. T1 and T2 were even more serious, stating that adherence to the core values must be mandatory so that the faculty could witness the participation of all the faculty's teachers in professional development for the sake of all.

- Relationships – INTEGRITY

The faculty teachers participating in this study were interested in this question. T6 as a young teacher, even thought integrity is the most important core value, which was easy to understand when the teacher shared he had just completed his thesis. According to most interviewees, one

needs to develop relationships with others on the journey to become an ELT professional, especially when completing important tasks which require his or her integrity so as to have respect for and learn good things from others and on the other hand, say no to bad things. T2 added integrity is then based on agreement and harmony for mutual learning and this opinion is clearly consistent with Bolman (2008), Betof (2009), Donaldson (2009), and Cohen (2010) when discussing the roles of leaders as teachers. Also, according to T2, The Faculty's professional development activities, such as Research Camp, help build relationships and therefore develop integrity among teachers when they better understand each other and become more open to criticisms that they believe are constructive. T6 puts it this way: "When teachers adhere to the Faculty's core values, they are aware of integrity enough to know what is right and what is wrong in order to adjust their professional conduct; however, they also try their best to keep relationships".

- **Meaning & Contribution – RESPONSIBILITY**

Commitment to core values is ultimately expected to result in social responsibility as practiced in most parts of the world, both in businesses and educational institutions (Ashmos, 2000; Covey, 2006; Bolman, 2011; Ulferts, 2021). The study's faculty's teachers were no exception since they all emphasized the core value of responsibility and surprisingly considered this an outcome. According to the interviewees, that teachers can contribute to society is their honor. T3, though she was a young teacher, had been working in social work since she was a student, and she had already realized the role of responsibility. She simply thought students' achievements after graduation were truly an outcome for teachers. T5 also agreed with the idea by stating, "the faculty's teachers contribute a lot to the country's human resources, many of whom are successful people and even decision-makers in the government, which is our happiness deep from the heart. In return, these successful alumni return to contribute to the development of the faculty and, of course, that of teachers and, ultimately students".

The qualitative results demonstrate the positive fact that EF faculty members, who have spent a significant period of service at the unit, are not just clear about the message of the five core values but also already developed, to a certain extent, awareness of how to put them into practice. This is shown in the array of professional development activities and programs they have joined, and their personal career enrichment has not ever ceased.

Conclusion

Whole-person development has been the quest among employees all over the world. In the field of ELT as a knowledge profession, such development is obvious. Continuing professional development is not traditionally focused on filling one's mind with more knowledge, but innovative ELT professionals are more aware of developing other abilities, as found in alignment with the core values of the Faculty of English Linguistics & Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNUHCM, Vietnam respectively: research, survival, relationships, and contribution. The core values of the faculty would offer ELT professionals guidance as to what is essential for their natural professional development in their working environment rather than being told what is good for them and what to do, as Timperley (2008) confirmed. More than that, the ELT teachers are well aware of how to build their professional development pathway to their own aspiration that fits their own competence, which is in line with Avidov-Ungar's (2016) research findings.

Recommendations

The findings recommend the role of the faculty's leaders in effectively communicating the core values to enhance teachers' perceptions of the core values so that they have the guidelines and motivation for their continuing professional development despite the unfavorable circumstances they may encounter. The affirmation that the core values of a particular organization shall not be generalized across many has been stated in Gokce (2021). This research study can also serve as a reference for leaders of the faculty in the future or even those of other organizations, including businesses. Furthermore, the research suggests further study with a deeper insight into the issue by comparing different faculties in different countries to understand cultural reasons that affect teachers' commitment to embracing the core values.

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An analysis of the modulation system in Vietnamese from a systemic functional perspective and some suggestions for legal translation

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

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Systemic Functional Grammar (hereinafter referred to as SFG) is a linguistic area that has attracted numerous attention from linguistic scholars in Vietnam and worldwide. In this paper, we focus on Modulation analysis in Vietnamese, including Obligation and Inclination, from a Systemic Functional perspective. The qualitative research methodology will be applied to explore the aspects of Modulation in Vietnamese. The descriptive language method is mainly employed in this article to investigate the Modulation system in Vietnamese from the SFG viewpoint. The data for the investigation of Vietnamese Modulation was collected from formal online newspapers in Vietnamese. The data for the recommendation for legal translation was the Singapore Companies Act. The results of the study showed that the Modulation system in Vietnamese is composed of two categories: Obligation and Inclination. Regarding Obligation, it consists of four subcategories: necessity, Obligation, permission, and expectation. As for inclination, it includes Intention and Willingness. Then the results of the study will be employed to make some suggestions for legal translation in Viet Nam context.

Introduction

Modality is an aspect of linguistics that has been receiving various concerns among domestic and international scholars. However, the research on Modality is quite complex because each language has its own Modality systems (T. T. H. Nguyen, 2006). Additionally, in one language, each linguist has their own research approaches to Modality. In Vietnam, studies on Modality have been conducted with numerous approaches, from traditional grammar to functional ones. However, an approach to Modality from Systemic Functional Grammar is still new and thus has a lot of gaps.

As mentioned above, an application of the Modulation system to analyze Vietnamese still needs to be more extensive for the differences between the two languages. Additionally, the analysis of legal discourse and then making some recommendations of English and Vietnamese translation has been quite completely new, so it is meaningful to investigate several aspects of SFG as well as its application in translation (B. V. Nguyen & Ngo, 2021; X.

M. Nguyen, 2022; Pham, 2021; Tran, 2022)

In the scope of this paper, we discussed some aspects of the Vietnamese Modulation system. Specifically, in this article, from the Systemic Functional perspective, facets of the Modulation system in Vietnamese as for concept, means of realization, and semantic features are going to be analyzed. Then, the results were applied to make some recommendations for legal translation. The study is expected to be helpful for scholars who are interested in SFG in general and Modulation in particular. Additionally, the study is also useful for legal translators in the specialized field in which the differences in language, culture, society, and legal systems lead to challenges in interpretation.

In the introduction, It is necessary to add the phenomenon, to make the argument clearer and stronger.

Literature review

In the world, in terms of Modality, linguists have approached it in various ways, from traditional grammar to functional one. But in Vietnam, most of the studies have approached Modality from traditional grammar by Vietnamese typical linguistic authors such as Hoang Phe, Dinh Van Duc, Le Dong, and Nguyen Van Hiep in the studies about Vietnamese (Nguyễn, 2002). In terms of functional grammar, there are works by Cao Xuan Hao. Regarding systemic functional grammar, Modality has been approached by Hoang Van Van in his study about interpersonal analysis of a Vietnamese middle school science textbook (Van Van, 2020). Therefore, it can be seen that Modality analysis in Vietnamese is a field that is quite new in Vietnam. For that reason, we chose to explore facets of Modality from a systemic functional perspective and then applied this analysis in making suggestions for legal translation. The novel aspects of this research are to explore the facets of the Modulation system in Vietnamese. More importantly, some suggestions for legal translation have been made thanks to the research's analyzed results (Manfredi, 2014; Olsen, Lorz, & Stein, 2009; Van Van, 2006). Therefore, it is expected to make contributions to comprehend and translate English legal texts, which is essential to approach a foreign legal system in English (Manfredi, 2014; Olsen et al., 2009; Simonnæs & Kristiansen, 2019).

Theoretical framework

Because of the limitation of the number of pages in this paper, we just made an overview in terms of Modality in SFG and gave more details for Modulation. According to Halliday (1998), language is composed of three meta-functions, and Modality is a component of the interpersonal function (Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, 1998; M.A.K Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Matthiessen (2013) demonstrated that interpersonal meaning is a linguistic resource expressing interaction, social role, and the relationship between the speaker or writer and listener or receiver (Matthiessen, 2013). In addition, Thompson (2013) adds that interpersonal meaning is not only the relationship or interaction between the speaker and the listener, but it also reveals the participants' views of the world (Thompson, 1996). The interpersonal meaning is realized through the system of Mood, Modality, and Person system. However, in this article, we just focus on the Modulation analysis in Vietnamese, which is a

component of the Modality system, in order to make some suggestions for legal translation. The Modality system might be summarized in Figure 1 below:

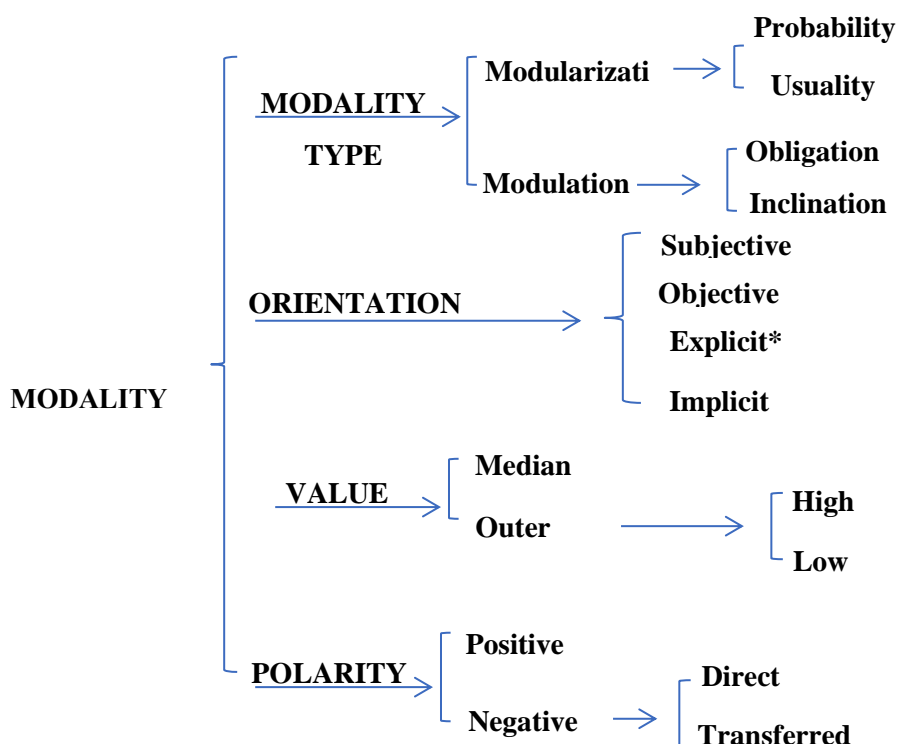


Figure 1. System network of MODALITY (M.A.K Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004)

In the SFG, Modality is classified into Modularization and Modulation. The modulation system reflects the speaker's level of confidence in the eventual success of the exchange in terms of the degree of **Obligation** as *being allowed to, be supposed to, be requested to, need, should, must* in command and **inclination** such as *willing to, anxious to, determined to, will, will not, may,...* in an offer (M.A.K Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 147). The realization of Modulation can be summarized in the below table:

Table 1. Modulation realization

Types of intermediacy		Typical realization	Example
Modulation	Obligation (allowed /supposed /required)	- Finite modal operator - Passive verb Predicator	<i>You must be patient!</i> <i>You're required to be patient!</i>
	Inclination (willing /keen /determined)	- Finite modal operator - Adjective Predicator	<i>I must win!</i> <i>I'm determined to win!</i>

Source: (M.A.K Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004)

The purpose of the study

The study used a qualitative approach and applied the Modulation analysis from the Systemic Functional Grammar perspective by Halliday in order to explore two main issues:

- (1) The linguistic features of the Modulation system in Vietnamese.
- (2) Application of Modulation analysis in translating legal English.

Research methodology and data

In terms of the research methodology, a qualitative approach was employed to investigate the characteristics of the Modulation system in Vietnamese. The language description research methodology has been applied to investigate Vietnamese's linguistic features in Modulation analysis (Iimura, 2021). Specifically, based on Modulation in English in studies by Halliday and other linguistic scholars who are keen on Systemic functional linguistics, we examined features of the Modulation system in Vietnamese. This analysis has taken into consideration factors related to Vietnamese culture, language context, cultural and social context, as well as language typology (Hongying, 2020). The method of describing language is the main research method we use in this study. Specifically, in this article, the linguistic features of discourse will be described at the sentence level to find out the characteristics of the modulation system in Vietnamese on the basis of analyzing the elements of Mood, Modality, and Person. After the interpersonal metafunctional features are described, we will propose some related translations (Hoang, 2005, 2012, 2018, 2020).

Regarding data for Vietnamese Modulation analysis, we collected from formal online newspapers such as Tuoi Tre, Thanh Nien, and Phap Luat. Then the data would be collected for analysis as well as evidence for the authors' perspectives. The data for suggestions of legal translation is the Singapore Companies Act, which was first enacted on December 29, 1967, and has been revised over the years. We use the last revised version dated 30/07/2020 as amended by Act No. 40 (Amended by Act 40 of 2018) and the up-to-date consolidated text on the Singapore government website (<https://sso.agc.gov.sg/Act/>).

Results and discussion

Obligation in SFG

From the SFG's theoretical framework associated with the features of the Modality system in language, we described the Modulation system in Vietnamese in spite of the fact that the features of the functional system in each language are disparate. They depend on language typology, linguistic features, and even the culture, which significantly influence on the functional systems of language (Iimura, 2021, p. 30). For that reason, we based on the linguistic features of the Modulation system established by Halliday in the SFG theoretical framework in order to describe this system in Vietnamese, but we have taken into consideration these factors such as language typology and Vietnamese culture. The key aspect of SFG is to focus on the functions of language mainly, so the Modulation system in Vietnamese has been described based on the functions of language in Vietnamese.

As mentioned above, Inclination and Obligation are two subcategories of Modulation. In

English, they can be realized in one of two ways: by finite modal operators or by expanding the Predicate (in the passive form or by an adjective) (M.A.K Halliday, 1994, p. 181). Within the scope of this article, we will conduct a survey of the commands in Vietnamese that perform two basic functions of the language “*invite*” and “*ask for*” to describe the Modulation in the Modality system. Specifically, in this paper, we discussed (1) the definitions of Obligation and Inclination in Vietnamese, (2) the categories of Obligation and Inclination, (3) the realization of Obligation and Inclination in Vietnamese.

Obligation in Vietnamese

(i) The subcategories and realization

First of all, the definition of Obligation in Modulation has been discussed on the SFG level. It can be said that it is impossible to define the concept of Obligation based on dictionaries. The reason is that Obligation is the linguistic term in Halliday's systemic functional theory paradigm. Therefore, it must be understood from the SFG perspective. Basically, Obligations in the SFG demand goods and services in a language that is not polarized. Accordingly, the Obligations in the propositions must be performed by using intermediate modes of expression between two polarities: prescribing and proscribing. In other words, Obligation in the Modality system might be the modes of expression in which an utterance can require the receiver of the utterance to perform such a certain action. This definition is a base from which the subcategories of obligations are identified and explored.

In Vietnamese, a demanding clause that requires the addressee to perform such a specific action can be realized in several ways. Based on the surveyed data, Obligations can be realized by one of four methods: necessity, Obligation, permission, and expectation. When the addresser expresses the necessity, Obligation, or permission from the addressee, this means that the speaker gives an offer that makes the addressee do an action called the exchange of goods and services. As for permission, it might be a bit difficult to explain the reason why this category belongs in the system of obligations in Modulation. The permission is understood as a bidirectional relationship “*demand – give*”. The requesting party needs to obtain the giver's permission to perform the action. This means that the demanding party has a certain obligation to comply with the action. This is the reason for why Iimura (2021) included the permission in the Modulation system in Japanese (Iimura, 2021). This phenomenon tends to be quite similar in Vietnamese. Therefore, it can be concluded that Obligations in the Vietnamese Modulation system include four basic subcategories: Necessity, Obligation, Permission, and Expectation. Obligations in Vietnamese Modulation can be summarized according to Table 3 below.

Table 2. Meaning of Obligations in Vietnamese Modulation

Necessity	Obligation
Spokesperson needs something done (action)	The receiver of utterances must take action because of the requirements of laws, rules, or social norms.
Permission	Expectation
The spokesperson authorizes the receiver to take action, and the person receiving the utterance will not be able to take action without permission.	Expect someone to take action

In terms of ways of realization of Obligation in Vietnamese, according to the research by Bui (2004), Modality in Vietnamese is expressed in a variety of ways, including intonation, modal verbs, idioms, particles (auxiliaries), modal adverbs, interjections, and structures, sentence structure, etc., (Bui, 2004). These study results have been proved in previous studies by Vietnamese linguistic researchers. These findings are based on which the Modulation system in Vietnamese has been discussed in this article.

As mentioned in a theoretical framework, we have applied SFG as the basis for describing Vietnamese grammar. According to SFG, Modality is realized through 'verbs' by one of two methods: finite modal operator and predicate expansion (verb). Thus, in this paper, the Modulation realization in Vietnamese has been mainly described through 'verbs'. The ignorance of other means, such as idioms, particles, adverbs, interjections, etc., is a limitation when investigating the Modality system in Vietnamese clauses. However, these means will be described in the SFG on a different level and may function differently. Therefore, the article only focuses on describing the Modulation system in Vietnamese based on SFG but mainly focuses on two methods: finite modal operator and predicate expansion.

According to the study by Bui (2004), modal verbs play an important role in performing modal functions in a Vietnamese clause. Basing on the previous studies by Vietnamese linguistic authors such as Diep Quang Ban (Diep, 1996), Nguyen Kim Than, Cao Xuan Hao (Cao, 1991), Dao Van Hung (Dao, 2000), it is stated that the means of realizing the Modulation function in Vietnamese have only one method: modal verbs, which are considered equivalent to the finite verbs in English. These modal verbs are preceded by one or more verbs that perform the following predicate function. The below table presents the means of realizing Obligation in Vietnamese.

Table 3. Means of realizing Obligations in Vietnamese

<i>The function of the utterance</i>	<i>Obligation</i>	<i>The method of realization</i>
Demand (Imperative clause)	Necessity	cần (need), nên (should),...
	Obligation	phải, cần phải, buộc phải (must), bảo (ask), đề nghị (suggest), yêu cầu (require)...
	Permission	Có thể (may, might), được, được phép (be allowed to),...
	Expectation	Hy vọng (hope), mong mỏi, chờ đợi (expect),...*

As for groups of verbs that belong to the subcategory of expectation, they are not considered as modal verbs by traditional Vietnamese linguists. Diep (1996) demonstrated that modal verbs are ones that are not independent in normal conditions and do not have full lexical meaning. However, the verbs in the subcategory of expectation are lexical words with full lexical meaning and do not need to be followed by another word to add meaning (Diep, 1996, pp. 65-68). Nevertheless, from our personal perspective, these words perform the function of Modulation realization. The reason is that these words obviously function in the roles of the exchange of goods and services in imperative clauses in an utterance.

These below sentences are examples for this case:

Ex1: *HLV Gareth Southgate của tuyển Anh **mong muốn** CĐV đừng la ó khi tuyển Ý hát quốc ca trong trận chung kết Euro 2020 sắp tới.* (The England coach - Gareth Southgate wants fans not to boo when Italy sings the national anthem in the upcoming Euro 2020 final.) (Source: Online Phap Luat Newspaper dated 11/7/2021)

Ex2: ***Mong sao** đèn khu cách ly bớt sáng thêm mỗi đêm.* (Hope that the lights in the isolation area are less bright every night. (Source: Online Phap Luat Newspaper dated 27/7/2021)

Ex3: *Doanh nghiệp **mong** chính sách thiết thực, hiệu quả mùa COVID-19.* (Businesses expect practical and effective policies during the COVID-19 season.) (Source: Online Phap Luat Newspaper dated 05/7/2021)

It can be clearly seen that words, such as *mong*, *mong Sao*, *mong muốn* in the above examples function as demands in imperative clauses that require specific objects (not) to perform certain actions or happen, such as not to boo, to be less bright or to be practical and effective.

From the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is only one means of the realization of Modulation in Vietnamese: by verbs that perform a quite similar function with the finite modal operators that SFG proposes.

(ii) Illustrative examples

Necessity

Ex4: “Tôi không thể không làm. Chúa nói với tôi: ‘Con là người phù hợp và con **cần** làm điều này’” - bà Debby nói với AP. (Source: “New wife donates kidney to save husband's ex-wife's life” - Tuổi Trẻ Online June 6, 2021)

“I couldn't help but do it. God said to me, 'You're the right person, and you **need** to do this,’” Debby told AP.

Obligatory

Ex5: “Đến 0h40, trạm thu phí buộc phải xả trạm. Đến 2h13 trạm thu phí trở lại nhưng đến 3h25 **buộc phải** xả trạm tiếp.” (Source: “Ninh Xuan BOT was forced to discharge the station after a few hours of toll collection)

“At 0:40, the toll station was forced to discharge the station. At 2:13 a.m. the toll station returned, but at 3:25 a.m., it **was forced** to discharge the station again.”

Permission

Ex6: *Theo các nhà bán lẻ, công việc ưu tiên hiện nay là tập trung xử lý các đơn hàng online, vốn bị ùn ứ trong những ngày trước đó do hàng hóa ở những điểm bán phong tỏa cũng không được vận chuyển ra ngoài.* (Source: “Ho Chi Minh City lifted the blockade for many essential sales points” - Tuổi Trẻ Online on July 2, 2021)

“According to retailers, the current priority is to focus on processing online orders, which were congested in the previous days because goods at blocked sales points were also not shipped out.”

Expectation

Ex7: *“Tết Đoan ngọ: Đơn giản, tiết kiệm, hạn chế đông người, **mong** diệt COVID.”* (Source: Tuổi Trẻ Online on June 14, 2021)

*“The Dragon Boat Festival: Simple, thrifty, limiting crowds, **hoping** to kill COVID.”*

Inclination in Vietnamese

(i) The subcategories of inclination and the means of realization

The inclination is to express the intention or willingness of the speaker to perform the action. The function of Inclination expression is to "offer" goods and services in utterances in clauses. In human communication activities, speakers show their inclination, which means showing what they want to do or tend to do. According to the results of previous studies and our survey of data on Vietnamese newspapers, it can be seen that the semantic scope of propensity modulation in Vietnamese will manifest through two subcategories: intention and willingness. The semantic domain of the subcategory of Modulation in Vietnamese can be summarized in Table 5 below.

Table 4. Meanings of Inclination in Vietnamese Modulation

Willingness	Intention
Willingness to take action	Proposed plan, intention to take action

The intention is a subcategory of the inclination to realize the speaker's "receiving" speech function when he or she makes a tentative plan to perform an action. Correspondingly, willingness is a subcategory of the inclination to realize the speech function of a speaker's "receiving" when he or she presents a willingness to perform an action in exchange for goods - services. Thus, it can be seen that there are two subtypes of inclination in the Vietnamese Modulation system: intention and plan. Similar to Obligation, Inclination is also realized by a sole form of modal verbs, which is finite modal operators, which are called modal verbs in traditional Vietnamese linguists. However, according to Ban (1996), there are still some words that are not completely modal verbs, such as chuẩn bị (prepare). The means of realizing inclination can be basically systematized in Table 6 below:

Table 5. Means of realizing the Inclination in Vietnamese

The function of the utterance	Inclination	Modal verbs to realize the inclination
Offer to receive (imperative clauses)	Intention (plan)	định, dự định, sắp sửa, chuẩn bị,...
	Willingness	dám, buồn, nỡ, muốn,...

(ii) Illustrative examples

Intention

Ex8: “Trong trường hợp này, Ban Tổ chức đang xem xét rút thăm để xác định xem ai sẽ được phép tới sân theo dõi trực tiếp.” (Source: “2020 Tokyo Olympics: No more than 10,000 spectators can enter the field” - Tuổi Trẻ Online on June 2, 2021)

“In this case, the Organizing Committee is reviewing the draw to determine who will be allowed to come to the field to watch live.”

Willingness

Ex9: “Đó là cuộc gặp gỡ với những người đồng đội, sẵn sàng bỏ qua lợi ích cá nhân để giúp đỡ người gặp nạn.” (Source: “Listening to a technology driver telling a job story” – Thanh Niên Online on July 2, 2021)

“It’s a meeting with teammates willing to put aside personal interests to help those in need.”

The modulation system in Vietnamese can be summarized in the following Figure 2.

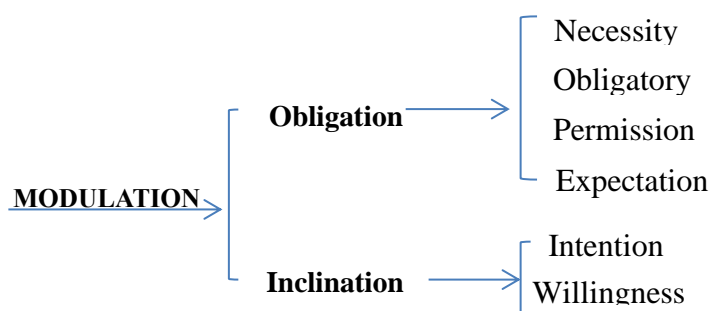


Figure 2. Modulation system in Vietnamese

Some suggestions of English – Vietnamese legal translation

The factor that contributes to the success of translation from the source language to the target one is to determine the equivalence. The determination of equivalence is different, and it depends on the theoretical framework. In legal translation, this is extremely essential. The reason is that the translation version can serve as a basis for determining the rights and obligations of the entities in legal relations. National or international authorized organizations tend to rely on the translated versions in order to make final decisions on resolving some

disputes. For that reason, the determination of equivalence is essential in legal translation.

No matter what the theoretical framework applied to determine the equivalence in translation, the essential element that should be taken into consideration in translation is “*the functions of language*”. In other words, a translation should be based on the functions of language, not forms or semantic meanings of vocabulary. Modulation plays such an important role in legal discourse, especially in contracts or legal documents regarding the rights and duties of related entities. The forms of Modulation will determine the rights and obligations of the parties in the implementation and settlement of disputes related to these types of discourse.

Therefore, the function of language is the factor that translators should be highly aware of in translation. When it comes to translating from English to Vietnamese or vice versa, the components of the Modulation system should be highlighted in order to determine the relevance and the degree of relevance. The recognition of relevant forms of two languages in terms of functions might contribute to the success of the complete translated versions. For example, in the Singapore Companies Act, *Shall* may be an Obligation or an Inclination. In case *Shall* is an Inclination and express the meaning of commitment, *Shall* can be translated into *cam kết*.

For example:

Ex10: *The Authority shall be responsible for the administration of this Act, subject to the general or special directions of the Minister* (Clause 1, Article 8). Translation: *Cơ quan nhà nước có thẩm quyền cam kết chịu trách nhiệm quản lý Đạo luật này, theo chỉ đạo chung hoặc đặc biệt của Bộ* (Khoản 1, Điều 8)

Comparison of the functions of Modulation to determine translation equivalence

The translators' perception of pertinence in terms of a functional level is essential, so the methodology of the determination of relevance in translation from a functional perspective is really important. To do that, the translator needs to determine the functions of the language in both the target language and the source language. However, it is unlikely that there is complete functional equivalence. For that reason, the level of relevance mentioned in this paper is the most likely relevant case by case.

In the scope of this article, we do not aim to give suggestions for all components of the modulation system; we just give some recommendations. The evaluation of the function of language is up to the translator. Specifically, the translator needs to determine the function of an element of Modulation in the target and source languages in advance when performing a legal translation. When the translator has selected the functional equivalence, he should choose the vocabulary in the target language to replace the source language.

This feature can be demonstrated more clearly by an example in the Singapore Companies Act. Through a semantic investigation of the word “*shall*” in the Act, it can be seen that *Shall* can be used for various meanings. Not only does it refer to a sense of Obligation, *Shall* can be also interpreted as Must, May, Will (future meaning), or present simple tense. Thus, these various meanings should be taken into consideration in translation. Specifically, when *Shall* demonstrates duty or Obligation, it can be translated into *phải, có trách nhiệm, có nghĩa vụ* in

Vietnamese.

For example:

Ex11: *Upon the application of a company and payment of the prescribed fee, the Registrar shall issue to the company a certificate of confirmation of incorporation.* (Clause 9, Article 17) can be translated into: *Sau khi hoàn tất thủ tục đăng ký thành lập công ty và thanh toán phí theo quy định, Cơ quan đăng ký phải / có nghĩa vụ / có trách nhiệm cấp cho công ty giấy chứng nhận đăng kí kinh doanh.*

The relevance in the context of culture and the context of a situation

It seems to be fundamental for the translator to recognize the function of language and determine functional equivalence. More importantly, the context of a culture of genres of discourse should be highly taken into consideration. Genre and Register are two contexts that strongly govern language usage. The language representation will be different when located in the contexts of a situation (register) and the context of culture (genre). Therefore, the translator also needs to investigate and comprehend these contexts when choosing vocabulary during language translation.

During the translation process, the translator tends to translate the discourse as a whole rather than just a few sentences in a discourse. Thus, the context of the situation will directly affect the translator; as a result, the translator seems to automatically adjust the language of the translation to suit the context of the situation. However, the cultural context needs to be given more attention in the language translation process. The reason is that the cultural context often does not directly and strongly influence the use of language in discourse in comparison with the context of the situation. Thus, it is necessary for the translator to be aware of this and to pay attention in the process of making choices in the target text. The below sentence is a typical example that indicates the influence of cultural context and situational context on language usage.

Ex12: *“A director of a company who makes a solvency statement without having reasonable grounds for the opinions expressed in it shall be guilty of an offense and SHALL be liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$100,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 3 years or to both. (Point 6, Article 7A, the Singapore Companies Act).*

The Registrar SHALL keep a record whenever the electronic transaction system or the registers are altered under subsection (2).”

The realization of the Modulation in these two examples is the finite modal operator "SHALL". In Vietnamese, when translating SHALL, we will have a variety of different options: sẽ (will), có nghĩa vụ (be obliged to), phải / cần phải / buộc phải (must), etc. However, if we take a look at the context in Vietnamese legal discourses, we can see that only some meanings are used to express obligations in these texts. We propose to translate the above two examples into Vietnamese as follows:

Ex12: *“Giám đốc của một công ty đưa ra tuyên bố về khả năng thanh toán mà không có căn cứ hợp lý cho các ý kiến được trình bày trong đó sẽ bị phạm tội và PHẢI bị kết án*

với mức phạt tiền không quá 100.000 đô la hoặc bị phạt tù có thời hạn không quá 3 năm hoặc cả hai. (Điểm 6, Điều 7A, Đạo luật Công ty Singapore).

Cơ quan đăng ký kinh doanh CÓ NGHĨA VỤ lưu hồ sơ bất cứ khi nào hệ thống giao dịch điện tử hoặc sổ đăng ký được thay đổi theo tiểu mục (2).”

Conclusion

This article has contributed to introducing and explaining a small aspect of the interpersonal meta-function, which is the Modulation system in the Vietnamese. The Modulation system in Vietnamese is composed of two subcategories: Inclination and Obligation. The obligation is divided into four small subcategories: necessity, Obligation, permission, and expectation. Inclination consists of two small subcategories: Intention and Willingness. Obligation and inclination are both realized by finite modal operators, most of which are quite similar to modal verbs in traditional Vietnamese grammar.

As mentioned above, although SFG has been studied for many years in Vietnam, the number of research is still quite modest in comparison with traditional grammar due to its complexity. Therefore, when we study the Modulation system in Vietnamese, we still have many suspicions and unsatisfactory points of view. This article might still be unable to solve all the issues of the Modulation system in Vietnamese, which is an isolated language typology. Through this article, we hope that there will be more scholars and researchers interested in Modality in Vietnamese from the SFG perspective.

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