The Proceedings of the International Virtual Conference 2021: Technologies and Language Education

School of Foreign Languages, UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

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ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL VIRTUAL CONFERENCE 2021 ON TECHNOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE EDUCATION

School of Foreign Languages, UEH University, successfully organised the International Virtual Conference on 15th November, 2021.

This conference was a platform for academicians, researchers, managers, and students to share their research, theoretical perspectives, and practices in the field of applied linguistics and language education. Abstracts and full papers were subject to double-blind peer review based on originality, novelty, relevance, presentation, and accuracy. The main theme for 2021 was Technologies and Language Education, which covered a wide range of topics including:

1. Blended learning
2. Remote emergency teaching and learning due to Covid-19
3. Synchronous and asynchronous language teaching and learning
4. Digital L2 assessment
5. Applying multimedia resources in language teaching and learning
6. Social networks as a multilingual context
7. Technology as a mediating tool in language learning

The proceedings of the conference include 14 selected papers submitted by authors from different countries and regions. The contributed papers went through a rigorous review process in which they were reviewed by experts who are qualified in the field of Technologies and Language Education. The proceedings aim to provide readers with the recent research results and findings in the related field.

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ACTION RESEARCH: A COMPARISON BETWEEN ONLINE AND OFFLINE GENERAL ENGLISH CLASSES

Ms. NGUYEN THI HANH

UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

This action research was conducted in an online General English class and an offline General English class. The students in the two classes had the same English level and studied the same module. The purpose of this research was to get findings to improve teaching General English classes both online and offline. This action research used the experimental method and the data collected and analysed were quantitative data. The first class was taught offline and tested offline. The second class was taught online and tested offline. The test of the two classes had the same content and consisted of four parts: Vocabulary & Grammar, Listening, Speaking, and Reading. The data of the test results of the online class were analysed and compared to those of the offline class. The findings showed that the offline class had better test scores in Listening and Reading, whereas the online class was better at Vocabulary & Grammar and Speaking. The results of the research brought direct and meaningful benefits to me in my teaching: With offline classes, I should be more aware of using great teaching material resources on the Internet. Besides, I should create a more comfortable, encouraging, and supportive learning environment in speaking classes. With online classes, I should provide extra reading exercises to students to print out before class to prevent students from looking at the screen excessively. This research in some way also contributed to designing blended courses. According to the research findings, Listening and Reading should be taught offline, while Vocabulary & Grammar and Speaking should be taught online.

Keywords: *comparisons of online and offline teaching, online vs. offline teaching, online vs. offline English classes*

INTRODUCTION

As an English teacher, during the recent time of social distancing due to Covid 19, I have been teaching a lot of online general English classes. I myself have found that teaching online and offline has a lot of differences. I always wonder if there is a difference in students' learning outcomes between online and offline classes. I have found and read some action research on comparisons of teaching English classes online and offline, but

their findings could not be applied to the students and the situations of my classes. In the research paper "*Efficiency of Online vs. Offline Learning: A Comparison of Inputs and Outcomes*" of Singh et al. (2012), the authors stated that "*Students taking the online course format are more efficient than their offline counterparts.*" However, they mentioned that "*Limitations of this study should be noted. The sample is not necessarily representative of other courses, other teaching approaches or other student populations. Additional research is needed with a variety of samples.*" Therefore, I think I myself should carry out this action research to find my own findings and lessons in my classes. In more detail, I also want to know the differences of students' learning outcomes in each English skill. If I could find the answers to the above questions, I would be able to improve my teaching both online and offline in my classrooms in the future.

As the typical feature of action research, the number of the experimental students was small, and other aspects of the classes were very specific in a context. Therefore, the research findings should only be applied in the two experimental classes and in my other similar classes in the future. To other situations and contexts, the purpose of this research was just to suggest a research procedure to get some useful findings and lessons to improve online and offline teaching.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Verster (2021) stated that action research was a process in which teachers investigate teaching and learning in order to improve their own and their students' learning. According to McCallister (2014), there are various types of action research in the fields of education, including individual action research, collaborative action research and school-wide action research. Individual action research involves working independently on a project, such as a teacher conducting his/her own, in-class research project with his/her students.

There are some researchers conducting studies on teaching online in the COVID-19 pandemic. Panda (2021) carried out a survey among teachers and students of selected schools in India and in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to assess their experiences of the effectiveness of online teaching over traditional classroom teaching and the possible ways to improve teaching and learning. His research concluded that the internet speed and technical issues were the main constraints, whereas flexibility and availability of content for revision were the positive features of online teaching. The use of animated and video content would help students' understanding and retention of topics. According to Sun (2021), the majority of students perceived that they had more time reading English materials during the lockdown periods compared to normal times. In addition, more students regarded it easier to do EFL reading during the lockdown periods than the normal times, providing the following two noted reasons in the survey: (i) It is more convenient

to look up new words online, and (ii) It is easier to search for background information about the reading.

The above studies all aimed to compare experiences and effectiveness of online and offline teaching. I was not able to find any studies which directly compared the learning outcomes of online and offline classes. Therefore, I wanted to carry out this research to find out those differences, and then analyse the reasons to improve my own teaching for similar student subjects in the same context.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This research wanted to find out the answer for the question related to the learning outcomes of the two experimental online and offline classes: **What differences (if any) are there in the mean scores of each language skill test and in the mean scores of the whole test between the online class and the offline class?**

METHODOLOGY

The goal of this research was to compare the differences in the learning outcomes of two experimental classes of students. The differences (if any) were due to the only differentiating factor: one class was taught offline and the other class was taught online. The activities and methods of my online and offline teaching were not an input parameter of this research. Instead, it was considered a constant value. Therefore, the results of this research were only valid and correct with the teaching methods that I actually taught in the two target classes of this research. Because of this, the details of my online and offline teaching methods were not mentioned in the research.

This action research was conducted in an online General English class and an offline General English class in a university. The students in the two experimental classes supposedly had the same English level and studied the same module. I was the teacher who taught these two classes. The first class was taught offline and tested offline. The second class was taught online and tested offline. The whole offline test of the two classes had exactly the same content and consisted of four parts: Vocabulary & Grammar, Listening, Speaking, and Reading. The writing test part was not included or compared in the research because in writing lessons, both two classes were supported, guided, and corrected via online media such as emails, LMS forums, and social networks.

For the comparison of this research to be valid and reliable, except the only differentiating online vs. offline factor, all other factors of the study had to be similar:

(i) The experimental students had to be in the same course program, similar in ages, in the same English level, and with the same learning objectives.

(ii) The content of the experimental test had to be the same.

(iii) The experimental test had to be carried out in the same procedure.

This paper was action research so the scope and the size of the students was small and specific. The research subjects were students in two classes at a university in Ho Chi Minh City. There were 25 students in each class and English was not their major. They were in the first semester of second year in their 4-year undergraduate university program.

The university classified students into English classes based on their scores from a placement test. The content of the placement test was randomly extracted from the university's test bank. This test bank had been built, upgraded, and used for several years. I was not able to access the test bank. However, through the regulations of the placement test, the evaluation process of this placement test was well organised in detail and purposefully. I did not have enough information to make a convincing assessment of the accuracy and reliability of this placement test. Nevertheless, when conducting this action research, I intended to apply the findings of this research only to the same student subjects who would be tested and grouped in classes by the same placement test procedure. Thus, the factor of accuracy and reliability of the placement test was not necessarily an input parameter of this research.

The students in this research all finished the course subject "Basic Informatics" and were used to studying online. The program which the students were taking part in was designed for completely offline learning. Only some of the classes of the program had to learn online because the class schedules were in the social distancing time due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Vietnam. In this research, the first class was conducted offline and tested offline as usual. The second class was conducted completely online because it happened in the social distancing period. After the social distancing period, I organised exactly the same offline test for the second class.

The English course of the two experimental classes was called "Academic English 3". The students learned 4 units (Unit 9 to Unit12) from an English textbook titled *Life Pre-Intermediate* Student's Book, 2nd Edition, National Geographic Learning, Cengage Learning by Hughes J., Stephenson, H., & Dummett, P. (2017). Other details about the English course of the two classes were described in the following table:

Table 1

Details about English course of two experimental classes

Features	Offline English class	Online English class
Number of students	25	25
Teaching Schedule	Monday Morning and Friday Morning (from 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM) **before** social distancing due to COVID-19 pandemic	Monday Morning and Friday Morning (from 7:00 AM to 11:00 AM) **during** social distancing due to COVID-19 pandemic
Number of weeks	8	8
Total number turns of students absent in whole course	7	4
Number of students absent more than 2 turns	0	0
Teaching-Learning facilities	In classroom with projector, teacher's laptop, whiteboard, wireless microphone, speakers, air conditioning, and internet connection	Online class via Google Meet. The teacher and students were at home using own PCs, laptops or smartphones with internet connection
Number of units	4 (Unit 9 – Unit 12)	4 (Unit 9 – Unit 12)
Tasks and exercises done in class	All tasks and exercises in the textbook	All tasks and exercises in the textbook
Homework	Online exercises of online *LIFE – Pre-Intermediate* workbook using students' own accounts	Online exercises of online *LIFE – Pre-Intermediate* workbook using students' own accounts
Experimental test (offline test for both classes)	The test of the two classes had the same content and consisted of four parts: Vocabulary & Grammar, Listening, Speaking, and Reading	

I designed the test with exactly the same content for the two experimental classes. In addition, the students in the two classes all had to take the test completely offline. This

arrangement was to guarantee that the differences of the test results only come from the differences between the offline and online factor.

Each student in the two classes was individually different; therefore, this research was not to compare the offline and online learning results of each student. Instead, the research only made comparisons of the learning results of an entire class against the other's by using MEAN scores. There were 5 mean values of scores in each class: mean of Vocabulary & Grammar scores, mean of Listening scores, mean of Speaking scores, mean of Reading scores, and mean of the 4 means above of each class, called the overall scores.

DATA COLLECTION

The experimental test of the two classes had the same content and consisted of four parts: Vocabulary & Grammar, Listening, Speaking, and Reading. The test was conducted after the end of the course. The test was intendedly designed to assess the students' achievements in alignment with the course learning objectives. Writing skill was not included in this research; therefore, the test did not have the writing part.

The students' scores of the 4 test parts were converted to a 10-mark scale. The overall scores were on a 10-mark scale as well. The details and the scores of the test are described in the following table:

Table 2

Details and scores of the experimental test

Test Part	Content and Duration	Marking	Maximum score
Vocabulary & Grammar	20 MC questions (25 minutes)	Number of correct answers/20*10	10
Reading	30 MC questions (45 minutes)	Number of correct answers/30*10	10
Listening	20 MC questions (30 minutes)	Number of correct answers/20*10	10
Speaking	5 criteria (5-8 minutes/pair)	Total scores of 5 criteria	10

All the test scores of the two experimental classes were collected and presented in the following two tables:

Table 3

Test scores of offline class

Student Number	Vocabulary & Grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Overall
1	6.50	8.00	8.00	9.33	7.96
2	4.50	5.50	6.50	9.67	6.54
3	4.50	8.50	8.00	9.33	7.58
4	5.00	8.00	7.50	6.67	6.79
5	4.00	5.00	6.00	8.33	5.83
6	6.00	7.00	6.50	5.00	6.13
7	6.00	6.00	4.50	6.33	5.71
8	5.00	7.00	8.50	4.67	6.29
9	8.00	7.00	8.00	6.33	7.33
10	6.00	7.50	5.50	7.33	6.58
11	8.50	9.50	5.00	6.67	7.42
12	7.00	5.50	6.50	5.67	6.17
13	8.00	5.50	7.00	9.00	7.38
14	7.50	8.00	4.50	9.00	7.25
15	8.00	8.50	4.50	6.67	6.92
16	4.00	5.50	8.50	4.67	5.67
17	9.00	7.50	7.50	9.67	8.42
18	7.00	5.00	5.50	6.00	5.88
19	8.00	6.00	6.50	7.00	6.88
20	9.00	8.00	5.00	6.67	7.17
21	4.50	4.50	6.50	6.33	5.46
22	7.00	5.50	8.00	7.33	6.96
23	6.00	7.50	5.00	9.00	6.88
24	5.00	4.00	4.50	7.67	5.29
25	8.50	7.50	8.50	9.00	8.38
Mean:	**6.50**	**6.70**	**6.48**	**7.33**	**6.75**

Table 4

Test scores of online class

Student Number	Vocabulary & Grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Overall
1	4.50	5.00	5.50	4.33	4.83
2	9.50	4.00	5.50	4.33	5.83
3	8.50	7.50	7.00	7.67	7.67
4	6.50	3.00	9.00	8.33	6.71
5	4.50	8.50	6.00	5.33	6.08
6	7.00	7.50	5.00	6.67	6.54
7	7.50	6.00	8.50	5.33	6.83
8	9.50	6.00	5.50	4.33	6.33
9	7.00	8.50	7.00	4.67	6.79
10	5.00	4.00	5.00	6.33	5.08
11	4.50	3.00	8.00	5.00	5.13
12	7.00	3.50	6.50	8.33	6.33
13	5.50	5.00	9.00	8.33	6.96
14	6.50	6.50	6.00	6.33	6.33
15	9.50	5.50	5.00	9.00	7.25
16	7.50	5.50	6.00	9.00	7.00
17	7.00	4.00	6.50	8.33	6.46
18	9.50	3.50	8.00	5.33	6.58
19	7.00	8.50	6.00	5.00	6.63
20	6.50	7.00	6.50	8.33	7.08
21	8.50	5.50	6.00	9.33	7.33
22	9.00	7.00	8.00	7.00	7.75
23	7.50	7.00	7.50	5.00	6.75
24	5.50	7.00	9.00	5.33	6.71
25	9.50	4.00	7.00	5.33	6.46
Mean:	**7.20**	**5.70**	**6.76**	**6.49**	**6.54**

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

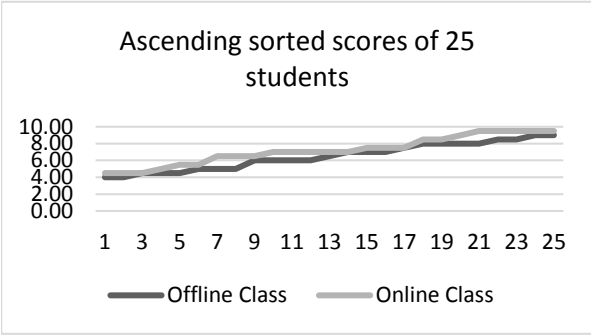
As mentioned above, the English level of the students, the textbook and other teaching-learning factors (except the experimental online/ offline difference) were equivalent. This research made comparisons of the learning results (i.e., Mean) of the entire first class against the entire second class. With this purpose, the students' test scores in each class

were sorted before being compared to those of the other class.

- **Comparison of Vocabulary & Grammar test scores:**

Figure 1

Comparison of Vocabulary & Grammar test scores



Means of two classes

Class \ Mean	Vocabulary & Grammar
Offline Class	6.50
Online Class	7.20

Findings about Vocabulary & Grammar test scores:

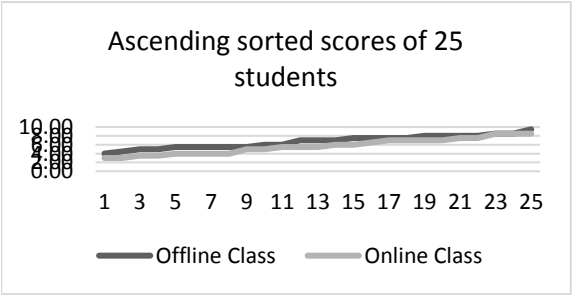
The mean of the online class (7.20) was about 10.8% (i.e. (7.2-6.5)/6.5) higher than that of the offline class (6.50). In the two classes, I used the same teaching slides and materials. However, in the online class, I used intriguing visual and multimedia resources from the Internet to illustrate the lessons on Vocabulary & Grammar.

Although there was Internet connection in the offline class, I tended not to actively use the Internet to exploit more teaching materials online. This was the big (but untrue) difference between teaching offline and online classes. Respectively, this explained the differences in the students' Vocabulary & Grammar test scores in the two classes.

- **Comparison of Listening test scores:**

Figure 2

Comparison of Listening test scores



Means of two classes

Class \ Mean	Listening
Offline Class	6.70
Online Class	5.70

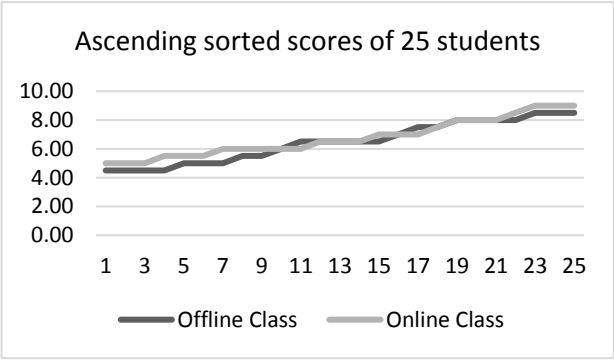
Findings about Listening test scores:

The mean of the online class (5.70) was dramatically lower than that (6.70) of the offline class, about 14.9%. In the two classes, I used the teaching slides and materials with the same listening scripts and tasks. In the offline class, I used a laptop and played the recordings, and the students listened to the recordings via the audio system of the classroom, which produced satisfactory sounds. During the listening time, I could pause sentence by sentence of the recordings to explain or to ask the students questions. In this way, the students would have a tendency to listen attentively. However, in the online class, the students' background or environment was not ideal. Students said that there was noise and other interfering sounds, which distracted their attention. Some students had difficulty in learning online because of the instability of the Internet, or low-quality or no headphones, which in some way affected their learning outcomes. Obviously, the offline class had a better study result in listening than the online class.

- **Comparison of Speaking test scores:**

Figure 3

Comparison of Speaking test scores



Means of two classes

Class \ Mean	Speaking
Offline Class	6.48
Online Class	6.76

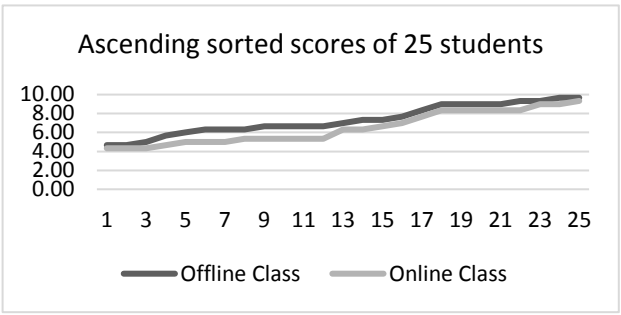
Findings about Speaking test scores:

The mean of the online class (6.76) was a little higher than that (6.48) of the offline class, about 4.3%. The difference might not be great enough to draw a convincing conclusion whether students study speaking online better than offline. In practice, the students in the online class were seemingly more willing to participate in speaking activities. Some students did not turn on their cameras, which maybe helped them feel more comfortable. This factor however did not bring considerably better Speaking scores to the online class. The small difference in the Speaking scores of the two classes did not match my expectation because I had thought the Speaking scores of the online class should have been much higher due to the students' much better performance.

Comparison of Reading test scores:

Figure 4

Comparison of Reading test scores



Means of two classes

Class \ Mean	Reading
Offline Class	7.33
Online Class	6.49

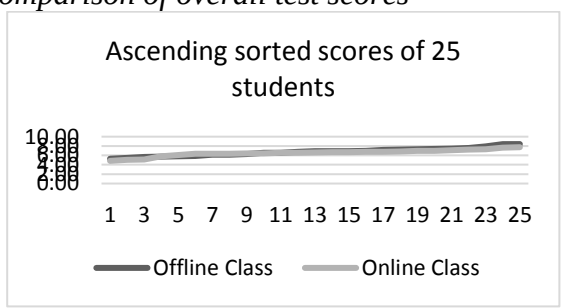
Findings about Reading test scores:

The mean of the online class (6.49) was remarkably lower than that (7.33) of the offline class, about 11.5%. This result was partially as I expected. With the online class, I could not observe the students' reading activities as I always did in the offline class. The students took advantage of this drawback and they seemed not to concentrate enough on doing their reading tasks. Besides, the students had difficulties in looking at both the screen and the paper textbook simultaneously, which certainly slowed down the reading speed. With extra reading exercises, the students had to focus on reading the text on the screen because they were not in the textbook. This strenuous effort could quickly make them tired and lose their patience. As a result, the online class always finished the reading tasks more slowly than the offline class. Reading texts on a screen was obviously never as easy as reading texts on a paper book.

- **Comparison of overall test scores:**

Figure 5

Comparison of overall test scores



Means of two classes

Class \ Mean	Overall
Offline Class	6.75
Online Class	6.54

The overall test scores were the average of the four means of the four test parts mentioned above. Details of the overall test scores are presented in the following summary table and chart:

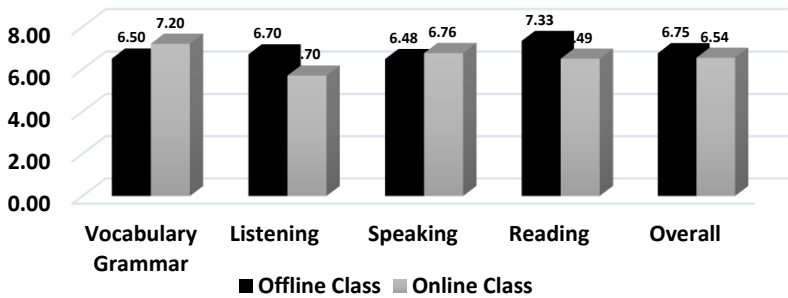
Table 5

Mean values of experimental test

Mean / Class	Vocabulary & Grammar	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Overall
Offline Class	**6.50**	**6.70**	**6.48**	**7.33**	**6.75**
Online Class	**7.20**	**5.70**	**6.76**	**6.49**	**6.54**

Figure 6

Comparisons of 5 means of experimental test



Findings about overall test scores:

The mean of the online class (6.54) was a bit lower than that (6.75) of the offline class, about 3.1%. This little difference in the overall scores showed that teaching online or offline did not have a considerable effect on the students' learning outcomes. However, as shown in the analysis in the test parts above, there was a great difference in the means of the test parts. The offline class had better test scores in Listening and Reading, while the online class was better at Vocabulary & Grammar and Speaking.

CONCLUSION

Among related studies I have found so far, I think I have suggested an alternative approach in comparing differences between online and offline teaching. In this research, the comparison between the overall scores and the part scores of each skill brought results in more detail in order to improve teaching efficiently.

The small difference in the overall test scores of the online and offline classes did not tell me convincingly whether online teaching was better than offline teaching or vice versa. However, by analysing the test results and the causes of the differences in the four test parts, I recognized the strengths as well as the weaknesses of the online and offline learning activities in the two experimental classes.

With offline classes, teachers should be more aware of using the available internet connection in the classroom to make use of the huge material resources available online such as multimedia dictionaries, visual documents, animations, videos, and other online resources to make learning Vocabulary & Grammar more appealing. Besides, to improve students' speaking skills, teachers should create a more comfortable, relaxing, encouraging, and supportive learning environment so that students feel more eager to participate in speaking classes.

With online classes, teachers should advise students to equip themselves with good audio devices (especially headphones), to find the best place inside their houses with little or no distracting sounds, and to concentrate more on lessons to improve their listening skills. With extra reading exercises, which are not in textbooks, teachers should send soft copies of reading materials to students in advance, and advise them to print them out to use in their online class. This helps students not to look at the screen for a long time, which may cause fatigue and lack of concentration.

Certainly, as the nature of action research, the results of this study are only directly applicable to these two experimental classes and classes with similar background and context. If a teacher wants to apply this study to his/her own classes, s/he can use the research procedures by themselves to find out results which are right to his/her target classes.

Another contribution of this research may be in the design of blended courses for similar classes. According to these research findings, Listening and Reading should be taught offline, while Vocabulary & Grammar and Speaking should be taught online. This distribution can enhance the strengths and reduce the weaknesses of blended courses.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Nguyen Thi Hanh is an English lecturer at the School of Foreign Languages, University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City. She obtained a master's degree in TESOL from Canberra University, Australia in 1999. She is interested in and has conducted some action research in English teaching and learning to improve her teaching.

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AVOIDING TECHNOLOGICAL MONOCULTURES AND SUPPORTING LIFELONG LEARNING LITERACIES

Dr. STEPHEN ALLEN

Humber College, Canada

ABSTRACT

This paper describes the results from a section of a larger survey and research study with students in an Ontario postsecondary institution. The study assessed the extent of the emergence of lifelong learning literacy, learning behaviours and attributes in online courses delivered in a learning management system (LMS). I argue that LMSs restrict student choice and the emergence of self-directed learning behaviours. Such constraints lead to more instrumental approaches to learning and do not make use of practices emerging from networked-based learning and how these instructional models work with the capabilities of web-based digital technologies and learning resources. The study employed a descriptive analysis methodology using an online survey to gather quantitative and qualitative data. The study tentatively finds that the learning management system (LMS) is perceived by students as an organizational and not learning environment and that an LMS-centered learning environment potentially encourages an instrumental approach to learning that emphasizes future workplace preparation over the kind of learning that encourages students to develop lifelong learning literacies. Students do not seem limited by the LMS technology in using external digital resources. However, they are not organizing these learning resources in personal learning environments (PLE)

Keywords: *lifelong learning literacy, learning behaviours, online courses, LMS, technology*

INTRODUCTION

For horticulturalists, a walled garden provides a fixed area from which to design what you plant; the walls provide warmth and nurture crops that may not grow in a wild space and they provide shelter from the elements and rogue plants eager to trespass (Campbell, 2008). However, this is a manufactured perfection. Life outside the walled garden is hardier, more complex, and niches evolve, expand and modify their ecosystem with all the inherent risk and rewards. Walled gardens offer protection from reality but these monocultures require management as they cannot sustain themselves. Students are sheltered within the walled garden of educational technologies such as learning

management systems (LMS) where peripheral actors are restricted. Such walled gardens run counter to the need to develop literacies that students can employ for self-directed lifelong learning after they leave formal education. In an information age dominated by participatory media (Jenkins et al., 2009) and the logic of information capitalism in which citizens will need lifelong upskilling and retraining (Castells, 2009) walled gardens are relics of an industrial era.

Online Teaching and Learning in Colleges

Attaining mastery of content within a curriculum can be difficult for students as they negotiate the competing demands in all their courses within a program, work responsibilities, and their online and in-person social lives**.** A knotty problem develops when online learning is enclosed in a walled digital garden that ignores the wider ecosystem students live within and the development of the attributes required to navigate these spaces.

Instructional design methods emerging from research in the field of education psychology suggest we can design activities in multimedia environments to support comprehension and can help the students with diverse learning needs (Pollock et al., 2002). These designs tend to focus on helping students understand what is being asked of them, not necessarily getting them to engage with more cognitively complex activities. Furthermore, for many incoming students today, textual communication alone in many subjects and fields may be less common in the near future than communicating using multimodal tools such as audio, video, interactive images, and speech to text. Communication is more likely through digital means than paper as evidenced by the utilization of popular social networking sites such as Pinterest, Instagram, Tumblr, and Snapchat (Hutt, 2017) as well as the rise of voice command assistants such as Amazon's Alexa, Google's Home, and Apple's Homepod.

A student in an online course will almost certainly interact with the learning content posted on the institutionally prescribed LMS, as in most cases this is the only location of the learning content:

A learning management system is the integral, behind-the-scenes player in a student's learning experience, serving as the course hub for management and administration, communication and discussion, creation and storage of materials, and assessment of subject mastery (Lang & Pirani, 2014).

For a student, this means their personal interaction with digital media is not only marginalized but learning content in online courses primarily resides within the closed system of the LMS thus limiting any opportunity to cross this personal and educational

divide. Institutions control access to the LMS course sites, most likely via an integration between an enterprise system for admissions and registrar purposes and the LMS. Once the student finishes a course their access ends and all the comments they may have posted in forums, blogs within the LMS as well as the actual course content is lost to them. An obvious drawback of this is that students are not easily able to subsequently link previous content to new content in other courses and potentially reuse it in order to synthesize their thinking on the wider and deeper level that program outcomes may ask of them. This also contrasts with students' personal experience of technology: It is hard to find a social media site that does not remind you of what you and your friends did five years ago. The social interactivity that is now taken for granted in digital resources also reveals the fact that the architecture of LMS technology has not fundamentally changed from the "course- and instructor-centric models" since the first LMS came out over twenty years ago (Brown, Dehoney, & Millichap, 2015, p. 2).

LMSs have become the de-facto location of online learning, and perhaps when instructors think of online learning, they may be thinking of how they would position the content in an LMS. Learning and instruction does of course take place outside the LMS. Personal learning environments help students organize the large amount of input they receive and acquire.

Personalizing Learning

My personal learning environment (PLE) consists of an internet connection, laptop, cell phone, large screen monitor, note paper, post-its, pens, highlighters, books, a music streaming service, and, of course, a cup of tea. On my laptop I have folders, organizational software like Miro, websites at hand such as a citation manager, my blog, the online university library, a social bookmarking site to organize links, and two or three social media apps. This may resemble another person's PLE but is likely unique in its combination of digital and physical resources. In this form, a PLE refers to the software-based and physical spaces within which an individual chooses to access learning resources and artifacts, communicate with peers, and store content, whether for informal or formal learning purposes. This describes an informal, personalized model, self-developed by an individual. It may be used by a learner in formal education, but the environment is not demarcated by the instructor. Students who explore, gather, and organize digital media into relevant fields to support learning outside the walled garden of the LMS can benefit from curating their own learning archive and lifelong personal learning environment that support the acquisition of digital and learning literacies they will need throughout working lives that continue to change.

The workplaces of the future

Up to the latter part of the twentieth century the economy was described as the industrial age. Since the 1970's onwards the rise in information technologies has led to the economy to be described as the information age. The digital information technologies that enabled this have not evolved to enclose economic activity in multiple and separate entities but as a profoundly interconnected network. As such, it is the interconnectedness of the network, one that superimposes national borders and power structures, that frames everything going on in the global economy. As Castells states in The Rise of the Networked Society (2009):

> The information technology does not evolve towards its closure as a system, but towards its openness as a multi-edged network. It is powerful and imposing in its materiality, but adaptive and open-ended in its historical development. Comprehensiveness, complexity, and networking are its decisive qualities. (p. 76)

An example of how new economic activity is created in the information age can be seen in the internet industry itself. Castells (2009) also describes the internet industry as currently consisting of four parts major parts: internet infrastructure, software developers developing infrastructure applications, web services like social media that derive indirect revenue through, for example, advertising, and lastly e-commerce companies.

Employment opportunities in this networked society are knowledge-based (Castells, 2009). These are the management, professional scientific, technical, financial, and administrative services that have also been the least affected in the COVID-19 pandemic because their work now exists to support the innumerable interactions within the networked society. An example of the rapid shift to e-commerce, that may not be completely reversed is that of Shopify which grew 62% between March 12th and April 24th 2020, compared to the previous 6-weeks during the first lockdown phase of the pandemic, while at the same time becoming Canada's most valuable public company with assets of $1.58 US billion, up 47% on the previous year (Silverberg, 2020). Moreover, much of Shopify's workforce will be now work from home and they are discarding much of their office infrastructure. Because eCommerce removes the need to staff stores and the services that support such practices, this example encapsulates the type of jobs that were most affected were the office real estate, tourism, food, manufacturing, and agriculture sectors—sectors which are increasingly insecure and prone to deskilling in the service economy model in Canada (Castells, 2009). However, communication skills remain central as the nature of these new jobs in the networked economy require:

> Cooperation, teamwork, workers' autonomy, and responsibility, without which new technologies cannot be used to their full potential. The networked character

> of informational production permeates the whole firm, and requires constant interaction and processing of information between workers, between workers and management, and between humans and machines. (Castells, 2009, p. 262)

Employers are increasingly communicating the need for essential employability skills as well as the vocational skills Ontario colleges support (Beletzan et al., 2017).

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The notion that applied learning institutions are preparation for the workplace belies the fact that the workplace of the future will increasingly require the cognitive, reflective, and organizational skills to be successful in self-directed lifelong learning endeavors. Postsecondary students must be given the tools, support and freedom to cultivate the new literacies and skills they need to be successful in their personal futures, not only those predefined by the course, program, or institution. When online courses are delivered only within the limitations of locked-in technologies such as LMS that create boundaries around wider engagement with networked learning opportunities students are less likely to make self-directed efforts to explore and acquire the lifelong learning literacies and skills they will need for success as adult learners in digitally enabled learning environments.

With the problem stated this way, certain research questions emerge as follows.

RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question is:

- To what extent are online courses delivered primarily through LMSs inadequate for developing the lifelong learning literacies required for success as adult learners in digitally enabled learning environments?

To gather enough data to adequately answer this question, I needed to consider a research methodology that would enable me to investigate the online LMS context. Before outlining that I will explore the broader field of education technologies and LMSs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section explores the research and current debates around the key themes of educational technology within postsecondary education systems.

Lifelong Learning Literacies

In this paper I have touched on a set of skills and literacies that employers will

increasingly expect in the knowledge economy and referred to them as *Lifelong Learning Literacies*. I define lifelong learning literacies (LLLs) as a set of communication, reflective, selection and organization skills sustained by the cognitive skills of goal-setting and self-regulation necessary to support the construction of knowledge in a self-directed online learning experience for personal or professional needs. These are strategies that can be learned and applied as needed. They are significant as they form the foundation for selection and organizational skills which can be iteratively honed through reflection and the subsequent reformulation of goals. An example of a theory that proposes to support learning in such complex, lifelong social and digital environments is Heutagogy.

Heutagogy. Heutagogy is the study of self-determined learning emerging from humanistic traditions such as andragogy and focused on knowing how to learn and the sharing of knowledge as opposed to hoarding knowledge. Heutagogy steps away from the flexible delivery focus of andragogy and aims to propose ways in which the teacher provides the content but the learners negotiate which of these they choose to use, how to expand on what is provided, and the notion of assessment as a learning, not measurement experience (Hase & Kenyon, 2000). Heutagogy emphasizes learning as an adaptive skill, one essential for the current workplace and it looks to develop methods to support learning but with the emphasis on changes to the learner, not the teacher or learning system and thus shift the choice of what, when, where, and how to learn to the learner. Heutagogy is a networked learning theory that merges well with the increasingly interoperability of software to enable flexible and personalized interconnected learning.

Next generation digital learning environments. The increasing interoperability between a larger web of software stands in contrast to the walled garden of LMSs. This has led to questions of how to proceed in developing LMSs, whether to rebuild the LMS architecture from scratch, or to add value to existing LMSs by increasing their interoperability with external learning objects, and software. The former solution has the associated problems of cost, implementation, and technical issues. The latter circumvents these difficulties but has the potential to further embed a walled garden paradigm as all that is really happening is adding more tools to an LMS toolbox. The concept of a next-generation digital learning environment (NGDLE) arose to address these. Brown, Dehoney, & Millichap (2015) outline the key attributes of an NGDLE as follows: a interoperability and integration; personalized; collaborative; analytics; aggregating functionality; embedded principles of universal design; all bound within the characteristics of a mash-up (pp. 3-4). Google Classrooms is an example of a suite of software tools that draws on the dissatisfaction of closed LMSs and the nascent concepts of NGDLEs. This differs fundamentally as it is not open, yet it needs to be taken seriously due to the Google's ubiquity. Google classrooms, part of the G Suite for Education Apps,

has an increasing presence in K-12 and higher education (Hill, 2019) and describes its capabilities as:

> Google Classroom makes teaching more productive and meaningful by streamlining assignments, boosting collaboration, and fostering communication. Educators can create classes, distribute assignments, send feedback, and see everything in one place. Classroom also seamlessly integrates with other Google tools like Google Docs and Drive. (Google, 2019)

Google has the ability and resources to further build its ecosystem. However, this may merely replace one walled garden with another, albeit more flexible, walled garden—one whose walls will be constructed through the mass collection of our data.

The NDGLE concept is quite dependent on an individual student taking a lot more responsibility than the current instructor directed LMS model. It is expecting a lot for students to aggregate resources they feel are valuable and to archive, share, personalize, and then collaborate with their peers. It is for these reasons of utility that proprietary systems like Blackboard, Instructure, and Brightspace D2L tend to be strengthening their hold as immovable institutional platforms by adding cloud-based features and analytics. Nonetheless, to support students in such learning spaces, we need to give them more control over their learning process. Personalization of learning necessitates the ability for the learning environment to be flexible enough to be configured on an individual or institutional level to change the learning experience. Such flexibility must also enable adaptive learning based on enhanced data analysis capabilities that empower personalized assessment and outcomes-based approaches to course length (Brown et al., 2015, pp. 4-6). Learning analytics implies the collection of data on a personal, course, institution, and regional level and is defined as:

> The measurement, collection, analysis, and reporting of data about learners and their contexts, for purposes of understanding and optimising learning and the environments in which it occurs. (Siemens et al., 2011, p. 4)

Data collected within LMSs can then be combined with data from the institutional student information system around grades, transcripts, and possibly regional education data to support integrated advising systems. Unlike current LMSs where interactivity tends to be teacher to student or student to content, new learning ecosystems are expected to facilitate multiple forms of collaboration within the institution, and also beyond, with other educational institutions and local businesses, where students may take work placements. Conversely, this level of interoperability may result in yet more lock-in through licensing. Along with interoperability, collaboration is key in breaking the walled garden model of LMSs and opening the private to the public in a way that individuals can control (Brown

et al., 2015, p. 7).

Collaboration is inherent in much of the participatory media students use in their personal lives and so, by exploiting these technologies, educators are already breaking down the walled garden model. Conversely, relying on educational software that does not encourage students to collaborate with peers or teachers results in additional walls within walls. Haworth defines an ideal student learning environment as "easy to use, 'open', dynamic, and give options for collaboration" (Haworth, 2016, pp. 360-361). Collaboration also relates to the level of self-direction a student can have in their learning environment, which in turn relates to the construction of a personal learning environment.

The next section briefly outlines the methodology I employed to investigate this context and problem.

METHODOLOGY

Overview of Methodology

It was important to me to uncover what was actually happening in the instructional context and to make recommendations for practice and institutional strategy. To do this I employed a descriptive methodology using the Student Insights Survey developed by JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)

The goals of research are threefold: to describe, to predict, and to explain (Conole, 2011). Descriptive research describes phenomena in specific settings and does not seek to predict or understand cause-effect relationships. Descriptive research is designed to reveal what is going on and thus typically uses case study, observational, or survey methods to gather data. The research can be longitudinal or cross-sectional. This research method does not involve the manipulation of independent variables that experimental methods employ. A strength of the descriptive method is its ability to support the development of additional questions once a phenomenon has been adequately described (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Participant Sample. The potential participant sample consisted of approximately 2,500 full-time, first- and second-year college students who were taking Liberal Studies diploma- or degree-level electives.

Survey Response Rate. The survey was distributed online to approximately 2,400 students studying in online liberal arts elective courses in an Ontario postsecondary college in the Fall of 2020. All students in this group were asked to participate and 720 students accessed the survey with a total of 618 completing questions in the survey and submitting their responses. The responses of the 102 students who accessed but did not

participate in the survey to completion have not been included in the final data set.

Quantitative data analysis. I used a descriptive statistical analysis of the survey data as this enabled me to see patterns and build a narrative around the descriptions. The survey was designed with closed and open questions. The closed survey questions offer gradations of response similar to Likert scales, and checklists. Student responses to these questions were rendered into numerical form and entered into SPSS software, upon which statistical analysis of the data was conducted. Descriptive analysis emphasizes communication of results in as simplified a form as possible and is used to "summarize, organize, and reduce large numbers of observations." (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001, p. 206).

Qualitative data analysis. The survey offered participants options to add qualitative responses in open questions around perceptions and digital resources usage as well as attitudes to self-directed learning. As with the quantitative data, a descriptive analysis was employed through the use of coding. Because the qualitative responses consisted of short answers, I used a coding method supported by SPSS. The data was rendered into SPSS, and the frequency of individual words and phrases were tagged and totaled. I then tallied the number of similar responses and sorted them into themes. These themes are then displayed and detailed in figures in the results section. Selected student qualitative comments are then used to build a supporting picture of the emerging themes and to compare and contrast this with the quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data emerging from each survey question is described or visualized individually and in turn with a supporting analysis after each section. This paper describes one area of research in a larger study. For clarity I have selected only the results of survey questions 21 through to 34, each of which is relevant to the research question defined in the Introduction.

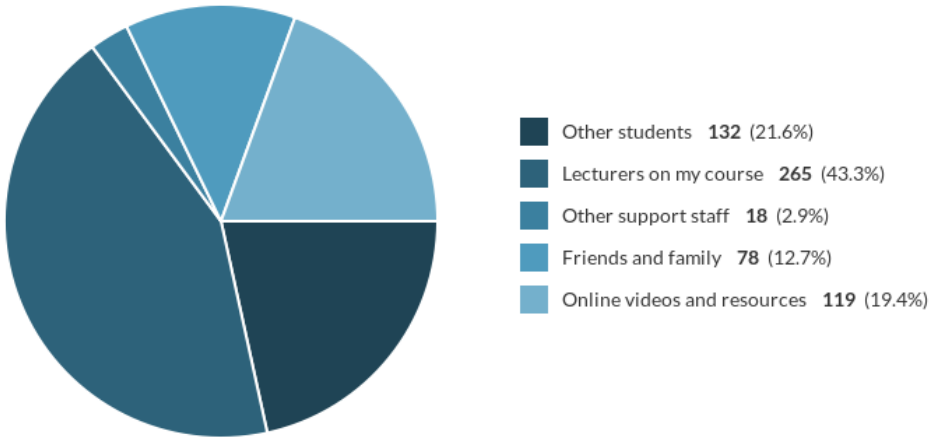
Walled-Garden Digital Environments: Technology in Your Learning

The responses to survey theme 'technology in your learning' are used to assess the extent to which walled-garden digital technologies limit lifelong learning literacies. The analysis will consider concepts like self-direction and networked learning theories.

Question 21 provides an additional dimension to the extent of student self-directedness by asking who students they receive support from in their learning.

Figure 1

Support for Using Technology



Note. This figure shows responses to question 21: Who supports you most to use technology in your learning?

Responses here show that 55% of students seek support from individuals or resources that are not in a formal instructor or college support staff role, thus showing an expanded community involved in supporting self-directed activities. I link such resource seeking organizational behaviour as a strategy within the concept of lifelong learning literacies.

Although not asking whether such digital resources are provided by an instructor or sought out by the students, question 22 in Table 1 reveals that the most popular learning activities in the list are those that are those typically provided by an instructor such as practice questions, interactive polls/quizzes, and course related videos. The least useful according to students at only 9% is time online working with their peers.

Table 1

Activities Students Find Most Useful for Learning

Rank value	Option	Count
1	Interactive polls/quizzes in class	109
2	Time working online with other students	57
3	Practice questions available online	276
4	References and readings	64
5	Course-related videos	104

Mean rank	3.0
Variance	1.6
Standard Deviation	1.26
Lower Quartile	2.0
Upper Quartile	4.0

Note. Table 1 shows student responses to question 22 by asking which of the given options they would like more of as part of their learning. The question is stated as: Which of these would be

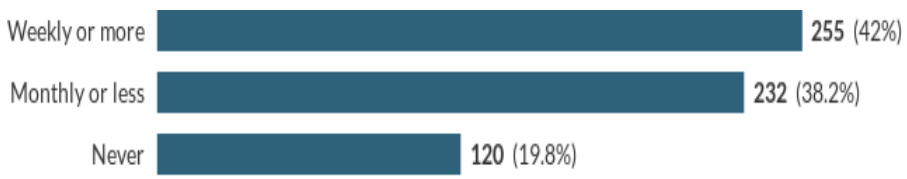
most useful to you as a learner?

Question 23 then asked for students to 'Please give an example of a digital tool or app you find really useful for learning'. In order, the top five responses from students were, in descending order: YouTube and Blackboard at 11% each, Kahoot and Google at 8% each, and Google Docs at 5%. Quizlet, a quiz making software similar to Kahoot, was placed at number six in the list. The list apparently reveals a mix of software like Google and YouTube that are likely to be commonplace in a student's personal life, and software like Blackboard, and Kahoot, that are primarily provided by the instructors.

The next question contains six nested questions and asks participants how often they engage with different types of software or activities as part of their course.

Figure 2

The Use of Polls and Quizzes



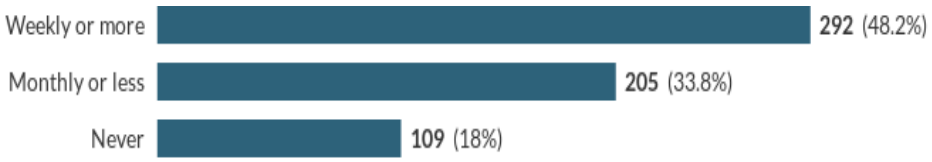
Note. This figure shows responses to question 24.1: As part of your course, how often do you use live polls or quizzes in class?

Responses to 24.1 back up the data from question 23, where participants reported they found polling and quiz software such as Kahoot really useful for learning. Figure 2 shows that instructors use such tools frequently. Question 24.2 expands on the practice of reviewing data from online polls by revealing that 79% of students reported working with data at some point in their course. 42% of respondents noted working with data weekly or more—apparently showing some level of familiarity with data analysis.

Although not specifying the manner in which learners work together online, the data from question 24.3 in Figure 3 reveals nearly half of students working with their peers at least weekly. Conversely, nearly 20% of students reported never working online with other learners. The extent of such peer-to-peer activities ostensibly refute the notion of a walled garden environment as instructor-centric and limiting students exploring outside the LMS. It does seem that students have significant opportunities to collaborate and independently construct elements of their learning experience.

Figure 3

Working Online with Other Students



Note. This figure shows responses to question 24.3: As part of your course, how often do you work online with other learners?

However, this refutation of the walled garden concept restricting the development of PLEs is seemingly only partly supported by the data shown in Figure 4, below. Here, 26% of participants reported creating a digital record of their work, yet 39% responded that they never use a digital portfolio. The responses do not indicate if these portfolios are teacher-directed, created by individual students, or, for what purpose.

Figure 4

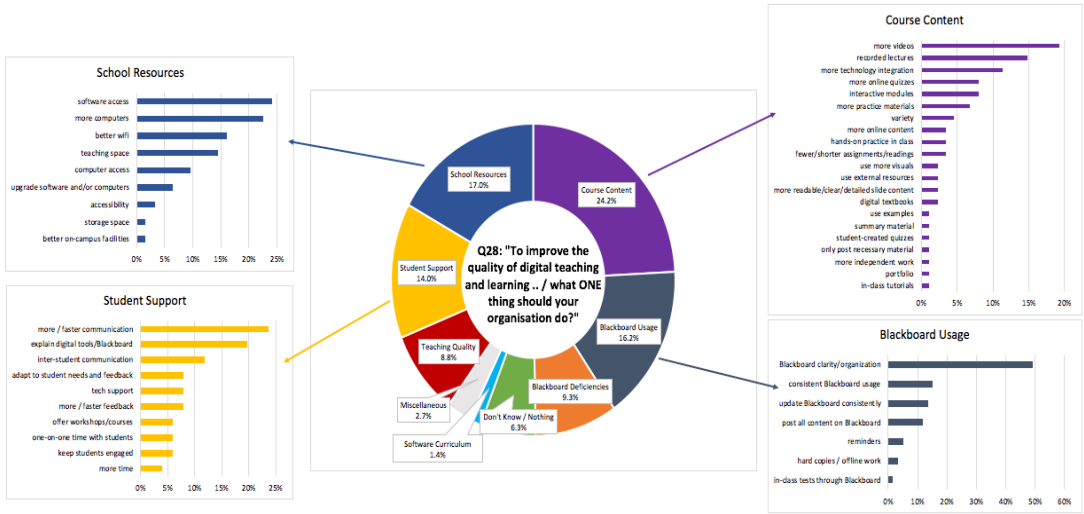
Creating a Portfolio of Learning

Note. This figure shows responses to question 24.4: As part of your course, how often do you create a digital record/portfolio of your learning?

Digital portfolios are an element of PLEs. Such nascent practices, whether self-directed or not, apparently support the notion of students developing inquiry habits outside of the LMS that are a necessary part of lifelong learning literacies. Also contrasting the narrative of the LMS environment creating limitations on instruction and learning are the results to the next three nested questions that asked participants to rate how teachers support their learning. For example, in question 26.1 62% of students agreed that instructors on their course made good use of digital tools and platforms, with 33% being neutral. Furthermore, instructors seem to offer an equivalent level of support in using technologies deployed for learning related activities as indicated in responses to question 26.2 that show 44% of student agreeing, and 46% being neutral when asked how much they agree that most of the teachers on your course help them with the digital tools they use for learning. Additional nuance is added to these questions in the qualitative responses to question 28 in figure 5.

Figure 5

Improving Digital Teaching and Learning



Note. This figure shows student responses to question 28: To improve the quality of digital teaching and learning ... what ONE thing should your organization do? This was an open response question with 340 unique responses. Student replies were coded for frequency and nine themes emerged: course content, Blackboard (LMS) usage, Blackboard deficiencies, do not know, software, miscellaneous, teaching quality, student support, and school resources.

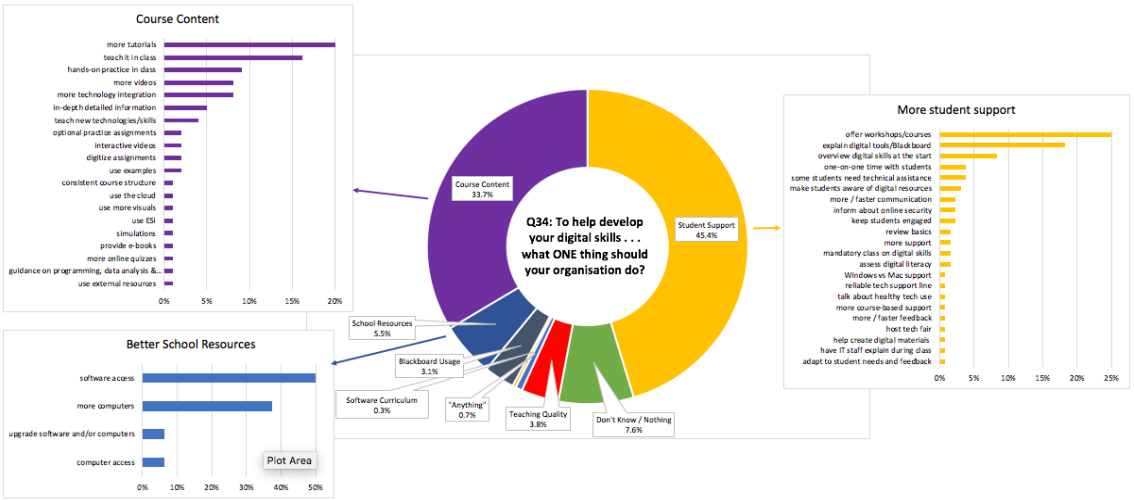
Participant responses revealed that the most common thing the institution should do to improve digital teaching and learning were grouped in the category of course content. Within the course content category, the most commented upon area was a request for more videos, either by just using the word "videos" or a request for recorded lectures. For example, one student commented that the institutions should "make more videos available" with another noting that it should "add more recorded lectures (video, audio casts) online", and further "offer online reading/videos materials related to in-class lecture for review at home". Comments related to the Blackboard LMS were associated with the way it is used by instructors such as "all course assignments or tests should be posted on Blackboard calendar and all lectures be uploaded" or that "all teachers should have to use blackboard, some don't". Another student commented in more detail on the organizational property of the LMS in stating that "Blackboard is the predominant software I use for teaching purposes within school. It would be beneficial if there were a cohesive way that professors organized their Blackboard pages so that you could find information more accessible". Blackboard was also referenced in relation to its perceived inadequacy such as provide a "better platform than Blackboard, which has many flaws and issues" and "create a better blackboard app!" and in relation to the user experience one students noted that "it's hard to navigate blackboard so instead of the symbols blackboard should have small titles under the symbols to make it easier to navigate". Some examples of software

and school resources being suggested other than the Blackboard LMS were "YouTube", "Adobe", "Photoshop", and "Sketchup" used for design programs as well as "Get better WiFi" and "Provide more computers". Seemingly apparent in the Figure above are the frequency of comments linked to students asking for more support that would inherently be enabled by the instructor or institution. For example, comments relating to college and student supports or how the Blackboard LMS is employed for teaching, and in the course Content category in Figure 5 where many of the comments are about what the students would like more of from their instructors. This apparently indicates the limited agency students may feel within walled-garden digital learning environments. Moreover, it also apparently indicates that students are looking for the kind of support that will help them become familiar with digital learning environments which I argue is a key component of lifelong learning literacies, even though results from question 24 and 26 indicate they do feel supported in using more complex work-related technologies.

Question 34 asked students for qualitative responses about what the institution should do to support digital skills, these are summarized into the main themes in Figure 6.

Figure 6

How the Organization Should Support Digital Skills



Note. This figure shows responses to question 34: To help develop your digital skills…what ONE thing should your organization do? Students were given the option to write a single word or sentence for this part of the survey. The 179 unique responses were then coded for emerging themes. Eight themes emerged as shown clockwise from the right. Four of the themes were commented on by more than 5% of respondents: more student support, better school resources, course content. The figure lists the subcategories within each of these four themes.

Question 34 as represented in Figure 6 sought qualitative responses from students by asking what one thing the institution could do to develop digital skills. The most common

theme in the responses was the request for more student support in the form of workshops and for instructors to explain digital tools and skills. Comments related to this theme were those such as this student who replied that the institution should "give tutorials on blackboard, website, word, excel" with another adding "have interactive YouTube videos that allow the user to complete the task at hand in a quick and efficient manner" and correspondingly "one lecture dedicated to digital skill", and another noting more starkly "Help us with technology. No one cares if we do not know how to use technology".

The second most common responses were around the theme of including digital support within courses, particularly in tutorials, and teach the skills directly in a and hands-on manner in class such with comments such as "hand out 'how to' papers" and "have more application of theory" or "introduce new ideas and skills rather than covering the same concepts", and further for the instructor to offer "practice assignments that are optional to hone one's digital skills". Such responses apparently reveal strong support for interventions and support from the institution and instructors in class for digital skills development. Figure 6 shows that, although students have the agency and a sense of control to seek the support they need, they are primarily looking to the institution to help them with their digital skills.

The last section outlines tentative conclusions emerging from this select set of data from the larger survey.

TENTATIVE CONCLUSIONS

The data reveals students as engaged in extensive peer-to-peer collaboration and comfort in reaching out to peers for support. Although this seems to refute the instructor-centered notion of a walled garden LMS, when asked, the type of things students would like to see more of tend to be resources and activities typically provided by instructors. Notwithstanding this, the students also report extensive use of participatory multimedia for learning outside the LMS. This seems to indicate students are taking action to circumvent the restrictions of LMS centered, walled garden learning—comments that were further supported by students indicating a desire for independent project and assignments and to increase the use of portfolios that demonstrate learning. Additionally, some components of lifelong learning literacies seem to be present in the form of confidence and the motivation to use digital technologies with students reporting being digitally literate, self-directed learning and organizational behaviours, and collaborative practices with peers that are considered essential in the workplace (RBC, 2019).

Furthermore, students are digitally literate users of audio-visual and participatory media technologies for personal and study purposes. Students report frequently feeling the need to employ digital tools and platforms outside the walled garden LMS to seek further

learning resources, yet the students do not report organizing these tools and resources into a nascent PLE. As lifelong learners, the students are digitally literate and aware of their own limitations to the extent they frequently request being able to access on-demand training modules to become familiar with digital tools they need in their workplaces. This suggests students are aware of future needs and are seeking out opportunities to resolve knowledge gaps. Further evidence of this is the way students report planning for learning as well as recognizing the need to learn how to learn. The lifelong learning literacies that students use appear to be the following:

- Confidence in making learning choices
- Digital literacy
- Self-awareness of their own knowledge limitations
- Self-organized learning behaviours such as seeking peer support and articulating their need for support in overcoming these limitations through the use of on-demand video-based training activities.

Conversely, students do not seem to be developing lifelong learning literacies in relation to:

- Collaboration (with peers)

Students are not constrained by the restrictions of the walled garden LMS. Furthermore, students see the LMS as an organizational and not instructional technology and place less emphasis on it as a learning environment. The students seek to overcome this limitation by using digital resources they enjoy using such as YouTube and use these sites to seek helpful learning content and guidance on using the technologies they feel they will need in the workplace. These kind of self-directed learning activities are not organized systematically in a way that would point to students constructing a PLE, however such self-directed activity points to students making choices about the learning they feel they need and which they do not feel is provided by the instructor through the LMS. Furthermore, these self-directed activities seem to be conducted independently of other students and students electing to collaborate on learning is not in evidence.

In summary, students seem to be exploring the wider environment of digital learning resources despite the restrictions of the LMS. However, they are not doing this is a sustainable way that points to the development of a PLE and they still request extensive support from the instructors and institution in utilizing these tools and resources—especially multimedia. Lifelong learning literacies such as digital literacies and self-directedness are in evidence. These are both essential workplace skills for workplaces in an increasingly networked society.

THE AUTHOR

Dr. Stephen Allen is an educator and administrator with over 25 years' experience. He is most animated when creating organisational and instructional systems that support professional development and access for all types of learners. Accompanying his experience, he holds a Doctor of Education researching networked-based online teaching and learning systems. He also holds an MA as well as a Graduate Diploma in Distance Education Technologies. His passion is to support people while together they build new skills, competencies, insights, and ways of doing that achieve results organisationally as well as personally.

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ATTITUDES OF ENGLISH-MAJORED SOPHOMORES TOWARDS LEARNING HOW TO DO RESEARCH

Ms. Le Thi Minh Thuy
Banking University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Doing research is undeniably an essential activity in the academic environment and should be encouraged among university students as it may develop students' appreciation of research in the discipline and give students first-hand experience of research-based consultancy through assignments and projects (Russell et al., 2007). However, for different reasons this activity has not been popular at Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City (BUH) as expected although the university has had many programs and different policies to motivate students to do research, such as organizing different research contests, funding students' scientific projects, and including research in students' academic assessment. Aiming for a better understanding of the situations from the perspectives of students on different issues, the author conducted a descriptive cross-sectional study among 84 sophomore English-majored students of Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City. The study was intended to help improve the author's awareness about the willingness of students toward doing research, the problems they have during the research process, and their motivational factors. The analysis of the data which was collected using a questionnaire shows that most students are not totally ignorant about doing research although they have different opinions on internal and external factors that affect their enthusiasm and success in this activity. The study implies that involving students in research activity at the early stages of their education is important in lightening up their desire for knowledge, which was also concluded by Wilensky (1997). In addition, different strategies to improve the popularity of doing research among students are suggested to stimulate their positive attitudes towards their own research projects.

Keywords: *doing research, English-majored sophomores, BUH*

INTRODUCTION

According to Rummel (1970), one of the essential components of any undergraduate curriculum involves an understanding of the research process, in which students know how to ask the right questions in the right way, conduct experiments, and collate and evaluate information. Although some studies show doubts on whether engagement in

research is better suited for higher ability undergraduates late in their programs or for all undergraduates, Doyle (2000) suggests that students should be encouraged to pursue research projects and to get involved in research as early as possible in their school programs. However, according to Nguyen (2019), students' awareness of research is limited when 14% of the students in his study had no ideas about research while 81% admitted that their knowledge of research was modest. Deciding to include doing research as an obligatory subject in second year of the bachelor curriculum, Faculty of Foreign Languages at Banking University of Ho Chi Minh City (BUH) have shown an agreement with Doyle (2000) that early exposure to doing research will be a good chance for students to be equipped with not only knowledge but also practical experience, which may improve students' confidence in doing more research in the future. However, it has been reported to the faculty after class meetings that students tend to view research methods courses negatively and that early exposure to research knowledge and skills will lead them to more stress and discouragement. Therefore, a detailed analysis on students' attitudes toward learning how to do research will obviously be very necessary to help instructors understand the situation better and find ways to facilitate research learning among students. While a great deal of interest is taken in studying the impacts of doing research on the development of natural science students or on student retention, information related to its impacts on knowledge and skill development of social science students, especially Vietnamese students, tends to be limited. Therefore, this study has been conducted with the hope to understand the multidimensional attitudes of English-majored sophomores toward introductory research courses. The sample of the study consisted of 84 students who had completed a research methods course. Based on a factor analysis, five factors of student attitudes toward research were identified. These were the factors of usefulness of research, anxiety, affect indicating positive feelings about research, life relevancy of research to the students' daily lives, and difficulty of research. Once identified, they can be incorporated into curricula more purposefully so that students may benefit from research experiences more predictably.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Effects of doing research on students' career orientation

Participation in research can bring many benefits to students as they can have a clearer view about the research process, i.e. how to work with research problem or how to define and refine their research and career interests (Dornyei, 2000). By doing research students can also have knowledge about the culture of science and be better oriented in career choices. They are more intellectually curious and able to assume leadership positions, and in possession of clear career goals (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Students who are likely to experience positive outcomes are those who were truly interested and involved in the

culture of research.

However, other researchers feel unsure about the usefulness of research for their future careers (Lodico, 2004; Pan & Tang, 2004). These feelings may be brought about by three main types of factors: situational factors, when students do not have prior knowledge and experience; dispositional factors, when students are not confident in their abilities; and environmental factors, which are related to their learning style, age, gender, and ethnicity (Wilson & Onwuegbuzie, 2001).

Effects of doing research on improving academic knowledge and various skills

Students are believed to have a chance to increase their knowledge about disciplines and their application in the world of academia (Spilich, 1997). Research experience can be considered as one of their most beneficial college activities when students have greater ability to acquire information independently, analyze literature critically, understand scientific findings, conduct research, speak effectively and learn on their own (Bauer & Bennett, 2003). Ishiyama (2002) also found out that early participation in research did promote the academic development of social science and humanities students at his university and that early collaborative research assisted in the academic integration of weak students. Therefore, the adoption of a program promoting early participation in research among students is rational.

Moreover, students can also learn more complex scientific concepts and improve a variety of skills (Peppas, 1981; Wilson 1998). It is commonly agreed among researchers that when being engaged in research students can enhance their critical thinking skills, problem-solving skills, literature and language skills, and personal initiative and communication skills. As a result, students' confidence can also be developed (Monahan, 1994).

Although overall research skills, as well as the specific skills of conducting a literature review, carrying out statistical analyses, and writing a research article, have been sharpened and the experience gain during the process of doing research is very helpful for students when entering the career of their choice, there is a belief that learning research methodology is overwhelming and the hard work involved in the research process may discourage students from doing research professionally. The problems arise from the amount of work required, the amount of material covered, test taking, difficulty of the material covered in class, as well as preparing individual research projects (Wilson, 1998; Wilson & Onwuegbuzie, 2001). However, according to Murtonen (2005), these concerns tend to be less serious when students have been more familiar with the teaching and learning environment at university.

Motivational factors in a research course

According to Dornyei (2000) and Henne et al. (2008), research courses will be effective with the support of instructors who play an important role in creating the basic motivational conditions, generating the motivation, maintaining and protecting motivation, and rounding of the learning experience. Teachers can create a pleasant and supportive atmosphere for the learning process where the learners' attitudes towards the subject can be enhanced. By setting goals and sub-goals, teachers can increase the quality of the learning experience and learners' confidence. They can also encourage students' effort by providing motivational feedback. Effective guidance from instructors can help facilitate positive outcomes. Monahan (1994) also believes that instructors need to identify the problems students have and should help them overcome these feelings with the right teaching and learning strategies as these feelings may prevent students from being able to read critically or may discourage them from being engaged in research of their own or taking additional research courses.

Motivation can also be found in the interaction the individual has with others in a meaningful activity. Paris and Turner (1994) argued that working together is motivational when different ideas and lateral thinking are encouraged, when peers provide models expertise that others can emulate, and when persistence is enhanced because of the obligation to the group and a collaborative goal. Group situations give an aid to students' learning and demonstrate a 'natural' motivation to collaborate (Sotto, 1994). However, Crook (2000) believes that tasks and social and emotional factors also determine individuals' levels of motivation, so that group support is one of the most affective benefits of collaboration.

METHODOLOGY

The research methods course for English majors at BUH provides information about various types of research designs as well as the stages of the research process and requires students to work on a group research project. Therefore, this course is not designed for freshmen who are quite new to the university environment and may find it overwhelming. This study collected data from 84 students among 125 English-majored sophomores who had just finished the research methods course and group research projects, so their feelings for the course were still fresh and the information shared by them would have higher validity value. Students attending the course could learn theories and practice doing research at the same time, so the information obtained from them is from a perspective of a learner and also a beginner researcher. A questionnaire is prepared and sent to this BUH sophomores' group via Facebook, and the data was obtained on the basis of students' consent and voluntary participation.

The study focused on the two research questions:

1. What were the attitudes of students towards the research methods course?
2. How important were the role of instructors and peers in their learning process?

The first hypothesis was that students would feel negative because they were overloaded with new and challenging scientific concepts, which discouraged them from doing more research.

The second hypothesis was that instructors played a significant role in students' research experiences and participation in research projects. However, the support from peers was more important than teachers' support because of the common understanding between students and the time spent together when working on group projects.

The instrument is a 5-point Likert scale designed based on the Undergraduate Research Questionnaire (URQ) developed by Taraban et al. (2008) to identify and quantify the critical dimensions in students' attitudes toward research experiences. Although the URQ has five scales, Academic Mindset is not included in the survey of this study as it reflects skills associated with academically efficient and effective students, which is not directly related to research. The others include Research Mindset, which reflects students' excitement about science and their confidence in conducting research and in critical and analytical thinking; Research Methods, which expresses students' confidence in their ability to design experiments, generate hypotheses, carry out experiments, analyze data, and report experimental results; Instructors' Support, which focuses on the role of teachers and mentors in providing role models for students, in encouraging them in their coursework and academic goals, providing feedback, and being available to discuss students' major areas of study and career options; and Peer Support, which emphasizes a supportive role for peers.

In addition to doing the survey, all the students also wrote narrative descriptions to reflect their feelings about the course and the experience of doing research. However, the analysis of these opinions was not included in this study due to limits of time and space.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Mindset

Table 1 summarizes the attitudes of students toward their research mindset improvement after the course. As shown in the table, there are a quite small number of students feeling uncertain about research. The mean score ranges from 3.88 to 4.40 concentrating on the

area of agreeing with the statements. Most students highly valued the research knowledge they could learn from the course with 90.5% agreeing that their understanding of the subject had been improved while 9.5% had no special view on this aspect. Students 'strongly agreed' that their ability to think more scientifically had been improved and that the research experience was important for undergraduate programs with the mean score 4.24. The results correspond to Spilich (1997) believing in the benefits of doing research at the very early years of university. However, there were still some doubts on the excitement of the subject and the improvement of confidence although these did not account for large numbers, 4.8 and 2.4% respectively. Students also found difficulties in time management, balancing their schedule with other obligations, and being independent academically, ranging from 2.4 to 7.1%. It can be explained that some students have not been familiar with loads of work involved the research process and found it quite stressful.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Research Mindset

Variable	Mean	SD
1. Research helps me in better understanding of subject.	4.40	.665
2. I am more interested in research due to my research experience.	3.88	.861
3. My research experience has helped me think more scientifically.	4.24	.726
4. My self-confidence has increased due to my involvement in research.	3.98	.715
5. Being efficient in my academic work is something I have learned.	4.12	.633
6. Balancing my class schedule with other obligations is something I have learned.	3.93	.677
7. I have better time-management skills.	3.95	.962
8. I have become more independent academically.	4.02	.780
9. I have developed a routine for completing my schoolwork.	3.98	.780
10. I have become more academically responsible.	4.05	.731
11. Doing research is an important part of my undergraduate experience.	4.24	.726

Research Methods

Table 2 demonstrates an analysis of the opinions of students on the development of their research methods. It is shown in the table that although the majority of students agreed that they could improve research knowledge and skills after the course, their attitudes toward this were not as positive as toward the importance of research; the mean scores also concentrate in the positive areas and tend to be lower than in the first scale. The most remarkable is that 92% of the respondents appreciated the opportunity to work collaboratively with others.

Although no students said that that they did not understand the contemporary concepts in the field or could not conduct literature research, large numbers of the opinions were neutral (35.7 and 42.9% respectively), showing that students were still unsure about the understanding of the field and literature research, and the figures for neutral ideas were the highest when it comes to students' writing skills and critical judgment (47 and 45.2% respectively). These problems are also mentioned in Wilson (1998) and Wilson and Onwuegbuzie (2001). Two students of the 84 respondents felt disappointed with many activities in the research process, i.e. formulating hypotheses, working with sources, collecting and processing data using software, etc. and unable to catch up with the whole group.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Research Methods

Variable	**Mean**	**SD**
1. I can think and work independently on a research project.	3.83	.762
2. I can work collaboratively with others.	4.31	.604
3. I can understand contemporary concepts in my field.	3.86	.751
4. I can identify a specific question for investigation based on the research in my field.	4.02	.749
5. I can formulate a research hypothesis based on a specific question.	3.88	.739
6. I can conduct literature search.	3.71	.708
7. I can understand research paper/journal article.	3.95	.697
8. I have sufficient and high-quality sources.	3.79	.750
9. I have good critical judgement and reflection upon the sources.	3.69	.811
10. I know how to work with references or cite sources	3.81	.740
11. I can write a literature review.	3.90	.617
12. I can document a research procedure.	3.76	.692
13. I can observe and collect data.	3.93	.640
14. I can statistically analyze data using computer software.	3.79	.813
15. I can organize research ideas in writing.	3.83	.730
16. I can interpret data by relating results to original hypothesis.	3.74	.857
17. I can write a research paper.	3.67	.650
18. I can relate results to the bigger picture in my field.	3.83	.696
19. I can orally communicate the results of research projects.	3.74	.828
20. I have sufficient time for the research project.	3.93	.745
21. I have good writing skills: accurate grammar and appropriate style.	3.67	.816

Peer Support

Although there was some unpleasant experience among students when they did not find peers encouraging or supportive and failed to learn from teammates, fortunately it was not very common. Table 3 below illustrates the different attitudes of the survey participants towards their friends' support. With all the mean scores of different categories higher than 4.0, working with peers was proven to be effective, especially when students needed encouragement to excel in their work and to improve the persistence (around 87 %), which is also mentioned in Paris and Turner (1994).

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Peer Support

Variable	Mean	SD
1. Teammates have encouraged me to excel in my coursework.	4.24	.790
2. Teammates have helped me clarify my professional goals.	4.21	.813
3. Teammates have been good role models for me.	4.07	.894
4. I have received academic support from teammates.	4.07	.838
5. Teammates' comments and ideas have encouraged my curiosity and further exploration.	4.10	.790
6. I have paid more attention to teammates' perspectives.	4.10	.656
7. Teammates have provided models of expertise that I can learn from.	4.10	.726
8. Teammates have given me useful feedback about my oral presentations.	4.19	.773
9. Teamwork has helped increase my belief in self-efficacy.	4.02	.780
10. My persistence is enhanced when working in a team.	4.10	.790

Instructors' Support

As mentioned Dornyei (2000) and Henne et al. (2008), instructors are a source of motivation for students. Table 4, which provides information on how students appreciate the support from their teachers, shows that students in the survey had very positive views on the role of the teachers with all the mean scores 4.2 and higher and up to 94% of the students had received sufficient academic support from their instructors and 54% of the participants were very happy with the useful feedback from teachers.

Table 4

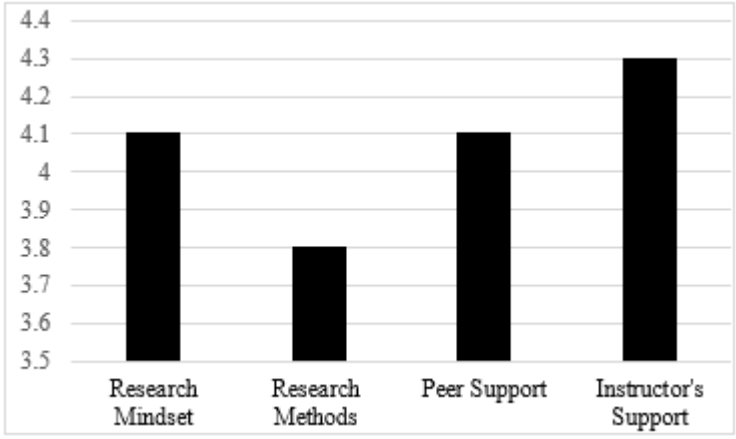
Descriptive Statistics for Instructors' Support

Variable	Mean	SD
1. The instructor has encouraged me to excel in my coursework.	4.24	.656
2. I have received academic support from the instructor.	4.38	.582
3. The instructor has encouraged me in my academic goals.	4.33	.650
4. The instructor has been a good role model for me.	4.24	.692
5. It was easy to discuss ideas in my area of study with the instructor.	4.19	.671
6. The instructor has given me useful feedback about my writing.	4.40	.734

When compared with other factors, the role of instructors' support was the best recognized and proven to be very important in the research learning process, which is shown in Figure 1. Students also made improvement in their research mindset and worked well with their teams. However, many of them were still struggling with knowledge about research methods and skills and might need more time before they can feel more comfortable with it.

Figure 1

Mean ratings for the four scale scores



From the data collected the researcher can answer the two research questions raised at the beginning. Unlike what had been hypothesized, most students found the usefulness of the course and had positive attitudes towards the knowledge and experience they could obtain

during the course despite some difficulties when being integrated into the academic world. It means that the course in some way can meet students' expectation and should be expanded widely among students in higher education. As for the second question, students appreciated the support from both instructors and peers, which implies that these factors played important roles in the progress of students. What is different from what had been suggested before the survey is that students were a little more positive to the instructors' support, which means that teachers should always be reliable sources of encouragement in the course.

LIMITATIONS

Some matters occurring during this research need consideration to achieve higher reliability and validity values. Firstly, the generalization of the research cannot be ensured as it was conducted on a small number of students at a single university. The result would be much more reliable if more students and more schools could be studied. Another limitation is that the data was collected in a cross-sectional study, which could only measure students' views on research methods with single items only once in the process, which can cause problems with respect to reliability of the data. To understand the reasons for the difficulties students had during the course and the variousness of problems, researchers should have spent more time with students doing longitudinal quantitative or qualitative research with data collected from interviews, observation, or narrative descriptions from students. In these ways, problems can be identified individually and more accurately, and the right methods can be implemented to fully engage students in the research learning. Therefore, at this time, this study can serve only as an exploratory point of departure for further studies.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Research participation should be encouraged among students in higher education so that they can benefit more fully from academic opportunities. Students can develop practices and be integrated into the academic environment where they can shape their knowledge, skills, and beliefs about research. However, teaching research methods to students is not an easy task. It is essential to take into consideration many internal and external factors before students can be more interested in research and may include it in their career choice. First, teachers should continue to be a reliable support who not only teach new knowledge but also give encouragement and rational feedbacks to learners. Teachers need to address students' problems early on the course to offer help and encouragement at the right time. Second, the classroom environment should be supportive of learning and building up confidence. Students who are struggling can turn to teachers, partners in their teams, or even any classmates dealing with the problems more effectively. Thirdly, the

structure of the course should be designed to include activities which help students understand what is being taught, and what the usefulness and importance of such a course is. They will feel more interested in the course and might put more efforts into the lessons if they can find the practicality and relationships between what they learn and they experience (Wilensky, 1997). Finally, both teachers and students need a more systematic and comprehensive research agenda which give them more time to work with each other and master the knowledge and skills before students can independently do research. If these elements can be taken into account, students can improve knowledge and skills, and be more confident to get into the academic world with the support of instructors and peers.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Le Thi Minh Thuy has been working in the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Ho Chi Minh City Banking University for 10 years and is usually in charge of teaching subjects related to language theories. While doing research on learning and teaching English, she also works with other lecturers to prepare teaching materials for different subjects, such as Grammar, Translation, Phonetics, Phonology, Semantics, and Literature. She is looking forward to opportunities to further her understanding of English linguistics in the future.

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EMBEDDING DIGITAL LITERACY INTO BUSINESS ENGLISH CURRICULUM AT UEH[1]: WHAT AND HOW

Ms. HA THANH BICH LOAN

UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Concerning digitalization in education, most people often think of transferring learning materials to electronic forms in order to set up various learning resources and make them more accessible. However, as regards learning outcomes, students need to be equipped with digital knowledge and skills to meet job requirements in this digital era. This causes learning program planners to have to embed digital literacy into curriculums as well as syllabi. Although IC3* has become a certificate that students must have so as to meet the requirements for graduation, it seems not to support enough for them to join professional activities in the workplace because it is just like an "infrastructure". The question raised here is what and how should be embedded. This paper aims to review what and how people here and there have been adding digital literacy into their English language programs. The findings reveal that digital literacy can be added into every single subject of a curriculum in terms of subject-related knowledge and skills, which may be seen as a breakthrough in designing a learning program in Vietnam at present.

Keywords: *digital literacy, embedding, knowledge and skills, job requirements*

INTRODUCTION

Digital literacy is an extremely popular concept when it comes to applying digital technology to professional or personal life. During the ad hoc lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the term *digital literacy* seems to be mentioned more than ever, especially in education because "students or pupils can stop coming to school but cannot stop studying" (Nguyen Xuan Phuc, former Prime Minister of Vietnam).

In education, digital literacy is often referred to as indispensable knowledge and skills in using platforms, tools, and devices in online teaching and learning. Similarly, in business, digital literacy means basic and necessary knowledge and skills in using platforms, tools, and devices in dealing with job tasks. That is also the reason why undergraduates at universities in general, and at UEH, in particular, are equipped with this kind of

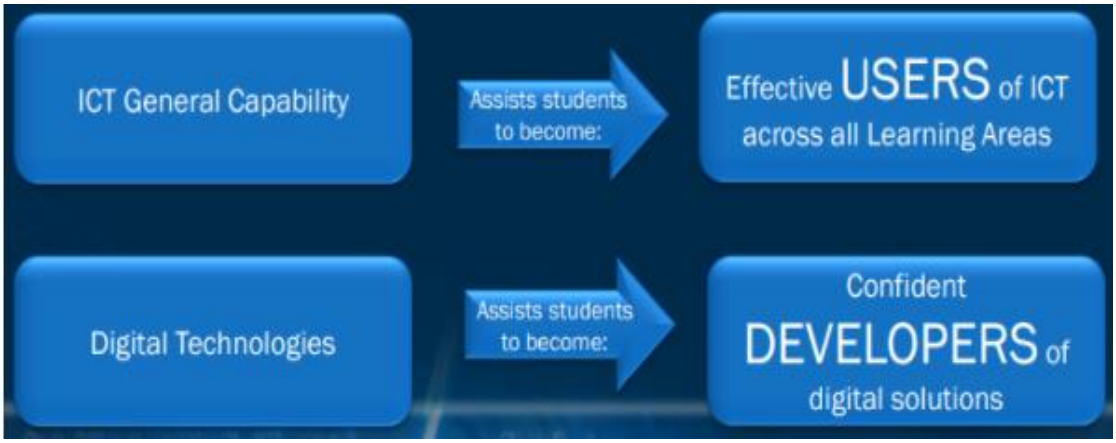
[1] University of Economics - Ho Chi Minh City

knowledge and skills to meet the demands of the labor market. IC3 (Digital Literacy Certification), which refers to ICT [2] literacy, therefore is one of the compulsory certificates for student's graduation from UEH. This is an international certificate issued by Certiport.

However, the concept of *digital literacy* has recently been expanded to a broad definition. It includes not only basic digital knowledge and skills of digital technology like IC3 but also professional digital literacy such as digital economy, financial technology (FinTech), digital marketing, digital sales, education technology (EdTech), etc.

Figure 1

The difference between ICT general capability and digital technologies[3]



Source: https://www.digitaltechnologieshub.edu.au/teachers/professional-learning/webinars/integrating-dt-into-other-subject-areas

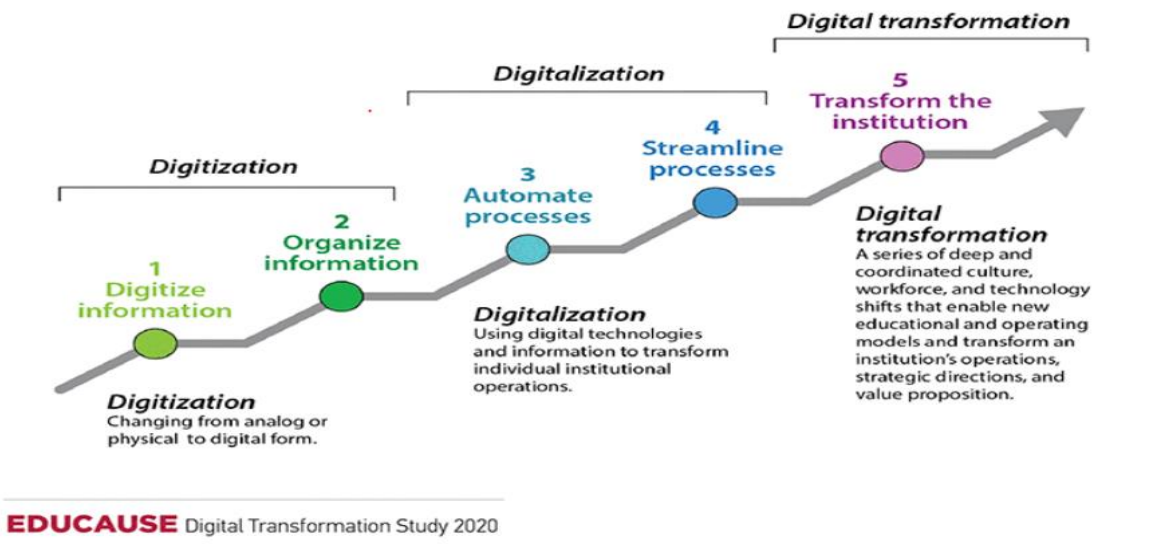
Applying digital literacy to different aspects from governmental bodies to business organizations or educational institutions is closely related to two factors: *digitization* and *digitalization*. *Digitization* means converting paper documents or encoding data into a digital form, which refers to *information*; meanwhile, *digitalization* means transferring business ***processes*** or offline systems such as paper or whiteboards by using digital technologies, which is also called *digital transformation* (Hartmann, 2017). However, according to EDUCAUSE (Brooks & McCormack, 2020), these concepts are classified in different levels as follows:

[2] Information and Communication Technology

[3] Kinnane, A. (April 26). Webinar 4: Integrating digital technology into other subject areas. Retrieved from https://www.digitaltechnologieshub.edu.au/teachers/professional-learning/webinars/integrating-dt-into-other-subject-areas

Figure 2

The difference among digitization, digitalization, and digital transformation



Source: https://library.educause.edu/resources/2020/6/driving-digital-transformation-in-higher-education

In the scope of this paper, the concept of ***digitalization*** will be discussed in terms of embedding the professional knowledge and skills of digital technology into a training curriculum in general and the English Linguistics program of UEH in particular. Nevertheless, digitalization and ***digital transformation*** are commonly used interchangeably, so are they in this paper.

What do we mean by digital literacy?

According to Rubble & Bailey (2007), digital literacy is "the capability to use digital technology and knowing when and how to use it" (p.21). Ribble & Shaaban (2011) define digital literacy as the use of technology as well as teaching and learning about it. With the significance of technology in this era, Reedy & Parker (2018) asserts: "Digital literacy is a powerful subject, which supports inclusivity, social mobility and digital citizenship globally." (p.1)

The ALA's Digital Literacy Task Force[4] gives a more detailed definition of digital literacy: digital literacy is "the ability to use information and communication technologies to find, evaluate, create, and communicate information, requiring both cognitive and technical skills." and it "should be considered to be a part of the path to knowledge."

[4] ALA: The American Library Association

Therefore, to meet the requirements of the digital era, "schools are continuously updating their curricula to keep up with accelerating technological developments."

As stated in a study by Delacruz (2018), Virtual Field Trips model, a kind of multimedia presentation, has offered chances for students to take trips to many different places to meet experts or take part in interactive learning tasks right in their classroom. The virtual field trips, hence, have also been used as a tool for cross-cultural exchange among schools internationally. Furthermore, this model also allows students to create "their own digital content, a core standard from The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) ".

DigCompEdu[5] (in Europe) built a framework for developing digital literacy including two priority areas: "fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem, and enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation". (p.1)

Many years ago, digital literacy skills ware defined as a workforce preparation activity but now it means that employees need to be digitally literate, or have full digital competence. In fact, many white collar jobs nowadays take digital literacy into account when hiring or promoting staff; for example, a study on the role of digital literacy in the EU labor market showed that the more individuals are digitally literate the more they are employed. On the contrary, if companies, especially entrepreneurs, are digitally literate, they can not only enhance their performance but also their brand image. Similarly, research also shows that "digitally literate entrepreneurs are able to communicate and reach wider markets than non-digitally literate ones as they use web-management and e-commerce platforms supported by data analysis and coding". (Astuti & Nasution, 2014, as cited in Wikipedia, 2021)

As cited by Wikipedia, the NYC Department of Education states that being digitally-literate signifies being knowledgeable and able to use various technology tools in different circumstances. In other words, a digitally-literate person can use technology skillfully in order to attain academic, professional, as well as personal goals. (Mantiri et al., 2019)

In the paper "A Global Framework of Reference on Digital Literacy Skills for Indicator 4.4.2", Law et al. (2018, p.6) proposes the following integral definition for digital literacy:

Digital literacy is the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate and create information safely and appropriately through digital technologies for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship. It includes competences that are variously

[5] the Digital Competence of Educators

referred to as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy and media literacy.

The importance of digital literacy in the undergraduate curriculum

As stated in the Digital Education Action Plan (2021-2027) by the European Union (EU), in the future 90% of jobs in all sectors in Europe will require digital skills, from basic to advanced. Furthermore, Education in EU (2020) points out that it is necessary for Europeans to gain digital skills to thrive in a technology-driven economy. It means that workers, job hunters, and even students will need to be digitally skilled to succeed in the digital age as well as adapt to new technologies.

In the aspect of technology, Garner (2016) states that one can know some things about digital technology but cannot know everything about it, so we all need to learn.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused institutions to accelerate digital transformation and enforce digital transformation, whether they intend to do or not, for survival. (Karen Wetzel, Director, Community and Working Groups, EDUCAUSE). Purposefultechnology (2011, p.1) also emphasizes the importance of integrating digital literacy into academic curricula:

> "*Technology is an advantage in the classroom because it gives students the chance to explore technological mediums which inevitably increase job skills that employers look for in the workforce.*"

According to Oxford University Press ELT (2017), the US Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that 77% of jobs within the next ten years "will require some degree of technology skills".

For business environment, Goasduff (2020) comments that due to the COVID-19 pandemic, accelerating digital business becomes feasible and critical for companies' survival. The website Purposeful Technology-Constructing Meaning in 21st Century Schools explains that people with white-collar jobs need to have digital literacy in terms of using media to present, record and analyze data, meanwhile blue-collar jobs have to be digitally literate to look for ways of increasing productivity, analyzing market trends, as well as enhancing job safety.

The main finding of the study on the effect of digital literacy on the performance of SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in Indonesia shows that digital literacy plays a very important role in digital business relationships as well as business and marketing networks. (Sariwulan et al., 2020)

For education, (Mantiri et al., 2019) point out that though schools have equipped computer technology in the classrooms, students have not been offered opportunities to develop their digital skills.

What is more, the article *Preparing English Learners for Work and Career Pathways, Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS)* [6] indicates that English language learners (ELLs) need both English instruction and occupational skills training to satisfy the multiple-skill demands of employers such as marketable skills (hard and soft skills) or employability skills (transferable skills) as well as knowledge of in areas related to health, information technology, or manufacturing.

As regards an English language program, Webber (2017) suggests three main reasons for adding digital literacy into second language instruction: (1) *digital literacy is now an essential skill for participation in today's digital world***.** For instance, applying for a job or just filling out an online form to register with a club or a workshop requires digital literacy skills; (2) *teaching digital literacy involves teaching vocabulary.* It means that key vocabulary for digital literacy and their functions must be learned and practiced through various computer applications; (3) *And most importantly, students learn by practicing***.** In fact, computers and the Internet are natural contexts to practice language skills for real digital tasks.

In a nutshell, digital literacy need to be inserted into language programs to achieve the due target of both language skills and technological skills.

As a whole, Lynch (2017) suggests eight essential digital literacy skills that students need to succeed in any career:

1. Coding
2. Collaboration
3. Cloud Software
4. Word Processing Software
5. Screencasting
6. Personal Archiving
7. Information Evaluation
8. Social Media Savvy

What is digital literacy for English language students?

Sardzoski (2021) shares a two-in-one approach that combines teaching ICT with EFL skills in the course named Digital Literacy for EFL Students. The aim of the course is to reinforce their language competence by using digital technology in the learning program. In this kind of course, students learn and practice indispensable basic skills in the digital era such as: Blogging, Web Design, Filmmaking and Video Editing, Social Networks, and Presentation Skills. When producing digital products, the students use English as a

[6] LINCS ESL PRO

tool to share and promote their ideas beyond their classroom. Moreover, the course also offers a meaningful context for students to enhance their entrepreneurship skills through getting some knowledge of digital branding for products or services. To put it simply, students have good opportunities to use various skills needed for success in college, career, and life.

Jenkins (2015) suggests POST (*People, Objectives, Strategy, and Technology*) as an approach for planning lessons with digital literacy activities. The element of *People* refers to their current ability and their needs. It is to say that teachers need to identify students' level of proficiency both in English and in technology in order to design appropriate lessons. *Objective* means defining types of digital literacy skills that students need to gain in the lesson. The objective includes dual aims: (1) students use language tools (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation), as well as language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing), and (2) digital literacy such as using apps or online tools to create digital products as required by a task. *Strategies* mentions identifying the activities that help students reach the lesson objective. The *Technology* component signifies considering the technology that students will use in the real world. Besides, the author points out that the best way to do this is to make a list of possible tasks or activities and respective technologies that will be deployed in the lesson by using an integrated approach (Eisenburg & Johnson, 2002). Besides POST, TPACK (Technological, Pedagogical, Content, Knowledge) framework (Bugueño, 2013) is another model for integrating digital technologies into a curriculum.

LINCS ESL PRO also indicates that it is essential for students to use technology for extending English language learning by creating and communicating information. Particularly, with basic digital literacy skills, ELLs can extend their learning beyond the classroom in terms of producing and communicating information online through various language acquisition activities which integrate both types of skills: (1) four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and (2) digital literacy skills.

Embedding digital literacy into curriculum

With the significance of digital literacy in education, the website Centre for Learning and Teaching recommends embedding digital literacy into curriculum:

Digital literacy needs to be integrated across the curriculum, rather than regarded as an add-on. It is best taught by embedding it into a subject, and working with real-life examples so that learners develop it through authentic tasks in meaningful situations over the whole of their programme of study. (p.6)

Embedding technology into curriculum (Naaweb, 2021) or integrating digital technology into school curriculum (Matos et al., 2019) mainly focuses on adding digital knowledge

and skills in general to date. There are few cases in which *digital professional literacy* embedded into every single subject to enhance graduates' professional development; i.e., students gain both specialist knowledge and professional digital literacy of that subject.

How to embed digital literacy into curriculum

According to Khanh Ngô (2021), in the Webinar with the senior management on Cisco Webex on July 16, 2021 held by UEH, there are two ways to embed digital literacy into the undergraduate curriculum: (1) *adding a new chapter about digital technology to the current syllabus*, and (2) inserting *concepts, knowledge, case studies, stories related to digital technology in every single current chapter/unit.*

What kind of digital literacy should be embedded?

What to be embedded depends on the contents of the learning program. For example, Phạm Khánh Nam, Dean, UEH's School of Economics, in the Webinar about *Enhancing integration of digital technology into curricula and subjects*, on Cisco Webex on July 16, 2021, held by UEH, shared what his school is doing at present: embedding digital knowledge must be related to the current contents; e.g., a chapter on Digital Economy is selected to be embedded into Macroeconomics.

As reported by Jisc (2014), the resources to provide for embedding digital literacies into curriculum should be abundant or diverse such as "case studies, workshop materials, guides and briefings, learning design tools and so on.

Recommendations for embedding digital literacy into the Business English Program at UEH

For a learning program like English Linguistics, it is hard to imagine how to do this and what to do because it covers language issues, while the aim of embedding digital literacy is to equip students for digital knowledge and skills to meet the demanding requirements of the labor market in the digital era.

In the English Linguistics program at UEH, the core contents include Business English; therefore, except for the inherent subjects of English Linguistics such as Phonology, Phonetics, Semantics, Syntax, etc., almost other subjects are related to Business and Economics like Business English, Macroeconomics, Logistics, Business Management, Human Resources Management, Marketing, Logistics, and so forth[7].

Despite many fruitful suggestions from research here and there, there seems not to have been single proper idea for enhancing digital literacy in a Business English program,

[7] Visit https://ueh.edu.vn/dao-tao/dai-hoc-chinh-quy/cu-nhan-chinh-quy-chuan/tieng-anh-thuong-mai/ for the full learning program of English Linguistics at UEH.

whose contents are closely related to economic field. As a result, the recommendations will be based on the selective synthesis of the views mentioned above.

Here is an example of embedding digital literacy into the English Linguistics program at UEH, based on suggestions from Khanh Ngô, Phạm Khánh Nam, and other authors cited in this paper:

Table 1

Embedding digital literacy into a Business English course

Subject	**What**	**How**
Language skills (Business English)	▪ Online meeting tool ▪ Wiki tool (on LMS) ▪ Video recording ▪ Audio tool ▪ Vocabulary stock ▪ Flipped classroom ▪ Breaking news	▪ Simulated business meeting ▪ Project ▪ Documentary film ▪ Podcast ▪ Quizlet.com ▪ LMS ▪ Facebook.com
Macroeconomics	Digital Economy	▪ Concept ▪ Chapter
Marketing	Digital marketing	▪ Chapter ▪ Project
Logistics	▪ Cloud-based platform ▪ Robots, drones, and autonomous vehicles	▪ Concept ▪ Chapter
Business Management	MIS (Management Information Systems)	▪ Concept ▪ Chapter
Human Resources Management	▪ Unilever uses digital technology for their recruiting process. ▪ IBM uses a digital platform their employees' customized experience.	stories

CONCLUSION

With the development of digital technology and the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, almost every sector or organization is forced to practice digital transformation so as to move forward. This means the workforce also has to change themselves to meet the challenges from the labor market. Students are the objective of this, who need to be equipped with not only professional knowledge but also digital literacy. That is the reason why educational institutions must quickly respond to the digital revolution, demands from entrepreneurs as well. The best way to do this is to embed digital knowledge and skills into subjects of the curriculum properly.

For a learning program of English Linguistics - Business English major, which is much closer to the economic field, it is vital to add more knowledge about economics, along with digital skills integrated in the language learning process. With this dual aim, the graduates will be able to confidently join the labor market both locally and internationally as they are considered to be digital citizens.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Ha Thanh Bich Loan is an English instructor at School of Foreign Languages, University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. She received her MA in TESOL from University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City. Her research interests primarily lie in curriculum design, language testing, and e-learning.

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TEST ITEM ANALYSIS: AN EXAMPLE AT THE UEH UNIVERSITY

Dr. PHAN THI VAN THANH
UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

Ms. TRINH MAI PHUONG
University of Pedagogy, Ho Chi Minh City

Ms. NGUYEN HO THANH TRUC
University of Pedagogy, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Learning Management Systems (LMSs) allow convenient and systematic tracking of students' participation and performance in a way that might have been very challenging and time-consuming. Mini-tests d employed on the LMS at the Department of Foreign Languages, the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh city (UEH University), provided vital and authentic data for conducting test item analysis, which is mainly used for identifying problematic and biased test items. The current paper aims to report major theories and practices related to multiple-choice test item analysis and illustrate the detailed techniques for analyzing test items using IBM SPSS software. With step-by-step instructions on how to run necessary statistical tests, we hope readers could easily replicate the analyzing process and consequently improve their own tests' quality before disseminating to students.

Keywords: *assessment, testing, test item analysis*

INTRODUCTION

Testing is an essential component in the holistic cycle of teaching and education. It is to provide learners and teachers with important information regarding whether learning outcomes have been met and what should be taken away as lessons for advancing to the next levels in curricula. Unfortunately, as observed, in many cases and for a variety of reasons from being too bogged down with teaching or working loads to not being equipped with adequate methodology to monitor test quality, most teachers have perhaps been ignoring the test item analysis phase. Being left unmonitored and not consolidated, those test items have been applied from semesters to semesters, threatening their reliability and validity. This could be dangerous, yet, has been deliberately repetitive. In

an effort to ameliorate the situation, we hereby present the concept of test item analysis, relevant literature of test item analysis, and the specific procedure for how to conduct test item analysis to yield findings that could shed light on enhancing testing quality. We understand there are many genres of testing and evaluation existing in the field of ESL/EFL teaching; however, the scope of our brief paper merely covers multiple choice questions because of their omnipresence and data availability. Additionally, due to the scarcity of data, we did not include item distractor analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Assessment and evaluation play a vital role in the areas of language teaching and learning (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Cheng, Rogers, & Hu, 2004; Torres, 2019) and correlate to a multitude of TESOL aspects such as language teaching methodology and curriculum design (Davison & Cumins, 2007). The underlying concepts including tests, assessment, measurement and evaluation have been used interchangeably regardless of possessing distinguishing attributes.

MEASUREMENT

Measurement, by and large, demonstrates the process of quantifying the characteristics of individuals and can be further clarified in three distinctive features: quantification, characteristics, and explicit rules and procedures. In other words, it denotes assigning numbers, non-numerical categories or labels to the characteristics of a person under explicit rules (Bachman, 1995). In the context of education, measurement can be referred to as the practice of quantifying a learner's level of language proficiency making use of a wide range of tools such as a questionnaire or a test (Adom et al., 2020).

EVALUATION

By definition, evaluation can be described as a process of obtaining information for decision-making practices (Bachman, 1995; Rea-Dickins, 1994). As a component of ELT, evaluation is deemed to be an incentive for professional and curriculum enhancement (Rea-Dickins, 1994). It is an on-going process which can be conducted internally by the educational program's stakeholders or entail external evaluations by individuals or institutions outside the program (Yambi, 2018).

ASSESSMENT AND TESTS

While evaluation can be seen to adopt quantitative and qualitative methods in collecting data pertaining to the determination of the quality of a program, assessment is undertaken

to give an insight into student learning and devise measures to improve their performance (Yambi, 2018). Indeed, assessment occurs during the process of learning and teaching when both teachers and students benefit substantially. Students are thereby able to receive constructive feedback in order to make any possible adjustments to their learning strategies aiming at preset learning outcomes. Likewise, assessment is utilized by instructors for operating regular job appraisal concerning the appropriateness of their teaching methodologies. Information is subsequently yielded using numerous assessment instruments, inclusive of tests, interviews, questionnaire observations, etc. (Cheng et al., 2008; Davison & Cumins, 2007; Torres, 2019; Yambi, 2018)

Tests, accordingly, serve as tools for assessment. A test is defined as a measurement method of identifying an individual's ability, knowledge, or performance (Bachman, 1995; Brown, 2004). What differentiates a test from other means of measurement is that it is created to receive a specific set of behavior. It is also highlighted that language testing is of great significance in giving evidence of learning and teaching and thus reviewing the effectiveness of a teaching program. As a result, practitioners are required to reach a certain level of competence in language testing (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). According to Bachman (1995), language tests can be categorized with reference to five different features: the intended use, the content, the frame of reference, the scoring procedure and the testing method.

MULTIPLE CHOICE TECHNIQUE

In terms of scoring procedure, objective and subjective tests are distinguishable from one another. Subjective tests do require extra judgements from raters whereas raters for objective tests are bound to adhere to predetermined marking criteria. Multiple choice technique is a typical example of objective tests (Bachman, 1995). Designing multiple-choice test items is an overwhelming task as a number of its drawbacks are taken into consideration (Brown, 2004):

- Only recognition knowledge is tested
- Guessing has a huge impact on test scores
- The restriction on what is tested is obvious
- Washback might be detrimental
- Cheating might be unavoidable

Notwithstanding differing perspectives in foreign language learning and assessment, Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) have consistently been the most predominant testing items for both standardized tests and non-standardized tests composed by educators (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Jayanti et al., 2019). Requiring test-takers to select the most

appropriate option among a list of alternatives, this testing format facilitates scoring, rater predisposition avoidance and knowledge content coverage (Weimer, 2018).

The efficacy of MCQ-based testing can be optimized by intensive analyses of each test item due to the interrelation between the quality of individual test questions and the whole test (Sharma, 2000; Oluseyi & Olufemi, 2012). This analysis is a process wherein both candidates' responses and individual test questions are examined. Data collected greatly benefits not only the test but the test item writer also. They aid in the identification, elimination, or adjustment of problematic items (Lange et al., 1967), hence the improvement in adequacy of the MCQ-based tests. Additionally, detailed analytics about confusing or misleading test items provide input from which test item writers can further develop their question construction skills and identify specific course content that needs more focus on.

Approaches to test item analysis may vary, but its quality indicators usually include Item Facility (IF), Item Discrimination (ID), and Distractor Effectiveness (DE).

- ***Item Facility*** (IF), one main parameter measuring item difficulty, is defined as the percentage of students getting the item right. With an index from a low of 0 to a high of 1.00, IFs ranging from 0.15 to 0.85 can indicate an acceptable test item (Brown, 2004).

- ***Item Discrimination*** (ID) is a measure comparing responses to the same test item of two groups of testees, high-scoring and low-scoring. Generally, higher discrimination index is the indicator of better items. Specifically, varying from – 1.00 to +1.00, values close to +1.00 indicate highly discriminating items, which means high-achievers tend to answer correctly and gain higher scores for the test item (Brown, 2004).

- ***Distractor Effectiveness*** (DE).

In MCQs, distractors are wrong alternatives which are used to 'distract' and check if testees can notice the differences among all the options. Distractor Effectiveness (DE) or Functionality refers to the distribution of distractors chosen in each question, or the percentage of low-achievers selecting each distractor in one question. However, there is no specific formula for calculating DE, but if no testee chooses a particular distractor, it is considered as "dysfunctional" and test-constructors are advised to review and replace it (Malau-Aduli & Zimitat, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

Data of 25 students (N=25) was collected from an English for Business class in the Department of Foreign Languages, UEH University. As one of the formative assessment

forms used throughout the entire course, tests were delivered to students at the end of each unit. These tests were to check students' retention and comprehension of the content of the units. Each test comprised 30 multiple choice questions testing mainly vocabulary and grammar, 10 cloze test items, 10 reading comprehension and 10 listening comprehension questions. For the purpose of the study, 15 multiple choice questions were extracted from a .CSV test result file.

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

The .CSV file was imported to SPSS after deleting irrelevant data of students' names, ID, email addresses, log in time and dates. Decimal separator was converted from ',' to '.' to be compatible with the SPSS decimal system. Question numbers were recoded as Qx, with x being the numbers from 1 to 15. Each question became a dependent variable and a new variable called 'Total_Score', which is the total points of all 15 variables, was calculated. Basic statistical values including measures of central tendency (mean and standard deviation), reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha), frequencies statistics, and point biserial were investigated.

Difficulty.

First, a descriptive analysis was run to get the central tendency of all the questions in the quiz. We clicked on Analyze, then Descriptive Statistics, and later clicked on Descriptive. Next, we put all the question variables to the Variables column, clicked Options and selected Mean, Std. deviation, and Descending means. From the results, we could easily see which question had the highest means. The logic was the higher the mean is, the easier the question is. From the result table we could roughly tell which question was the easiest and which one was the hardest.

For example, questions number 1, 5, and 9 should be very easy because the means for those were the highest and almost equal the maximum possible score for each question (0.1). In contrast, questions 12, 13, 14, and 15 might be too hard for students because the means were low. The results suggested we come back and revisit our test items to see if we need to revise them.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Measuring Difficulty level

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
VAR00001	25	.00	.10	.0960	.02000
VAR00002	25	.00	.10	.0880	.03317
VAR00003	25	.00	.10	.0680	.04761
VAR00004	25	.00	.10	.0760	.04359
VAR00005	25	.00	.10	.0960	.02000
VAR00006	25	.00	.10	.0920	.02769
VAR00007	25	.00	.10	.0840	.03742
VAR00008	25	.00	.10	.0880	.03317
VAR00009	25	.00	.10	.0960	.02000
VAR00010	25	.00	.10	.0800	.04082
VAR00011	25	.00	.10	.0760	.04359
VAR00012	25	.00	.10	.0640	.04899
VAR00013	25	.00	.10	.0640	.04899
VAR00014	25	.00	.10	.0440	.05066
VAR00015	25	.00	.10	.0600	.05000
Valid N (listwise)	25				

However, knowing a question is too hard or too easy may not be enough for us to make decisions. Next, a reliability coefficient test (Cronbach's Alpha) was run. We went to Analyze, Scale, and Reliability, put all the variables into the Items column, selected options, Item, Scale, and Scale of item deleted. Then, we clicked Continue and then OK. What we needed to mainly care about was the Cronbach's Alpha value, which should be as close to 1 as possible because if it was closer to 1, our test would have a high internal consistency, which meant how closely related a set of items are as a group. In this situation, the value was only .554, proving the test did not have a very high internal consistency. What this told us could be that we needed to revise our test and consider deleting the questions that if deleted would enhance the Cronbach's Alpha's value.

Table 2

Cronbach's Alpha Value for Reliability Level

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.554	.624	15

Descriptive analysis and reliability coefficient were the first two basic tests to run in examining whether a multiple-choice test was reliable or not. Moving on, we would discuss frequency statistics, a very important factor in deciding the reliability of a test. Again, we clicked on Analyze, Descriptive Statistics, and then Frequencies, moved all the question variables to the Variable column, then clicked on Statistics. We did not have to select Central Tendency checkboxes since we had known the means and standard deviation in the Descriptive test. We only needed to check the Quartiles box.

We could see in the results that each variable/question would have the frequency and percent column. For example, for question 1, there were 24 out of 25 students answering correctly, IF=.96. This might lead us to interpret that this question was a very easy one, did not have a high level of discriminating between high performers versus low performers and therefore, might need revising. Question 14 appeared to be a challenging question as there were 14 incorrect responses and 11 correct ones, IF=.44. Question 12 on the other hand had 9 correct responses and 16 incorrect ones, IF=.36. These two questions might be considered having better reliability in terms of discriminating students.

Table 3

Item Facility

VAR00001

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	1	4.0	4.0	4.0
	.10	24	96.0	96.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

VAR00012

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	9	36.0	36.0	36.0
	.10	16	64.0	64.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

VAR00014

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	.00	14	56.0	56.0	56.0
	.10	11	44.0	44.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Discrimination.

We need to be mindful that there as one more test to run to avoid biased questions and false discrimination – the point biserial, which is in fact a very basic form of correlation.

We click on Analyze, Correlate, and then Bivariate. We had calculated a variable called "Total_Score" which represented the total score of each student for all the questions. The correlation between this and each variable would tell us if the students' score for that test item truly reflected their deep understanding of the materials. The result of the point biserial of question number 14 was considered having a good level of discrimination. The Pearson correlation value r=.266. Normally, the rule of thumb is that the value below .20 is considered a poor test item, 0.2-.3 is considered fair and could be improved and 0.4-0.7 is considered good. In the case of question 14, the correlation value is .266, meaning the question appeared to be a rather fair and needed revising.

Table 4

Point Biserial

Correlations

		Total_Score	VAR00014
Total_Score	Pearson Correlation	1	.266
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.199
	N	25	25
VAR00014	Pearson Correlation	.266	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.199	
	N	25	25

CONCLUSION

The current paper presented several techniques for analyzing test items and how to interpret the results to help us recognize good, fair, and poor test items and therefore make proper adjustments to improve the item and test quality. We truly hope the presented techniques could be helpful in assisting teachers and test administrators to revise test items that have been implemented for midterm and more importantly final exams at the UEH University. One limitation of the paper is the lack of item distractor analysis. As indicated in the introduction, we were not able to extract the data from UEH LMS. Had we done that, we would have had to manually collect students' choices, which could be quite overwhelming. Regardless of the limitation, the current paper could still provide readers with insights into the role of test item analysis and many meaningful hands-on steps for practically improving multiple choice test items.

THE AUTHORS

Dr. Phan Thi Van Thanh is an English instructor at the UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City, a freelance eLearning consultant and an English tutor. She was conferred a Master's in TESOL and a doctorate degree in Instructional Technology by Murray State University and Texas Tech University, respectively. Her research interests are instructional message design and computer assisted language learning.

Ms. Trinh Mai Phuong is currently a full-time lecturer at HCMC University of Education where she is teaching skills and English for Tourism mostly to non-English majors. She earned her M.A. in Applied Linguistics at Curtin University in 2012. Her academic fields of interest include teaching English at higher education and language testing and assessment.

Ms. Nguyen Ho Thanh Truc is currently working as a guest lecturer at English Department, Ho Chi Minh city University of Education (HCMUE). She holds a BA degree in English Language Teaching from HCMUE and a Master's in Applied Linguistics from Curtin University. Her research interests include English Language Teaching methodology, Translation, Testing and Assessment.

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USE OF THE DICTIONARY FOR READING SKILL IN FRENCH

Ms. NGUYEN THI THIEN PHUONG
UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Dictionnaries are tools for learning a language, in particular for training in reading skill. However, what types of dictionaries do learners use? Do they have a good method of consulting a dictionary? The author of the article conducted a study on the dictionnary practice of students of the French Department of the Ho Chi Minh University of Pedagogy to try to answer this problem before proposing some reflections in order to improve the efficiency of reading.

Keywords: *reading skill - dictionary - lexicology*

L'USAG*E* DU DICTIONNAIRE POUR LA COMPÉTENCE DE COMPRÉHENSION ÉCRITE EN FRANÇAIS

Les dictionnaires sont des outils au service de l'apprentissage d'une langue, en particulier de l'entraînement à la compréhension écrite. Cependant, quels types de dictionnaires les apprenants utilisent-ils ? Ont-ils une bonne méthode de consulter un dictionnaire ? L'auteure de l'article a mené une étude sur la pratique dictionnariale des étudiants du Département de Français de l'Université de Pédagogie de HoChiMinh-ville pour tenter de répondre à cette problématique avant de proposer quelques pistes de réflexion en vue d'améliorer l'efficacité de la lecture.

Mots-clés : compréhension écrite – dictionnaire- lexicologie

Lors de l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère, les apprenants sont amenés à utiliser de nombreux outils dont les dictionnaires qui ont un rôle indispensable. Ces derniers ne sont pas seulement utilisés pour obtenir les significations, les définitions, le(s) concept(s) d'un mot… mais peuvent fournir également aux utilisateurs des règles de phonétique, de grammaire, des étymons et du vocabulaire associé.

Établir un lien entre le dictionnaire et la compréhension écrite en langue étrangère est nécessaire, tout comme l'impact du premier sur le second, en particulier sur l'apprentissage du français, pour proposer ensuite des mesures en vue d'améliorer l'efficacité de la pratique et l'auto-apprentissage. La recherche est donc menée dans le but d'étudier l'habitude des apprenants dans l'utilisation du dictionnaire pour la lecture.

Les questions de recherche sont les suivantes :

- Quels types de dictionnaires les étudiants en FLE choisissent-ils comme outil d'aide à la lecture d'un texte en français ?
- Ont-ils de bonnes techniques pour le dictionnaire en vue de la compréhension et de l'analyse ?
- Quel impact le dictionnaire exerce-t-il sur la qualité de l'apprentissage?

Comme hypothèse, nous supposons que les étudiants utilisent les dictionnaires numériques sur des supports électroniques tels que les applications de dictionnaire, les sites web… et ce pour leur côté pratique. Cependant, l'efficacité de ces outils serait douteuse, à défaut d'une bonne méthode, ce qui ne les aiderait pas beaucoup dans la compréhension.

COMPETENCE DE LECTURE

Pour HARMER (1989), la lecture est une activité régie par les yeux qui reçoivent les messages et par le cerveau qui en décode la signification. La lecture ici est définie en termes de processus biologiques humains. ANDERSON (1999) donne également une définition similaire, selon laquelle la lecture est un processus compétent et proactif qui implique le lecteur et le matériel de lecture dans la construction du sens. Quant à RUMELHART (1977), la lecture comprend trois éléments principaux : le lecteur, le texte et l'interaction entre le lecteur et le texte. Bref, ces trois points de vue montrent que la lecture est un processus cognitif permettant au lecteur d'atteindre un objectif donné. Du point de vue psychologique, DUFAYS et al. (2005) considèrent que le but important de la lecture est d'explorer, de divertir, d'imaginer, d'apprendre ; à partir de quoi on peut répondre aux questions, satisfaire sa propre curiosité. Par conséquent, le but que poursuit le lecteur déterminera ce qui l'intéressera et ce qu'il lira. Plus précisément, selon HARRIS & HODGES (1981), le concept de « lecture » a été longtemps utilisé dans un sens étroit pour désigner un ensemble de compétences liées à la réflexion et au décodage pour comprendre un texte.

D'un point de vue didactique, CUQ (2003) considère que « lire » va de pair avec « comprendre », qui en est aussi le but :

La compréhension est l'aptitude résultant de la mise en œuvre du processus cognitifs, qui permet à l'apprenant d'accéder au sens d'un texte qu'il écoute (compréhension orale) ou lit (compréhension écrite).

CUQ (2003, p. 29)

NGUYỄN Việt Quang (2013, pp. 33-41) distingue quatre niveaux de lecture :

- Compréhension littérale : comprendre des informations ou des idées clairement données par l'auteur et que le lecteur identifie facilement pendant la lecture.
- Compréhension inférentielle : comprendre des informations « sous-entendues » que le lecteur identifie en se basant sur la déduction des structures de phrases pour trouver les idées qui ne sont pas représentées dans le texte.
- Compréhension critique : ce niveau permet au lecteur d'évaluer l'exactitude et le commentaire du texte à travers les connaissances acquises.
- Compréhension créative : ce niveau de compréhension permet au lecteur d'établir des liens avec son vécu.

STRATEGIES DE LECTURE

BRANTMEIOR (2002) définit les stratégies de lecture comme des processus perceptifs que les lecteurs utilisent pour comprendre ce qui est lu. Ces processus peuvent impliquer le balayage, la maîtrise de l'idée principale, l'analyse détaillée des idées, le jugement, l'identification des groupes de mots communs, la prédiction, la mobilisation des connaissances individuelles, l'inférence, le référencement et la distinction des idées. CHOVELON & MORSE (2003), quant à eux, proposent la méthode suivante :

- Étape 1 - première approche : il faut d'abord saisir le « paratexte », à savoir les éléments relatifs au contenu principal du texte (le titre, le sous-titre, le chapeau, la nature du texte…) ;
- Étape 2 - lecture intégrale : consistant dans le repérage des paragraphes et de leur idée principale et dans le travail sur les paragraphes (compréhension détaillée, distinction de l'idée de chaque paragraphe) ;
- Étape 3 - analyse lexicale (champs lexicaux, mots-clés) et grammaticale : qui facilite la bonne compréhension du texte ;
- Étape 4 - généralisation du texte : consistant à utiliser des phrases concises et simples pour fournir au lecteur un contenu sous une ou plusieurs perspectives différentes.

Dans cette perspective, la consultation du dictionnaire peut intervenir dans l'étape 3, plus précisément dans l'analyse de mots. Le lecteur veut trouver dans le texte le sens des mots ou des phrases qu'il ne comprend pas.

Le dictionnaire

Il existe des critères et sous-critères pour classifier les dictionnaires. Si l'on se base sur le matériel, on peut parler de dictionnaires en papier et de dictionnaires électroniques, que ce soit sous forme d'appareil ou en ligne. Mais si le critère porte sur le contenu, on distingue généralement :

Le dictionnaire monolingue et le dictionnaire bilingue ou multilingue ;

Le dictionnaire extensif et le dictionnaire intensif ;

Le dictionnaire de mots et le dictionnaire de choses ;

Le dictionnaire de langue et le dictionnaire encyclopédique.

Dans le cadre de cette étude, nous nous intéressons au dictionnaire de langue. Ce dernier est un outil d'accès aux sens des vocables d'une langue. Selon CNRTL8, le dictionnaire est un ouvrage réunissant l'ensemble de mots d'une langue ou d'un domaine d'activité humaine, synthétisés sous forme de liste et présentés selon l'ordre alphabétique, fournissant des informations relatives à la signification et aux aspects spécifiques du mot. LAROUSSE9 s'y rejoint en considérant le dictionnaire comme un *ouvrage didactique constitué par un ensemble d'articles dont l'entrée constitue un mot, indépendants les uns des autres et rangés dans un ordre déterminé, le plus souvent alphabétique.* Ainsi, le dictionnaire est une source de données pertinentes relatives aux mots (classes, prononciation, fonction, étymon, définition, structure syntaxique…). De la catégorie didactique, il peut être imprimé ou électronique.

L'enquête

Comme outil d'enquête, nous avons choisi le questionnaire pour la collecte des informations et pour offrir aux informateurs l'aisance dans les réponses. Le questionnaire a été distribué à 144 étudiants du Département de Français de l'Université de Pédagogie de HoChiMinh-ville, de la première année à la quatrième année. Il comprend 5 parties :

- Renseignement sur l'informateur
- Habitude à utiliser le dictionnaire
- Usage du dictionnaire dans les compétences de lecture
- Usage du dictionnaire aux études du vocabulaire
- Évaluation des compétences par les modules de compréhension écrite

8 www.cnrtl.fr

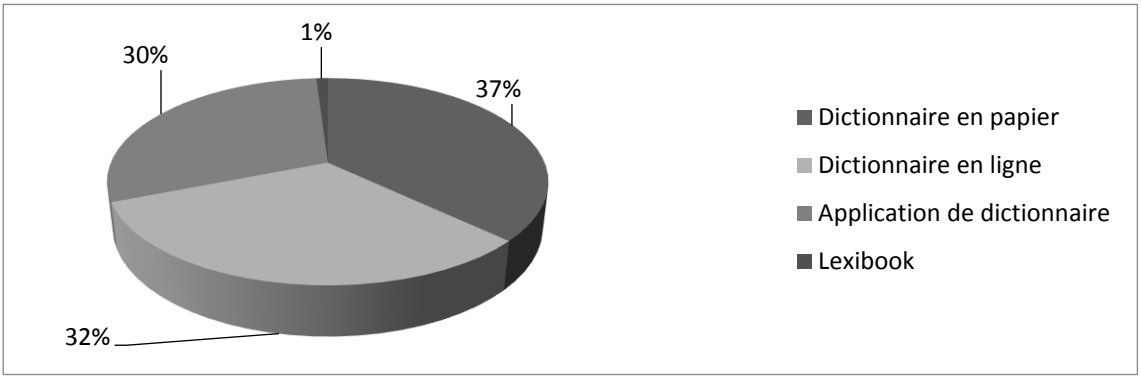
9 www.larousse.fr

Quel(s) dictionnaire(s) pour la lecture?

Le technologique remporte sur le traditionnel. Les dictionnaires numériques, que ce soit en ligne ou en application, sont plébiscités. Cependant, l'usage des lexibooks est très limité, avec seulement 4 utilisateurs.

Chiffre 1

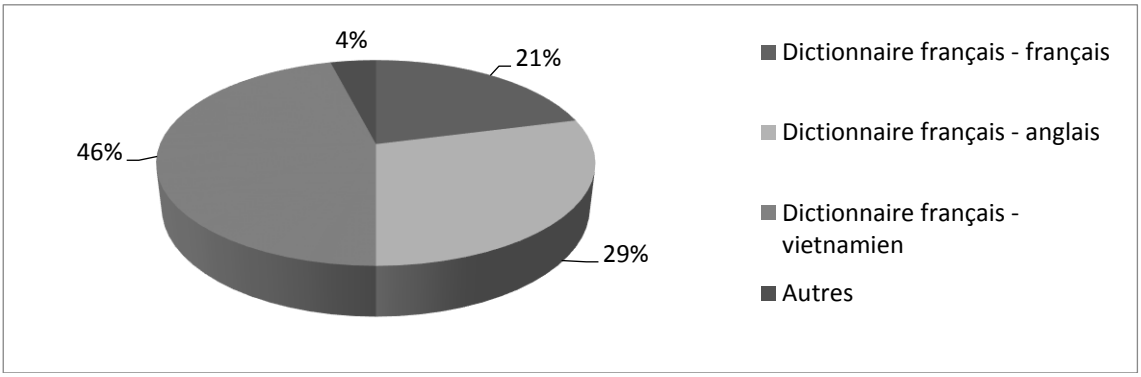
Usage des dictionnaires selon le matériel



Les dictionnaires bilingues (français – vietnamien ou français – anglais) dominent au détriment des dictionnaires français – français. Cela montre que les étudiants ne sont pas confiants quant à leur niveau pour consulter un dictionnaire monolingue et qu'ils ne peuvent se passer d'une langue intermédiaire.

Chiffre 2

Usage des dictionnaires selon le contenu



Quant à la fréquence de l'utilisation des dictionnaires, les numériques sont prépondérants: 85% utilisent les dictionnaires en ligne régulièrement ou très régulièrement. Ce pourcentage est de 75% pour les applications de dictionnaires. En revanche, 68% déclarent une utilisation limitée et occasionnelle pour les dictionnaires en papier.

L'enquête révèle aussi que l'usage du dictionnaire pour la compréhension écrite varie selon les étudiants de la première année, de la deuxième année et de la troisième année. Les étudiants de la deuxième année ont une fréquence d'usage de dictionnaire exceptionnelle, ceci s'explique par la présence du module « lexicologie » durant cette période.

Table 1

Fréquence de l'utilisation des dictionnaires

Étudiants	Jamais	De temps en temps	De fréquence moyenne	Régulièrement	Très régulièrement	Total
1ère année	6%	7%	22%	26%	39%	100%
2e année	0%	2.5%	10%	40%	47.5%	100%
3e année	0%	6%	32%	32%	30%	100%

Pratique du dictionnaire comme stratégie de lecture ?

Tombés sur du nouveau vocabulaire à la lecture d'un texte en français, la majorité des étudiants (67%) recourent tout de suite au dictionnaire, notamment chez les étudiants de la première et de la deuxième année. L'appui sur le contexte pour deviner la signification d'un mot / d'une phrase traduit la seconde stratégie utilisée par la moitié des étudiants pour contourner l'insuffisance lexicale. Enfin, le recours au contexte relève d'une autre stratégie, ce qui les aide à mieux comprendre le problème du paragraphe et à faciliter la consultation lexicale.

Le choix du mot vedette constitue un autre problème. Soit l'énoncé « Il lui a donné carte blanche », seulement 17% des étudiants livrent la bonne signification de l'expression. Cette expérience révèle qu'ils ont des difficultés avec les locutions figuratives ou avec les syntagmes libres. De ce fait, la compréhension écrite n'est pas liée aux compétences en dictionnaire à celles en vocabulaire. Même disposant du sens de toutes les unités constitutives d'une phrase, les étudiants ne parviennent toujours pas à comprendre cette dernière, étant donné que la lecture ne dépend pas seulement de la maîtrise du vocabulaire mais aussi avec d'autres compétences linguistiques.

Or ce genre de phénomène n'est pas rare en français, mais il n'est pas beaucoup traité dans le module « lexicologie ». De même, quand il s'agit de demander aux étudiants de choisir le mot vedette dans la phrase « Elle s'en est allée » pour le chercher dans le dictionnaire, le nombre de bonnes réponses reste à désirer (seulement 6%). La plupart des étudiants optent pour « aller » au lieu de « s'en aller ».

L'identification de la classe des mots pour la pratique du dictionnaire est également une compétence essentielle dont les étudiants ne disposent pas tous. Par exemple, quand nous leur demandons d'identifier la nature des mots qui constituent la phrase « C'est un quartier aux petites allées ombragées », seuls 49% des élèves choisissent la bonne réponse (1 verbe et 2 substantifs). Nombreux sont ceux qui confondent encore « allée » (large chemin bordé de verdure) avec le participe passé du verbe « aller ». Cela montre que leur maîtrise de la grammaire est limitée, en particulier en matière des parties du discours.

PISTES DE REFLEXION EN GUISE DE CONCLUSION

La plupart des étudiants utilisent le dictionnaire français - vietnamien ou français - anglais au lieu du dictionnaire français – français parce que le premier les aide à faire un lien entre la langue maîtrisée et la langue à apprendre. Cependant, l'utilisation du dictionnaire bilingue présente également de nombreuses limites lorsque l'acception trouvée ne correspond pas toujours à celle qu'il faudrait, ce qui nuit à la compréhension et entraîne des mots inappropriés. Par ailleurs, cette pratique limite la capacité à acquérir du nouveau vocabulaire et des syntaxes utiles pour l'expression.

La grande majorité des étudiants choisissent les dictionnaires numériques (sur site web ou sur application numérique) avec une très grande fréquence, de par l'aspect pratique qu'ils offrent, ce qui correspond à notre hypothèse de recherche. Nous nous rendons compte que, malgré le module de lexicologie, les étudiants ne sont pas encore en mesure d'appliquer les bonnes méthodes pour la consultation dictionnariale. Le réflexe de vérification des sens fait défaut. L'efficacité ainsi que la compétence de compréhension écrite dès la première année sont encore limitées, ce qui rend difficile des progrès réalisés dans la lecture.

De ce qui précède, nous suggérons quelques pistes : Il faut d'abord encourager les étudiants à utiliser les dictionnaires français - français dès la première année (il existe des dictionnaires monolingues pour les débutants). L'établissement peut organiser des ateliers dédiés à l'usage de dictionnaire.

Le module de lexicologie devrait aider les élèves à améliorer la compétence à utiliser les dictionnaires, à associer cette dernière à celle de la lecture. Par ailleurs, un renforcement des autres compétences linguistiques (grammaire, phonétique…) en vue d'une meilleure efficacité de compréhension écrite. Le recours à des connaissances lexicologiques approfondies permettra aux étudiants de reconnaître les mots et à obtenir de manière plus efficace et plus rapide des informations adéquates aux contextes. Pour cela, du mot, ils doivent maîtriser le radical, dépourvoir des affixes (préfixes et suffixes). Ils peuvent aussi procéder à deviner le sens d'un mot à partir du contexte et des éléments connus du mot.

Pendant les cours de compréhension écrite, l'enseignant devrait procéder à une méthode

systématique, sans oublier entraîner les étudiants à l'usage des dictionnaires, en les mettant en garde sur les problèmes et sur les erreurs que peut induire cette pratique.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Nguyen Thi Thien Phuong graduated from Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, majored in French and has developed an interest in teaching. She then obtained her MA degree in French Studies from University of Rouen Normandy, France. With over 25 years of teaching experience, she used to be a lecturer at many well-known universities at Ho Chi Minh city in such as University of Medicine and Pharmacy, University of Science, University of Economics and University of Law.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

Renseignements généraux :

Vous êtes étudiant(e) en : £ 1ère année £ 2e année £ 3e année £ 4e année
 Pédagogie £ Traduction-interprétation £ Tourisme

1. Quel(s) dictionnaire(s) utilisez-vous pour la compréhension écrite ? (plusieurs réponses possibles)

 Dictionnaire en papier
 Dictionnaire en ligne (web)
 Autres :
 français - vietnamien
 Autres :
 Dictionnaire électronique
 Logiciel de dictionnaire (app)
 français - français
 français - anglais

2. Sur l'échelle de 1 à 5, avec quelle fréquence utilisez-vous les différents dictionnaires pour votre compréhension écrite ? (1 : jamais à 5 : très souvent)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Dictionnaire en papier					
Dictionnaire électronique					
Dictionnaire en ligne (web)					
Logiciel de dictionnaire (app)					
Autres :					

3. Sur l'échelle de 1 à 5, avec quelle fréquence utilisez-vous les dictionnaires pour votre compréhension écrite selon les années académiques ? (1 : jamais à 5 : très souvent)

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
1ère année					
2e année					
3e année					
4e année et après					

4. À la lecture d'un texte en français, vous… (plusieurs réponses possibles) :

 faites une première lecture balayage), puis une lecture fine

 lisez une fois du début jusqu'à la fin

 lisez en zigzag

 ne lisez que les parties et les contenus auxquels vous vous intéressez

 Autre :

5. Si vous tombez sur un mot nouveau sur un texte en français, vous… (plusieurs réponses possibles)

 consultez tout de suite le dictionnaire

 recourez au contexte pour le comprendre

 consultez le dictionnaire à la fin de la lecture

 Autre :

6. Soit la phrase : " ***Il lui a donné carte blanche***". Sur quel élément vous appuyez-vous pour en trouver le sens dans le dictionnaire ? (plusieurs réponses possible)

 donner carte carte

 donner carte blanche carte blanche

 sans le dictionnaire, la phrase veut dire : che

 ……

7. Soit la phrase: " ***Elle s'en est allée***". Sur quel élément vous appuyez-vous pour en trouver le sens dans le dictionnaire ? (plusieurs réponses possible)

 allée

 s'aller

 s'en aller

 aller

 s'en

sans le dictionnaire, la phrase veut dire : ……

8. La phrase: "***C'est un quartier aux petites allées ombragées***" a (plusieurs réponses possibles):

 1 verbe conjugué

 2 verbes conjugués

 2 noms

 2 participes passés employés comme adjectifs

9. Comment auto-évaluez-vous votre niveau de compréhension écrite en français?

10.

Modules	**Niveau**			
	Très bon	Bon	Moyen	Faible
Module de base				
Module 1				
Module 2				
Module 3				
Module 4				
Module 5				
Module 6				

Si vous avez suivi le module de Lexicologie, continuez avec les questions 10 et 11. Dans le cas contraire, continuez avec la question 12.

11. Dans le module de Lexicologie, avez-vous appris l'usage et la bonne façon de trouver un mot ?

 Oui

 £ Non

12. Selon vous, le module de Lexicologie vous a été utile pour l'usage du dictionnaire?

 Oui

 £ Non

Dans quelle mesure?

13. Comment et selon quelles étapes utilisez-vous le dictionnaire ?

.....

FIN

LEARNER AUTONOMY IN DIGITAL ERA – A STUDY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS, HCMC

Ms. DUONG THI THUY UYEN
UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Thanks to the rapid development of technology and its strong support for language learning, learner autonomy is assumed to be greatly promoted and enhanced. At universities in Vietnam in general and at the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City (UEH) in particular, the students can take advantage of modern technology tools and state-of-the-art libraries during their learning process, which is the basis for learner autonomy. The study was conducted to find out how autonomous learning was developed and promoted by technology at UEH and whether the impact of the teachers - one of the key factors influencing learner autonomy - became diminishing. The data was collected from a questionnaire sent to 150 second-year students and informal interviews with three librarians. The results indicated that self-directed learning at UEH was on the increase thanks to the UEH Smart Library with its success in digital transformation. However, to have genuine autonomy in language learning, the students still needed proper guidance and more support from the teachers in exploiting technology as well as having basic and practical knowledge of autonomous learning.

Keywords: *learner autonomy, digital era, technology*

INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of the epidemic COVID-19 and its consequences have led to significant changes in language learning and teaching. Teachers and learners worldwide have to adapt to new working and learning conditions and environments. In the same trend, online teaching and learning have become popular in Viet Nam, and it appears that the students have learnt how to work more independently. With its nature of changing and developing rapidly, technology provides learners with an array of means and easy access to uncountable resources for self-study, based on which autonomous learning can flourish. At the University of Economics, Ho chi Minh City (UEH), great investment has been made in building up the UEH Smart Library, which successfully integrates 4.0 technology into the library and is presented as a leading library of digital transformation in Viet Nam. Then, the students can enjoy better facilities and an excellent environment to study, such

as using mobile applications and the all-inclusive searching tool to access lots of e-books, and booking rooms in functional areas for their learning preferences. Therefore, it is assumed that learner autonomy will be greatly promoted and enhanced at UEH. To test this assumption, the study was conducted to find out how technology helped with developing and promoting learner autonomy and whether the influence of teachers on the students' skill in this field became diminishing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy has been studied and discussed by many scholars and experts. For its definition, Holec (1981) defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning", and "… to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3). However, according to Benson (2013), the concept of learner autonomy can be traced back to the University of Nancy' s Center for Research and Application in Language Teaching's admission of this perception in language learning in the early 1970s. Having the same concern and research field, Dickinson (1987), Little (1991), and Dam (1995) respectively highlight the other aspects of autonomy as "learning without the direct control of a teacher" (p. 5), "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action" (p. 4), and the qualifications of independently choosing aims and purposes, setting goals, as well as choosing materials, methods and tasks. Relating to specific tasks for autonomous learners, Holec (1981) identifies a detailed set comprising "determining the objectives, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.), (and) evaluating what has been acquired." (Holec, 1981, p. 3)

Recently, with the influence from other fields such as psychology, teacher development, motivation and technology, there has been a reconceptualization of autonomy (Reinders & White, 2016). Autonomy is then defined "as a multifaceted construct that operates on a number of dimensions" (Reinders & White, 2016, p. 144). Benson (2011) classifies autonomy into four dimensions or modalities, including location (the setting where learning takes place), formality (the degree to which learning is structured and linked to educational qualifications), pedagogy (type of learning or instruction), and locus of control (decision makers about learning).

It is suggested from Holec's and other scholars' definitions that learner autonomy is associated with independent learning and self-determination. Learners are encouraged to rely more on themselves. They are also empowered to make their own decisions related to their learning, helping them become highly responsible students. There are the two factors implied in the concept of learner autonomy, which are freedom but responsibility. Lamb (2017) points out that learner autonomy is also subject directly to the context where

it is practiced, emphasizing both external and internal factors relating to endorsing and accepting responsibility. Besides, learner autonomy is associated with learning strategies which can be metacognitive (planning and evaluating), affective (motivating oneself and dealing with negative emotions), cognitive (made co-existing with learners' awareness, involvement, intervention and creation levels (Nunan, 1997)), and social-interactive (collaborating and detecting sociocultural aspects) (Oxford, 2008).

The rapid development of technology and its wide applications in language teaching and learning lead to the change in the perception that "autonomy is very much about *inter*dependence, not merely about *in*dependence" (Reinders & White, 2011). In the eyes of Little (1991), interdependence is needed because autonomous learning requires interaction. However, in either way of understanding, *inter*dependence or *in*dependence, teachers' intervention is completely necessary. Little and Dam (1989) (in Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019) state that it is the teachers' encouragement and help in learner reflection as well as appropriate target language use that count. These roles can be considered as pedagogical principles of promoting learning autonomy. Through teachers' intervention, learners can acquire learning strategies as well as widen their knowledge of learning. Littlewood (1996) emphasizes that "to promote learner autonomy, interaction, negotiation, collaboration, and teacher support are crucial elements" since they help to increase higher levels of learning autonomy.

As far as learner autonomy and technology are concerned, technology is assumed to be a tool for fostering and boosting autonomy thanks to its great benefits for learners. The main advantage is that learners can have opportunities to access freely and unlimitedly authentic materials in the target language. Especially nowadays, most learners are tech-savvy, so they can make good use of computer-assisted language materials for their own purposes (O'Reilly, 2005) and self-directed learning can be promoted and enhanced. With a greater richness of resources available to them on the Internet, globalized online spaces (YouTube) and new mobile technologies (smartphones and tablets), language learners can share, interact and get support for learning outside the classroom (Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019). Condrat (2014) lists technology tools used to improve learner autonomy, including emails, blogging, site management, collaborative projects, online tests, socializing networks, games and creation of learning communities.

To measure a person's level of acceptance of a new approach by technology, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) should be used. It is the heir to two well-known theories: Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). TAM is developed by Davis (1989) combining the attributes of TRA and TPB with the technological development context. TAM focuses on the users' attitude to technology and, as a result, their intention to use it. These are the two most important TAM characteristics when applying for learner autonomy, which were also the base for Prieto,

J. C. S., Migueláez, S. O., and Garca-Pealvo, F. J. 's research (2016) on promoting a model of mobile technology acceptance for homework and distance learning.

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, learner autonomy has become an effective method to build up learning culture. Benson (2007) and Joshi (2011) identify seven ways to build up learner autonomy among which are distance learning and Computer Assisted in Language Learning (CALL). Particularly, distance learning is defined as self-motivation to participate in learning activities and CALL is defined as the computer-base in class activities and individual works for language learning. These have been the common methods of learning when there is social distancing in the pandemic around the world. Thus, although having been mentioned earlier, learning autonomy is considered to be suitable with the current learning contexts worldwide when computer-base and distance learning are now main methods of class delivery. Then, with learners' widespread use of mobile devices, especially smartphones, there is an increase in online informal language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2017b), and mobile-assisted language learning is taken advantaged of (Chik, 2018). Murray (2014) also suggests that mobile devices offer the on-demand access and freedom of choice that is often associated with learner autonomy.

It is a must now to exploit technology for learner autonomy in the digital era. However, proper guidance from the teachers still plays a crucial role in this aspect because without their help and advice, learners face more challenges when they want to take advantage of technology in studying. Being overwhelmed with the information and authentic materials they get from easy and unlimited access, learners fail to determine the appropriate tasks and materials. Gee (2003) (in Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019) stresses that instead of supporting, this might have detrimental effects and even worse, in some cases, "give a false sense of development to learners".

In the book "Language Learner Autonomy: Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Asian Contexts", Nguyen Van Loi (2016) has an in-depth analysis of and local implication about how learner autonomy should be applied to Vietnam educational environment. According to Nguyen (2016), there is a misconception when assuming that students are fully responsible for learner autonomy. He clarifies that teachers are those who should be aware of and seriously trained about learner autonomy before implementing it to their students. More and more workshops and seminars should be conducted to equip and update teachers with the knowledge of this concept. In addition, measures to push learner autonomy into the school environment should be designed by educational leaders. Especially, there should be teacher assessment on learner autonomy to support teachers in enhancing the concept towards students gradually. Nguyen (2016) also emphasizes that another important point mentioned is that students need to be motivated and supported to achieve learner autonomy, instead of being forced to this purpose.

With its nature, learner autonomy is a complicated concept. Learners then cannot be expected to acquire this skill in a short time, and autonomous learning "should be cultivated gradually" (Condrat, 2014). Self-directed learning requires commitment from both learners and teachers, and the combination with an autonomous learning environment. Continual struggle is also needed (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and "teachers and students should be supportive all the way on this difficult path" (Condrat, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the role of the technology in assisting learner autonomy for the students at UEH and the levels of the teachers' influence in this issue, a questionnaire was delivered to 150 second-year students and informal interviews were conducted to three librarians. The language used in the questionnaire was Vietnamese to make sure that all the questions were thoroughly understood and answered properly. The survey was done on the google form to have quick and graphical results.

120 responses from the students were collected with detailed explanations for open ended questions. In-depth information was also provided by the librarians on the questions asked.

DATA ANALYSIS

Questions 1 to 3 – Students' concepts about learner autonomy

With 92.5% of the subjects who affirmed that self-directed learning played a significant role at tertiary education, the responses to questions 1 revealed that generally the students had good basic knowledge of learner autonomy. 6.7% of the students believed it was quite important and only one student (0.8%) responded that it was of no importance at all. The percentage in the answers for question 2 also showed that the students also understood that self-directed learning still requires supervision or guidance. However, just over half of them (52.5%) agreed that independent learning meant studying with the teacher's guidance; the 47.5% left stated that learners worked by themselves to be called autonomous learners. For question 3, 87 students (72%) identified that working in pairs or in groups was an effective way for autonomous learning, and 28% of them assumed that in autonomous learning, learners would study or work alone.

Figure 1

Independent learning and teachers' guidance

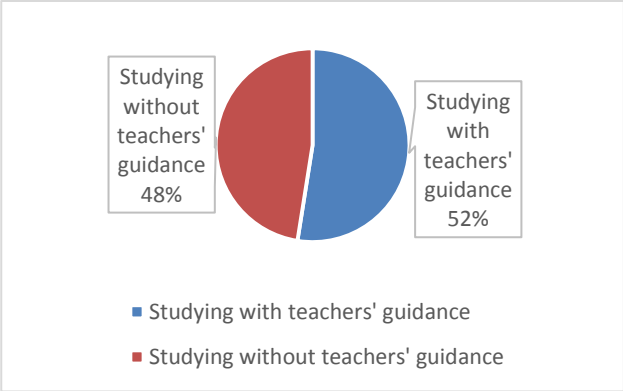
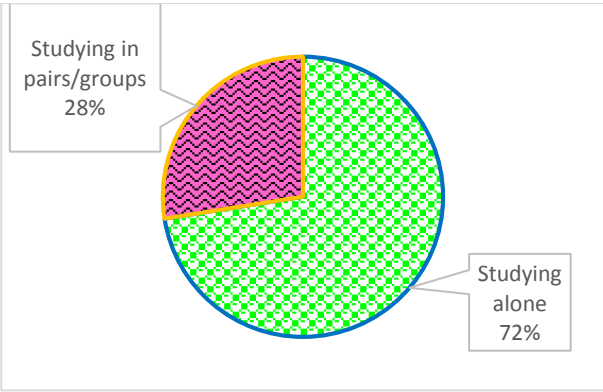


Figure 2

Ways to have effective self-directed learning



Question 4 – Software and applications used for independent learning

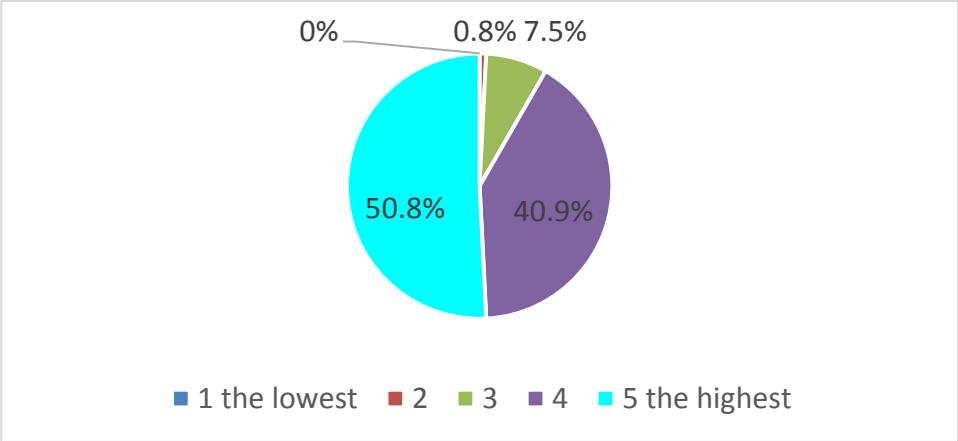
When asked which software and applications they commonly used for self-directed learning, most of the students (83%) responded that they accessed the websites to study English, and 81% of them learned with the video clips on YouTube. The means used were mainly desktop/laptop and smartphones. Only around one-fifth of the students used the tablets for their independent learning.

Question 5 – Assessment on the levels of support of technology in self-directed learning

Assessing the level of support of technology in their autonomous learning of English on the scale of 5 with number 1 equal to the lowest support and number 5 the highest one, 50.8% of the students chose number 5 and 40.9% of them clicked number 4. Only one student did not believe much in the support of technology, choosing number 2, and there was no response for number 1, the lowest support.

Figure 3

Levels of support of technology in self-directed learning



Question 6 – Reasons for the preference for technology in English self-directed learning

The main reasons for the preference for technology in English self-directed learning were that it was quick and convenient (93%); there were numerous learning sources to choose from (92%); and learning could be conducted anywhere and anytime (92%). It seemed to be a good reason (for learner autonomy) when the students stated that they could find and make friends to study with, accounting for 42%. Another understandable reason (39%) was that they would not feel ashamed when making mistakes. In particular, one student cited the reason for being able to identify the level, design his/her own syllabus and self-assess with certain software and online applications.

Question 7 – Reasons for the failure of technology in supporting learner autonomy

Working with technology most of the time during their study, the students were also aware that technology could fail to support them in their autonomous learning. The highest percentage (80%) was for the reason that even with the most modern technology, they did not know how to start their self-directed learning with, that was which materials, contents and levels would be appropriate for them. The second cause was that they did not know who to ask for help when encountering difficulties (68%). The third reason went for slow connection (42%), and the same percentage (37.5%) were for spending a lot of time looking for online materials or resources and not user-friendly applications.

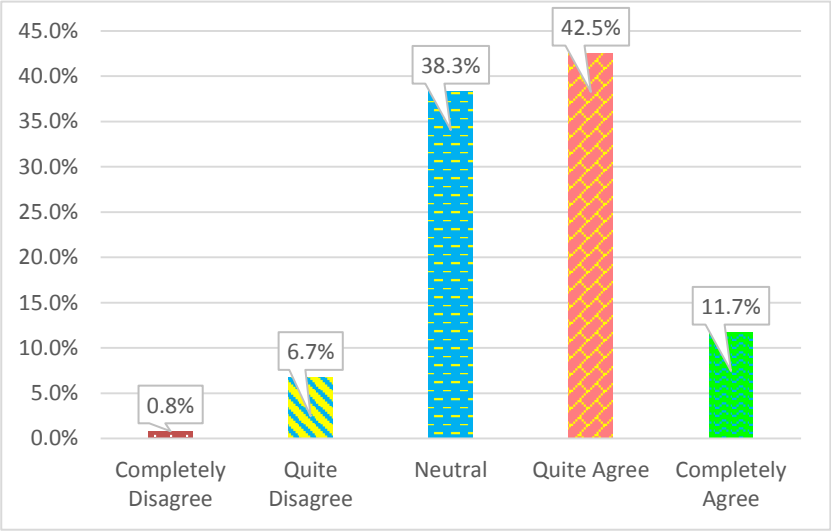
Question 8 – The support of the UEH Smart library in promoting learner autonomy

One-tenth of the students completely agreed that UEH Smart library helped develop and enhance their autonomous learning. 42.5% quite agreed with the question and 38.3% of the respondents offered a neutral answer. Again, only one student showed a complete disagreement to the statement on the support of this modern library.

Relating to the convenience of the library, nearly the same number of the students rated this quite highly and gave the neutral rating for its convenience, with 44% and 41% respectively.

Figure 4

The UEH Smart library's support in developing and enhancing autonomous learning

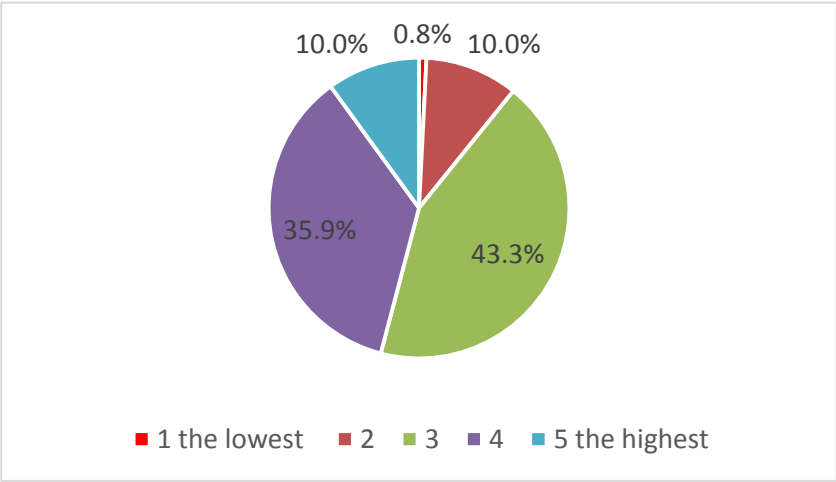


Question 9 – The effectiveness of the apps installed in the library

When asked to assess the effectiveness of the apps installed in assisting them in searching for information needed, 43.3% chose number 3 on the scale of 5 for the level of effectiveness. 35.9% of them ticked number 4. The same percentage went for the options of quite effective (number 2) and completely effective (number 5), which was 10%, and only one student stated that these apps were entirely useless to him/her.

Figure 5

The effectiveness of the apps installed in the library

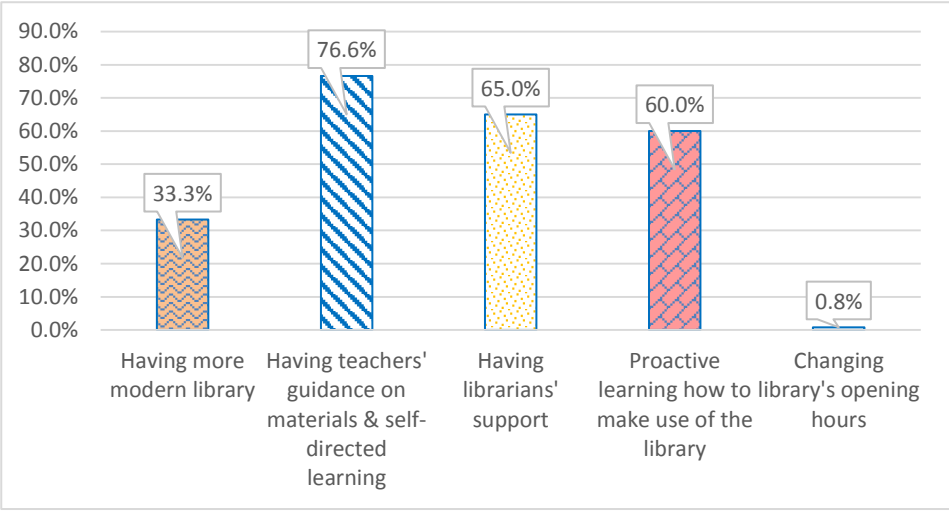


Question 10 – The needs or requirements to improve independent learning at the library

Regarding the issue of how to take the most advantage of the library and develop the students' abilities in self-directed learning, the highest percentage was for having more guidance from the teacher in choosing the appropriate materials and gaining knowledge of learner autonomy, which accounted for 76.6% of the students' responses. The support from the librarians was also highly appreciated, taking up 65%. Surprisingly, the idea of being proactive to learn how to make use of the library filled the third slot (60%). It seemed that the students held growing expectation regarding the modernity of the library, with 33.3% of them hoping for having a more modern one. Concerning the opening hours, only one student suggested that the library should change this with earlier opening time and later closing one.

Figure 6

The needs or requirements to improve independent learning at the library



The informal interview results

In the informal interviews with the three librarians, the main issue discussed was on how technology applications in the UEH Smart Library support the students in autonomous learning. Besides, they were also asked about the role of the teachers' in supporting the students' English self-directed learning.

The responses from the librarians revealed that with the UEH Smart Library, the students were provided with an excellent learning environment. Through the Smart Library's website, the library resources and services could be accessed seamlessly. There were mobile applications and touchscreen maps which gave the students the opportunity to facilitate their knowledge creation, as well as develop a positive attitude towards self-learning. Furthermore, the all-inclusive searching tool not only provided a single gateway

to every library collection from e-materials to traditional books but also helped the students to expand their research by following the suggestions of relevant subjects based on their previous search queries. In addition, there were functional areas in the library which were divided in order to honour students' learning preferences. For instance, soundproof meeting rooms could be booked to practice speaking or presentation skills. Especially, the IoT (Internet of Things) system created real-time reports and automatically and proactively adjusted the library's environment, creating a green and energy-saving space for all users. Generally, the UEH Smart Library was attempting to establish a common smart hub where the UEH community was encouraged to learn autonomously and interact multidimensionally with others.

When asked if the software programs or apps installed in the library were exploited for the students' English autonomous learning, the librarians responded that from their observation, most of the students preferred working with the apps on the Internet or learn English with countless video clips on YouTube to using online materials or e-books for the purpose of improving English. There were a few students borrowing paper coursebooks or just occupying a space in the library to do the homework assigned. They commented that while most of the students adapted quite well to and enjoyed the new learning environment, some students were in favour of using traditional methods to study English. The librarians concluded that the guidance and support from the teachers were definitely needed to improve learner autonomy for the students at UEH with different approaches depending on the students' levels.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results of questions 1 to 3 indicated that the students were highly aware of the important role of learner autonomy. However, there was a misinterpretation of the way autonomous learning is conducted. Some of the students still took the view that independent learning was practiced without the teacher's guidance and intervention, and implemented with studying alone. This misconception reflects that accurate and sufficient information was not imparted to the students; therefore, they had no sound knowledge about the nature of self-directed learning. This state is explained by Little (1994) that the students have the tendency to equate autonomy with individualization and isolation. Then, the English teachers at UEH should focus on developing the right conception when working with the students on learner autonomy.

The responses from questions 4 to 7 suggested that most of the students were technophiles. They proactively made use and took advantage of new technology for their studying. However, they were also fully aware of the disadvantages when working with technology applications without help and guidance. The reasons stated for the preference for and failure of technology relating to learner autonomy indicated that the students could

identify the strengths and weaknesses of technology which affected their self-directed learning process. However, combined with the information acquired from the interviews with the librarians, it appeared that there were some of the students who were not proactive enough, being quite passive in searching for information that they needed to acquire. They preferred the traditional way of studying with paper books or printed materials to the e-ones. Therefore, when promoting autonomous learning, it is significant for the teachers to boost their proactiveness and develop their sense of responsibility so that they can work on their own more in the future.

From the data collected for questions 8 and 9 and the informal interviews, it can be commented that the UEH Smart Library plays an influential support role helping the teachers promote the students' learner autonomy. It provides an excellent learning environment for independent learning, contributing to promoting self-directed learning with multi-resources, mobile apps, green spaces, makerspaces and IoT applications. Therefore, the teachers and the managers should include the library in their plan for improving learner autonomy at UEH.

Finally, the responses for question 10 were in anticipation with the need for the teacher's guidance and support being what the students expected most. This expectation is in light with Littlewood's opinion that teacher support can help pave the way for higher levels of motivation to learn autonomously (Littlewood, 1996), and through their intervention, students can acquire learning strategies and widen their knowledge of self-directed learning (Esfandiari & Gawhary, 2019). The answer also affirms that the teachers still occupy a substantial influential role in enhancing the students' skill of learning independently even when the students have been well equipped and supported by technology already.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Learner autonomy has not been fully and effectively exercised at UEH. In order to foster and encourage this, certain important tasks need to be completed.

As Mehran & Mir (2019) states in their study, learner autonomy requires both independence and interdependence, and autonomy both inside and outside the classroom need to be pondered. With more technology tools to be used and more online research being conducted as a result of the pandemic, the autonomy outside the classroom should get more of the teachers' attention. The UEH Smart Library, with its countless online text books and modern technology applications, should be fully utilized. However, the teachers' guidance and support on determining appropriate tasks and materials for self-study are prerequisite. This, once again, necessitates the investment from university leaders in training for the teachers as well as the management's practical assistance.

As far as teaching staff is concerned, all English teachers at UEH have currently completed language and methodology training, and obtained master and doctorate degrees in Applied linguistics or TESOL. However, learner autonomy requires an expansion of this knowledge and calls for changes and more training in response to this educational trend. Although the teachers themselves can undoubtedly conduct in-depth research on learner autonomy, training in this area should be provided and included in teacher professional development plans. The training should focus not only on updating their knowledge of learner autonomy but also on the sharing/exchange of effective methods of using technology to improve students' autonomous learning.

Based on Kumaravadivelu's proposal (2003) with three stages to build up students' autonomy, including raising the learners' awareness of the reasons why the teacher chooses certain goals, tasks and materials; allowing learners to choose from a range of options provided by the teacher; and learners' determining their own goals, tasks and materials, the following responsibilities are recommended.

For the first stage, it can be said that its goal seems to be partly achieved although this is the outcome of, to some extent, a passive reaction to the changing situation. The students at UEH have got used to learning online due to the global pandemic over the last two years, and they have had growing awareness of independent learning during that time.

In the second stage, improvement can be made with more options for learning materials, tasks and strategies provided to the students. With the advancement of technology, it appears that teachers and students will find it easier to carry out this task. However, they are about to face a significant challenge. The main reason is that students are not accustomed to making their own decisions, particularly those concerning learning objectives, tasks, and materials. These factors are expected to be determined by the university (the requirement for English proficiency in order to graduate) and the classroom teachers (tasks and materials). Furthermore, the students' primary focus is on how to achieve high final exam scores. To change this habit and mindset, it will take time and effort from both teachers and students to step outside of their comfort zones of simply following what has been conventionally set up and decided. Again, training is required to help solve this issue.

In the final stage, the teachers are expected to spend more time with the students to help them determine their own goals, tasks, and materials as well as identifying their own learning styles. Due to the large number of students in their classes, challenges arise. This necessitates the teacher's undying passion and dedication to the subjects. There seems to be too much work for the teachers. Therefore, to lighten the burden, the teacher can take advantage of Grasha's model, categorizing their students into three pairs of six learning styles: competitive – collaborative, avoidant – participant, dependent – independent

(Grasha, 2002, p. 128). Then, the students can also identify their own styles, which helps them in their ongoing autonomous learning process.

CONCLUSION

Learner autonomy is a good tool for language learning. Therefore, from the beginning, the teachers should encourage and boost their students to become independent learners. However, due to its complexity, learner autonomy requires great effort and commitment from learners and teachers, as well as sufficient investment from the university leaders to create conditions and environment for autonomous learning.

So far, technology contributes positively to enhancing learner autonomy. Advanced technology has helped to transform the commercial materials used in the classroom into materials designed for autonomous work. With digital tools, learners become more independent as they do not have to rely on teachers for input and practice. They can set their own goals and plan how to achieve them, and be more motivated. However, it is believed that the teachers' influence on the students' skill in autonomous learning has not become diminishing. At UEH, even though being well supported by advanced technology, the students have not been able to practice self-directed learning effectively. Therefore, they still need the guidance and support from their teachers to be more independent and develop their language skills beyond the classroom. To this end, training should be provided to the teachers and more funds should be invested in the UEH Smart Library and classrooms so that the students can make actual improvement in this skill, which produces better results for their current and further studies.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Duong Thi Thuy Uyen is the Deputy Dean of the Department of English for General Purposes and an English teacher at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh (HCM) City, Viet Nam. She obtained her bachelor's degree in English from the University of Education, HCM City and her master's degree in TESOL from Hanoi University of Foreign Studies. Uyen's research interests include syllabus design, learner autonomy, and language learning assessment.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

To evaluate learner autonomy at UEH, the support of the UEH Smart Library in developing the students' skill in self-directed learning for English, please answer the following questions by clicking one/more than one of the options provided or giving your own opinions.

1. In your opinion, the role of learner autonomy at tertiary education is:

   A. Very important B. Important C. Not important

2. Learner autonomy means

   A. Studying without teachers' guidance B. Studying with teachers' guidance

3. The effective way for autonomous learning is

   A. Studying alone B. Studying in pairs/groups

4. Which software and applications do you often use for your independent learning?

5. How do you assess the levels of support of technology in self-directed learning?

Low Quite low Neutral Quite high High

6. In your opinion, what are the reasons for your preference for technology in English self-directed learning?

7. In your opinion, what are the reasons for the failure of technology in supporting learner autonomy?

8. How do you agree with the statement that the UEH Smart library can support the students in promoting learner autonomy?

Completely disagree Disagree Neutral Agree Completely agree

9. How do you assess the effectiveness of the apps installed in the library?

Low Quite low Neutral Quite high High

10. In your opinion, to develop the students' abilities in self-directed learning, we need to:

   A. have a more modern library

   B. have teachers' guidance on materials and how to practice learner autonomy

   C. have guidance/support from the librarians

   D. be proactive to learn how to make use of the library

   E. Others

ONLINE COLLABORATIVE WRITING THROUGH FRAMAPAD: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Ms. LE THI THAO LINH

UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Numerous past studies have shown the advantages of collaborative writing in enhancing language learners' skills. Besides, working together in groups is a common practice in our society, especially at tertiary level to promote collaborative skills. These days, with the development of information technologies, there are some available digital tools which enable the more comfortable teaching and learning of collaborative writing. Among which, Framapad offers certain benefits regarding teaching productive skills such as writing. This paper aims at exploring how students feel towards the use of this tools in their online classes as well as whether generally it helps them to produce better writing group product . The instruments employed were online questionnaires and observations through students' pads. The results show that students had positive attitudes towards the use of this web-based tool in their collaborative writing activities. Besides, the overall effectiveness of this practice in improving students' writing ability was also concluded.

Keywords*: collaborative writing, tertiary level, technology based, online environment, coordination*

INTRODUCTION

Collaborative writing has received considerable attention during the past years due to multiple benefits it offers regarding students' writing ability. Firstly, collaborative writing is defined as the writing process in which all participants spend time discussing, cooperating, even arguing to mutually create a product and through this social process, learners develop their writing ability as well as other vital skills (Talib & Cheung, 2017). The basis of collaborative writing was built upon sociocultural theory, in which the cooperation and interaction with others became the foundation for growth and academic development to take place (Vygotsky, 1987). In fact, social interaction is reported to have significant influence on learners' academic performance. If students can maintain good rapport with others in their learning environment, they are more likely to achieve success as opposed to those who do not (Liu & Lan, 2016).

Collaborative writing has been documented as beneficial in developing students' higher-level thinking skills such as critical thinking (Liu & Lan, 2016). Through interacting, communicating and checking on each other, participants have opportunity to reflect on their own language use. In such an era of technical advancement, finding information online is now much easier than ever before though not every piece of news is always reliable. Consequently, students need to enhance their critical thinking and view everything with a critical eye. In that sense, the collaboration process enhances learners' decision-making, negotiation and dealing with conflicts (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014)

Furthermore, in recent years, technology has been fused into education and training, especially amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. It is certainly a challenge to both teachers and students alike while at the same time this creates greater opportunities for autonomous learning to rise, Therefore, hopefully the introduction of technology into collaborative writing process is promising considering our learners' interactive and cognitive development and brings about more valuable teaching and learning experiences.

Framapad are similar to other tools designed specifically for working collaboratively such as Blog, Google Docs, Wikis, Forum, etc. It consists of word processing, namely a pad and allows numerous writers to work on the same product synchronously or at different times. A pad is an text editor on the online platform. And the thing that stands out with Framapad is the automatic use of color code for different contributors and their contributions are made differently from each other and being recorded as they are typed. Moreover, Framapad introduces a really user-friendly environment, so with a little bit of training, almost all students can use this working tools with ease. The instruction of what users can do in a pad is demonstrated as follow:

- Creating a new pad
- Start producing texts
- Inviting other collaborator
- Chatting with the group through that chat box
- Choosing colors for your text
- Looking back and restoring the older version through history
- Exporting finished in various formats

(https://framapad.org/en/)

Among many technological tools, Framapad helps to promote learners-centeredness due to the following reasons. Participants are likely to get timely feedback and comments from their peers or instructor and reflect on what they have learned through the editing

process. The availability of this tool allows learning to take place anytime and anywhere, which helps to maximize learning opportunities. Interaction is considerably enhanced in Framapad, which provides chat box at hand for participants to chat and share. Additionally, they can easily add a comment for any body text and by choosing the words, the feedback can be added to the right column. A reply function to any comment is also added to boost interaction among students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of collaborative technology in writing classes

Over the last decade, especially in recent years when the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on various aspects of life including training and education, many collaborative web-based tools such as Wikis, Google Docs, etc. have entered the classroom with a view to boost interaction and communication. Regarding writing skill, those tools are used for offering interactive and collaborative environment, in which many writers are involved in creating a mutual product (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014)

Technological tools used for communication, such as email, social networks, etc. has become an essential part of our daily lives, including education. Particularly, online resources play a vital part in students' learning experiences at tertiary level since interaction and autonomous learning are the key factors for academic success (Suwantarathip & Wichadee, 2014)

Teachers, trainers and educators have been encouraged to make use of technology, such as webs to facilitate their daily teaching. Especially regarding collaborative writing, past studies have shown the effectiveness of the usage of tools such as wikis, blogs, etc. in helping students improve their writing products (Talib & Cheung, 2017).

The effectiveness of using technology to facilitate collaborative writing.

Previous studies show that web-based communication and collaboration could considerably facilitate learning (Talib & Cheung, 2017). Technology, as a matter of fact, has helped to streamline the writing process, enable more complexity, better accuracy and timely feedback among students (Liu & Lan, 2016). Computer-based writing tools extend the class room out of physical space, enabling learners regardless time and space to interact with ease (Woodrich & Fan, 2017).

Some past studies looked at the effect of employing technology in writing instructions. One of which belongs to Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014), who wanted to examined the use of Google docs on students' writing ability. Their experimental study pointed out that students who experienced Google Docs had a better performance in their writing

compared to those in face-to-face classes only. Other studies also found that the use of web-based collaborative tools such as Google Docs motivated participants to collaborate in the writing process and facilitated each other through the peer-feedback activity on the online platform (Woodrich & Fan, 2017).

Another study by Liu and Lan (2016) examined the effectiveness of employing collaborative tools, namely Google Docs on learners' vocabulary gain together with participants' perception. The result demonstrated that collaborator groups had better vocabulary gain in the post-test, accounted for by the fact that their lexical knowledge was enhance through interactions and the repairing errors process. It also showed that the experimental group possessed higher level of boosted motivation, and less anxiety, which in turn led to positive perception of learning.

Students' attitudes towards employing computer-supported collaborative writing

Similarly, quite a few studies have looked at how students' affection towards online collaborative writing, including comfort level. The study by Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) demonstrated that students were more confident in sharing and communicating with each other compared to traditional writing classroom. In fact, being in this practice gave learners a sense of community in which members exchanged ideas with each other easily and practice writing with less anxiety.

The synthesis study by Talib and Cheung (2017) pointed out that students' motivation was enhanced during collaborative writing. This was explained for by the fact that the created products went beyond their expectations and students valued the communcation and interaction that went hand in hand with collaborative writing. When working in groups, students usually produced texts of shorter length, but of better quality, in terms of task fulfillment, accuracy and complexcity.

Besides, students admited that their language learning improved when participating in collaborative writing tasks. Aforementioned studies indicate that learners acknowledged an improvement in their language accuracy and vocabulary range. Particularly, students valued the peer feedback during collaborative writing. While interacting in groups, participants got support from their peers, learned some new ideas and perspectives. (Liu & Lan, 2016; Talib & Cheung, 2017). All of which contributes to enhancing learners' writing performance.

Research gap and research questions

Collaborative writing is not new at all in the field since there have been numerous studies through literature. Among those, the focus of earlier works was mostly on the effectiveness of collaborative writing and it was not until this decade that the exploration

of technology to enhance collaborative writing was investigated in depth.

When it comes to web-based interactive tools, there have been numerous studies on the use of Google Docs or Wikis in the past decade. However, Framapad is not so familiar, especially in Vietnamese context though it also offers similar interactive functions as the other tools. Besides, introducing such a new web-based tool may motivate learners because of the element of novelty. Framapad was cited by students as attractive (with the color code used) and easy to use through personal communication and there was actually a sense of excitement about the introduction of this tool.

Therefore, the study aims at investigating the incorporation of Framapad into collaborative writing process, especially concerning learners' perception towards this practice. The research questions are defined as:

1. What are learners' attitude towards the use of Framapad to produce writing products collaboratively?
2. How effective is using Framapad in collaborative writing in improving students' writing performance?

METHODOLOGY

Context of the study

This study involved 108 students taking the English Level 3 course, in the final semester of the 2021 academic year. The came from various departments of Ho Chi Minh City, University of Economics. There three classes included 50 male and 58 female students. The participants' level of English proficiency was around intermediate, according to the requirement of the English course they were attending.

The students had a class meeting once a week with 5 periods per each session. The length of the semester was about 10 weeks. Regarding writing, there were four writing topics from the course books, which was Business Partner, Level B2, from Pearson.

Table 1

Writing tasks

Unit 1: Corporate culture	Write the blog to introduce a volunteer project
Unit 2: Training and development	Write a training request
Unit 3: Finance	Write a annual report summary
Unit 4: Digital business	Write a short business proposal

Instruments

Questionnaire survey

The questionnaire was designed with a view to examining students' perceptions towards the use of Framapad in their collaborative writing. The items were on Likert scale, from 1 meaning strongly disagree to 5 meaning strongly agree. The investigation of participants' perception included some sub-components, namely: their affection, user-friendliness, collaboration within the group and the perceived effectiveness. Those themes are illustrated below.

Table 2

Items of the questionnaire and its sub-components

1. I love writing online collaboratively and revising work using Framapad	Affection
2. I would like to use Framapad for more learning tasks in the future	
3. Framapad is user-friendly and easy to learn with some training	User-friendliness
4. The use of color codes is interesting and convenient to mark my work	
5. I have something to contribute to my team on our assignment.	Collaboration
6. My team helps me a lot in completing the assignment	
7. My team can communicate well and provide timely feedback in the writing tasks using Framapad	
8. I feel I can write better when participating in collaborative tasks with Framapad	Perceived effectiveness
9. I can learn a lot from my friends such things as vocabulary use, sentence structure, etc. through collaborative writing with Framapad	
10. I read more as it is easy to find others' writing available	

The questionnaire was designed based on the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky emphasizing the social interaction in knowledge construction as well as knowledge of what students' learning perspectives are constructed from (Ur, 2012). The draft questionnaire was double-checked by fellow teachers who are also Master of Art in the field to check for errors and misunderstandings if there were any.

Observation of the students' pad

A close analysis of participants' writing product and process would shed light on the impact that this practice may have on student's learning activity and how effective they

perceived the tool. Aspects of frequency such as times visiting the page, participation in feedback activity, the contribution (length, quality) made to each writing task was analysed to consolidate what participants claimed in the previous questionnaire and provide an initial picture of how effective this practice was in improving learners' writing ability.

To be more specific, due to the function of tracking history of this collaborative writing tool, the teacher was able to assess the frequency that students visited the page, how many words/paragraphs they contributed to each mutual writing products. Furthermore, with the help automatic color code, their contributions were made different from each other instantly, which assisted teacher in observing each participants' contributions.

Additionally, students' peer feedback activity would be investigated as well with a view to shed more light on their participation and contribution to the writing products. If students made much attempt to give feedback to other learners, it proved they were cooperating well and the writing activity may benefit students' social learning.

Aspects of writing task completion, vocabulary range, grammatical use were investigated to give a big and initial picture of how effective the use of learning tool was towards the learning of writing.

Procedure

The date collection process was done for 5 weeks, with week 1 focusing on giving students some induction and training on how to use Framapad in their learning. Each week, students had a writing task to complete, which was preceded by a class meeting to provide guidelines and controlled practice for the specific topic. For instance, students may read the sample writing and then analysed the structure or organization. They also practiced some useful grammatical points as well as discussed relevant vocabulary together. Thereafter, the writing task was assigned to groups and they had to finish and submit the task prior to the following class meeting.

The questionnaire was delivered towards the end of week 5 when the participants had adequate experience of the practice. 108 online questionnaires were handed out to students via email.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Respond to research question 1: What are learners' attitudes towards the use of Framapad to produce writing products collaboratively?

According to Table 3, the overall mean score indicates that students had positive attitudes towards the use of Framapad in collaborative writing (Mean = 3.97)

Table 3

Means of students' attitudes towards collaborative writing using Framapad

Items	Mean
1. I love writing online collaboratively and revising work using Framapad	4.52
2. I would like to use Framapad for more learning tasks in the future	3.95
3. Framapad is user-friendly and easy to learn with some training	3.83
4. The use of color code is interesting and convenient to mark my work	4.70
5. I have something to contribute to my team on our assignment	3.74
6. My team helps me a lot in completing the assignment	3.67
7. My team can communicate well and provide timely feedback in the writing tasks using Framapad	4.25
8. I feel I can write better when participating in collaborative writing with Framapad	3.48
9. I can learn a lot from my friends such things as vocabulary use, sentence structure, etc. through collaborative writing using Framapad	3.85
10. I read more as it is easy to find others' writing products available	3.70
Total	3.97

As can be seen from Table 3, the highest mean scores fall to item 4, 1 and 7, which shows that participants were interested in the display of the pad (M = 4.70) and admitted that the tool was easy to use after receiving some guidance from the teacher (M = 4.52). Furthermore, they were positive that applying this web-based learning task enhanced their communication and promoted interactive learning vibes (M = 4.25)

On the contrary, the lowest score on the table was number 8 (M = 3.48), demonstrating that participants were less certain about their self-improvement in writing ability after this practice.

Overall, participants had a positive attitude towards collaborative writing using Framapad. A high mean score for Item 2 (M = 3.95) asking whether they would like to have more Framapad activities also consolidates students' affection for this tool. The same conclusion was made in numerous other research such as those of, Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014), Liu and Lan (2016), Woodrich and Fan (2017), which examined the same collaborative technology in teaching writing.

This can be accounted for by the fact that they found that doing writing was not dull anymore and students were happier when working with each other as a team. Additionally, item 5 and 6 had mean of 3.74 and 3.67 respectively, which indicates that leaners felt a sense of belonging to a community in which they could contribute and get benefits in return. This is supported by the sociocultural theory by Vygotsky in which learners considered relationships in the learning environment as important as other skills (Vygotsky, 1987).

Another finding from the questionnaire is the automatic use of color code anytime participants make contribution to the mutual work. The consensus rate for this item was very high (M = 4.7), and one explanation found in talk with participants is that students felt they could make distinct contribution to the group work and though working collaboratively, they could still show their ownership easily. This was especially true with learners of better language proficiency in the class. This finding echoes what Suwantarathip and Wichadee (2014) found in their study that even though students loved group collaboration, students sometimes needed to distinguish themselves to express their potential.

Responding to research question 2: How effective is using Framapad in collaborative writing in improving students' writing performance?

The last three items of the questionnaire shed light on the learners' perceived effectiveness of the use of Framapad. The result was rather positive (M = 3.48, 3.85, 3.70 respectively), among which students claimed they could learn from each other at local level consisting grammar, vocabulary use, punctuation, etc. This was supported by numerous past studies on the effectiveness of similar technological tools including those of Liu and Lan (2015), Talib and Cheung (2017).

Furthermore, a closer look at the learners' writing products illuminates the real picture of students' participation and the quality of their writing products. First of all, concerning task completion, a high percentage for task completion was achieved for every task, compared to individual assignment. Working collaboratively for the same writing assignment will definitely reduce the workload of each learner and at the same time, give students a greater sense of achievement when they can meet the deadline. However, the shared work may limit their performance since they can only be in charge of a few sentences or a short paragraph. Therefore, the instructor may consider giving the task of greater length to ensure every student got enough room to shine.

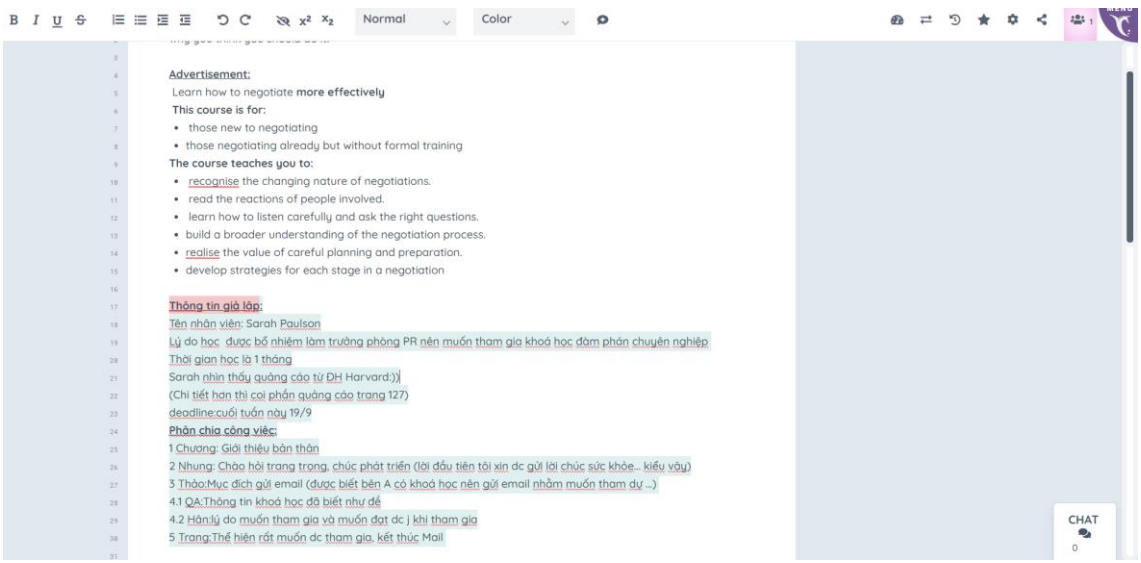
Concerning participants' writing quality, it is under the impression the final product was of fairly good quality. There still remained only a few minor mistakes regarding vocabulary use or grammatical errors. All the groups were guided for the outline of the task, so it seemed as they had no significant difficulties with this aspect. Besides, the task

was designed of a more controlled practice than free writing since they got the available ideas, which they needed to use for their complete product. There were, however, some groups asking for permission to put in their ideas, which shows their willingness to have more challenging tasks

Taking part in this interactive and collaborative practice requires learners to interact, exchange and even argue with each other, all of which helps them to grow academically (Brown & Lee, 2015). From the onset, students discussed to divide and allocate the task equally among the members, followed by each person completing his/her part and observing others' performance. Leadership skills is practiced here, giving students the opportunity to allocate work, which helps to develop their life skills.

Figure 1

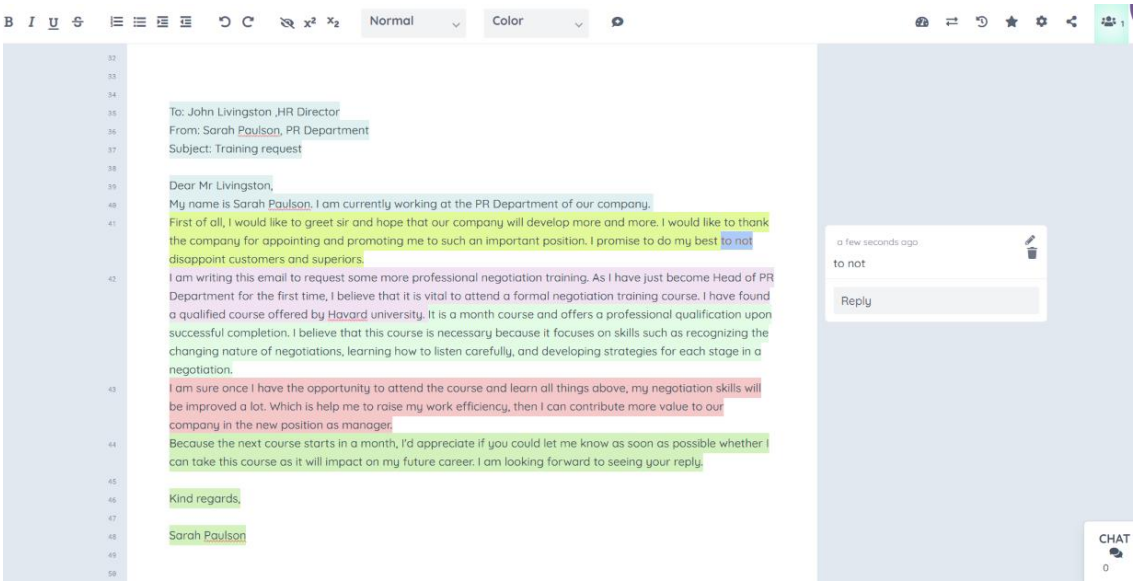
Demonstration of students' interaction in the pad



During training session, students were encouraged to give feedback to each other. They could even add their comments to any part of the group's writing or they could correct the text directly and the correction was distinguishable thanks to the colour code. The peer-feedback activity was found in many groups even though it was not really frequent. Peer-feedback practice plays an essential role in stimulating participants' discussion and exchange in writing, which is promising to improve students' writing ability (Ur, 2012; Brown & Lee, 2015).

Figure 2

Demonstration of students' product and their interaction



CONCLUSION

This study set out to investigate how students experienced the use of web-based tool in their collaborative writing, which is much different from their usual practice in traditional classroom. The findings seem positive concerning students' affection and it appears that this practice has great potential in enhancing learners' writing proficiency. During the collaborative writing activity, participants can develop their communication, collaboration and other 21st Century skills such as critical thinking, ICT literacy and leadership, etc.

As a matter of fact, online learning seems to increase in popularity in the near future, and the fact is that teacher assign students tasks outside class can facilitate teaching and learning considerably. Additionally, in such 21st century, young people really need to enhance their autonomous learning skills, high level thinking skills such as critical thinking, collaboration skill and ICT knowledge. Thus, students can earn a lot of benefits when technology such as this explored practice of Framapad is applied widely in the school setting.

Recommendation

The promising scenario of the practice would not be possible without adequate training of how to use technology effectively since being familiar with the tool is the first and foremost criteria to gain success (Woodrich & Fan, 2017)

Besides, teacher of instructor need to provide clear guidance on how to compose and collaborate before tasks are assigned to the groups. During the practice, teacher's moderation and guidance are essential in giving timely feedback and support, which ensure students' academic achievement (Brown & Lee, 2015).

Limitations and suggestions for further studies

This study has some limitations. First of all, the sample size was rather small and conveniently chosen, and the study was conducted at university context, so generalization can be not fulfilled. Besides, this present study looked at the effect of this web-based tool from students' perspectives, the subsequent experimental study may shed more light on the effectiveness of this practice. Future studies can step to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative writing employing Framapad and even extend to compare between collaborative writing with Framapad and face-to-face classes.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Le Thi Thao Linh is from School of Foreign Languages, UEH University. She is specialized in teaching General English and she has got more than 5-years teaching experience. She especially loves teaching academic writing. She loves reading books, traveling and doing craftwork in her spare time. The area of research that she is interested in is action research since she finds it very useful, practical and deals with her daily teaching job.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please tick in the appropriate box to show your agreement with the following statement:

5 is strongly agree 4 is agree 3 is neutral 2 is disagree 1 strongly disagree

1. I love writing online collaboratively and revising work using Framapad

2. I would like to use Framapad for more learning tasks in the future

3. Framapad is user-friendly easy to learn with some training

4. The use of color codes is interesting and convenient to mark my work

5. I have something to contribute to my team on our assignment.

6. My team helps me a lot in completing the assignment

7. My team can communicate well and provide timely feedback in the writing tasks using Framapad

8. I feel I can write better when participating in collaborative writing with Framapad

9. I can learn a lot from my friends such things as vocabulary use, sentence structure, etc. in this practice

10. I read more during this practice since it is easy to find others' writing

PANDEMIC-DRIVEN REMOTE LEARNING: FROM UNCHARTED TERRITORY TO IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE IN CANADIAN POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Dr. MARIA LUCIA DI PLACITO

Humber College, Canada

ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic forced many college and university students to shift from in-person schooling to virtual learning. With little preparation or skills-training, students faced a number of challenges when engaged in remote learning. The purpose of this paper is twofold. The first objective is to outline the leading challenges Canadian college and university students face(d) while engaging in pandemic-driven virtual learning, as reported in current research studies and editorials. Findings suggest that the leading challenges experienced by students engaged in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic include, increase in or exacerbation of mental health problems/illnesses, limited time and space to dedicate to virtual learning, issues with technology/internet, limited access to school-based support systems, and limited communication/interaction with peers. The second objective is to discuss the implications of these challenges, drawing particular attention to practices that can help overcome barriers and lead to more positive remote learning experiences in the future, such as investment in appropriate information technology platforms and delivery of asynchronous curriculum content.

Keywords: *remote learning, pandemic, COVID-19, higher education, learning, challenges*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education was one of the many sectors in North America affected by the COVID-19 global pandemic. In accordance with government physical/social distancing restrictions in March of 2020, colleges and universities across the globe transitioned to complete remote/virtual learning, with many institutions still maintaining this mode of delivery today for all or part of their study programs (Hodges, Moore, Lockee, Trust, & Bond, 2020; McDaniel, Suffern, Joo, & Alamuddin, 2020; Rothenberg, 2020). While some students flourished or remained unscathed by the abrupt switch (Dennon, 2020a; Elmer, Mepham, & Stadtfeld, 2020; Means, Neisler, & Langer Research Associates, 2020), the majority endured a number of challenges (Blankstein, Frederick, & Wolff-

Eisenberg, 2020; Gillis & Krull, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Murphy, Eduljee, & Croteau, 2020). Students became unsatisfied, disengaged, unmotivated, and displeased with their learning (Gillis & Krull, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Means et al., 2020). The purpose of this paper is twofold: one, to outline the leading challenges Canadian college and university students face(d) while engaging in pandemic-driven virtual learning, as reported in current research studies and editorials; and two, to discuss the implications of these challenges, drawing particular attention to practices that can help overcome barriers and lead to more positive remote learning experiences in the future.

CHALLENGES OF REMOTE LEARNING

Many studies have investigated the effects of COVID-19 on higher education systems and student learning (Blankstein et al., 2020; Gillis & Krull, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Murphy et al., 2020; O'Keefe, Rafferty, Gunder, & Vignare, 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020). It is important to highlight that students have experienced similar challenges regardless of synchronous/live or asynchronous delivery modes; rather, elements such as, course design, learning management system efficacy, and institutional organization, serve as more influential to the way students experience virtual learning (Murphy et al., 2020; St. Amour, 2020). As reported in relevant research studies and editorials, the leading challenges experienced by students engaged in remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic include, *increase in or exacerbation of mental health problems/illnesses, limited time and space to dedicate to virtual learning, issues with technology/internet, limited access to school-based support systems,* and *limited communication/interaction with peers*. The aforementioned concerns are described in more detail below.

INCREASE IN OR EXACERBATION OF MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS/ILLNESSES

Unsurprisingly, pandemic-related stresses, such as fear of contracting the virus, isolation, or economic loss, contributed to an increase in, or exacerbation of, student mental health problems/illnesses (Anderson, 2020; Aucejo, French, Araya, & Zafar, 2020; Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, 2020; Dennon, 2020a/b; Schwartz, 2020). A youth mental health non-profit organization, Active Minds (2020), reported that 20% of college students' mental health worsened since the onset of virtual learning; 38% indicated trouble focusing on academics and 91% experienced stress and anxiety. Likewise, Murphy et al. (2020) examined college student transitions to live virtual learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, and they determined that 61% of students felt nervousness, 59.5% expressed uncertainty, and 75% experienced stress and anxiety. Of note, an increase in, or exacerbation of, mental health problems/illnesses was reported as more commonly to occur in marginalized students. Blankstein et al. (2020) surveyed 15,000

students in 21 American higher education institutions and determined that "concerns regarding physical and mental health—especially amongst historically underserved and marginalized student groups—were present for approximately half of students" (p. 4). In particular, they reported that those who identified as transgender, non-binary, and of color, as well as those who are caregivers to siblings, parents, and/or grandparents, experienced the greatest of mental health concerns (Blankstein et al., 2020).

LIMITED TIME AND SPACE TO DEDICATE TO VIRTUAL LEARNING

Several studies identified that students found it difficult to access the time and space required for virtual learning (Anderson, 2020; Betancourt, 2020; Blankstein et al., 2020; Liu, Pinder-Amaker, Hahm, & Chen, 2020). Betancourt (2020) surveyed 20 American post-secondary institutions about institutional support for students during COVID-19 and found that they struggled most with time management, balancing household, family, and school responsibilities. Blankstein et al. (2020) shared similar outcomes when they evaluated student experiences across American colleges and universities during the pandemic pivot to learning online. Specifically, they learned that students had difficulty locating a quiet place at home to engage in schoolwork (Blankstein et al., 2020). While reviewing literature on the mental health needs of American college and university students during COVID-19, Anderson (2020) unveiled that some students live in unstable or unsafe home environments, which complicate the virtual learning experience. Like with the previously discussed challenge (*Increase in or Exacerbation of Mental Health Problems/Illnesses)*, low-income, minority, and/or first generation students may encounter barriers in accessing food, shelter, and healthcare, which can inevitably impair their remote learning engagements (Liu et al., 2020). In sum, responsibility-laden, unsafe, and/or distracting environments have generated difficulties with pandemic-driven remote learners.

ISSUES WITH TECHNOLOGY/INTERNET

Alongside mental health, time, and space, several researchers have uncovered *issues with technology/internet* as a principal challenge for students engaged in remote learning during the pandemic (Gillis & Krull, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Means et al., 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020). Several students were overwhelmed with the many learning management system platform styles used and the sometimes lacking compatibility between these systems and their personal devices (McDaniel et al., 2020). According to Gillis and Krull (2020), who explored American institutional strategies employed during the COVID-19 pandemic to improve remote learning, some students were not able to access a computer or internet connection. Specifically, their survey study data revealed that "more than half of students, 20 out of 39, encountered at least occasional internet

problems during the five weeks of remote instruction, with 8 percent of students experiencing these problems often" (Gillis & Krull, 2020, p. 293). Shim and Lee's (2020) analysis of South Korean college students' experience of remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated similar results. In particular, 34.14% of student survey responses (156 of 393 total) revealed network instability as a major concern. Drawing from a national survey of American undergraduates about their experiences with online learning during COVID-19, Means et al. (2020) uncovered that 44 percent of students experienced internet connectivity issues serious enough to disrupt their learning. Again, demographic variables seem to play a role with technology/internet access concerns: "access to computer and internet technology has always been stratified, with racial and ethnic minorities, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and people in rural areas being less likely to have a computer and to connect to the internet" (Gillis & Krull, 2020, p. 286).

LIMITED ACCESS TO SCHOOL-BASED SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Post-secondary institutions scrambled to move their teaching and learning online, while their other services, such as student support, lagged behind. Research in this area of study highlights that virtual learners were unable to access timely and efficient support from their given institutions during the pandemic (Anderson, 2020; Blankstein et al., 2020; Johnson, Veletsianos, & Seaman, 2020; Lorenzetti, 2020; MacPhee, 2020; Murphy et al., 2020; Schwartz, 2020). In Blankstein et al.'s (2020) work, 40% of students advocated for more communication about personal counselling and mental health services. Drawing from the perspectives of 46 students and 37 faculty in the United States, McDaniel at al. (2020) concluded that students could not effectively access existing institutional support services, such as financial aid and registrar offices (e.g., unresponsive to student questions). Tutoring, mental health, and career services were other areas reported in the literature that remote learners found difficult to access, as revealed in Dennon's (2020b) work, who surveyed 148 undergraduate students from a liberal arts college in Maine, USA. Interestingly, as noted in Treleaven's (2020) piece, *Inside the Mental Health Crisis at Canadian Universities*, access to student mental health support has been, and continues to be even in the face of a pandemic, subpar: "lengthy wait times to see a counsellor, even in crisis situations; inadequate student representation in decision-making related to mental health services…mandatory sick notes for missed assignments or exams; and overall inaccessible, disparate, opaque, discriminatory and inadequate campus supports" (para. 12). Such shortcomings become even more threatening for marginalized students who carry greater vulnerabilities, as demonstrated in earlier paragraphs (Dennon, 2020b).

LIMITED COMMUNICATION/INTERACTION WITH PEERS

Literature revealed *limited communication/interaction with peers* as a concern for college and university students engaged in pandemic-driven remote learning (Blankstein et al., 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; Means et al., 2020; O'Keefe et al., 2020). Sixty-five percent of American student survey respondents in Means et al.'s (2020) work confirmed having few opportunities to collaborate or communicate with their classmates. Likewise, survey respondents in Blankstein et al.'s (2020) study showed that students lacked connection with their peers. O'Keefe et al. (2020) offer a playbook for faculty to deliver high-quality remote teaching. In this work, they allude to the sometimes isolated nature of virtual learning, which restricts the employment of collaborative-friendly activities for students.

While challenges with mental health, technology, time, space, communication, and support access dominate the research area, remote learners likely face other/additional barriers that are more specific to individual institutions. For example, Means et al. (2020) note that the act of learning online is not problematic for higher education students; rather, it is the way in which online courses are organized and delivered that can be cumbersome. Furthermore, it is worth noting that student responses towards virtual learning are likely influenced by the distresses caused by the pandemic more broadly. For example, reported feelings of loneliness in virtual classrooms are likely intensified when coupled with social distancing mandates (Dennon, 2020b; MacPhee, 2020). Nonetheless, acknowledging the larger issues with pandemic-driven virtual learning is the first step to discovering feasible solutions.

MITIGATING THE CHALLENGES: IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

As the world continues to battle the plights of COVID-19, post-secondary institutions have developed strategies to overcome the eminent challenges college and university students face with virtual learning. Remote learning relies entirely on a stable internet connection and dependable technology. Post-secondary institutions are called upon to invest in appropriate information technology platforms, and subsequently, support students' accessibility to such technologies (Means et al., 2020). This is especially important for colleges and universities that cater to students from marginalized backgrounds. An example of support for technology accessibility is a *Laptop Loaning and Internet Access Program*, where students can acquire devices, along with computer software programs, from their respective institutions (Humber College, 2020). Not only does the provision of technology ensure that students can partake in online learning, using technology in creative and efficient ways can make for more engaging experiences, as well as help mobilize support services and encourage collaborative activity. At the same

time, even the best technologies are susceptible to malfunction, or can be rendered useless without an internet connection. In this case, it is anticipated that teaching faculty are patient, sympathetic, and willing to explore alternatives/accommodations. To help mitigate these barriers, instructors can prepare back-up strategies (Bao, 2020), assign less screen-dependent activities (Dennon, 2020a/b), or reduce the number of platforms/programs used (Dennon, 2020a/b).

Creating the time and space for productive virtual learning is arguably the most difficult problem to solve for remote learners, especially during a pandemic. St. Amour (2020) suggests delivering content asynchronously allows students the flexibility to participate in remote learning on their own time or when quiet space is available. Likewise, Gillis and Krull (2020) thoughtfully submitted, "an opportunity for synchronous interaction enhances student integration and learning in fully online classes [whereas] requiring frequent synchronous interactions risks creating barriers for students with technology, time, and resource constraints" (p. 285). In situations where spaces are unsafe, faculty are encouraged to scan for students at-risk, as they would in-person; a call on institutions to offer training on trauma-informed pedagogy suitable for online environments (MacPhee, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; O'Keefe et al., 2020; UCI Division of Teaching Excellence and Innovation, n.d.). Fostering an authentically-engaged virtual classroom is certainly key when attempting to increase communication between students. After all, "research shows that supportive relationships and feelings of connectedness to fellow students, family, friends, faculty members and mentors are protective factors that can help lower the risk for suicide and promote emotional well-being" (MacPhee, 2020, para. 3). Healthy Minds for Stressful Times at Humber College (2021), The Wellness Hub at Brock University (2020), and NAVI Virtual Assistant at the University of Toronto (2020) are examples of efforts that encourage post-secondary students to converse in the virtual world. In looking more specifically at the virtual classroom, using the breakout discussion rooms or chat tool functions in course learning management systems can foster genuine conversations between students (Means et al., 2020; Shim & Lee, 2020; St. Amour, 2020). Making the most of synchronous teaching time is additionally helpful, which can mean reserving live sessions for exercises/activities, rather than lecturing (Gillis & Krull, 2020; McDaniel et al., 2020; St. Amour, 2020).

Providing technology, flexibility, and communicative environments can help mitigate some of the challenges experienced by remote learners; all of which, however, can be rendered useless if student support services are lacking. Supporting students during pandemic-driven remote learning is imperative. Evidence asserts that college and university students are experiencing increased poor well-being and decreased access to support since the beginning of COVID-19 and virtual learning (Anderson, 2020; Dennon, 2020b). Efforts to move traditional support systems online are warranted, which can

include virtual counselling, tele therapy, and web self-assessment/support guides (Lorenzetti, 2020; Murphy et al., 2020; O'Keefe et al., 2020; Zhai & Du, 2020). Even more pressing is ensuring that students are aware of and can successfully access given support services. Oftentimes, support connection and awareness are heavily dependent on instructors. Instructors are encouraged to respond to student needs in a timely and productive manner, as well as provide clear direction on where/how support can be accessed (Johnson et al., 2020). As indicated in earlier paragraphs, institutions carry the responsibility of providing faculty with training on student support accessibility, student help-seeking behavior recognition, and/or effective intervention communication (Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, 2020; Dennon, 2020b; MacPhee, 2020).

CONCLUSION

It is not surprising to learn that a majority of challenges seen today are similar to those captured in the research on pre-pandemic online education (Lee, 2020). That said, many of the solutions suggested in the past render worthwhile for current application. Perhaps in the coming years (following a pandemic-driven transition to remote learning that left faculty, students, and staff isolated and ill-prepared), researchers, practitioners, and policy-makers will work more diligently in uncovering leading barriers to virtual learning, and subsequently, develop/implement timely and sustainable solutions.

THE AUTHOR

Dr. Maria Lucia (Marylou) DiPlacito-DeRango has been a Professor in the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences and Innovative Learning (FLASIL) at Humber College since 2011. She currently serves as the English Department Program Coordinator. Marylou completed a B.A., B.Ed., M.Ed., and Ph.D. at York University, Toronto, and a TESOL certificate at Humber College. Her research focus is on supporting student mental health in higher education. Her research/work has been published in several academic venues, including the International Journal of Mental Health & Addiction and The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. She has also published several children's storybooks: Pandemic Party Pandemonium (January 2021), Mindy's Marshmallows (June 2021), and Ziibi's Way (August 2021).

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STUDENTS' INVOLVEMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING DURING EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING AND LEARNING TIME DUE TO COVID-19

Mr. NGUYEN VAN NGUYEN

Banking University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

The Vietnamese education system had to switch to online learning due to the sudden impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has been causing some unexpected problems for both learners and teachers. This article attempts to highlight a situation at a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to gain an insight into student involvement toward this type of learning. The study employs a Likert-scale survey and open-ended questions to investigate the perspectives and levels of engagement of college students (N = 242) in the condition of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) during COVID-19. The findings place emphasis on the advantages and disadvantages of using online video conferencing lessons with various modes of language teaching and learning. Because there is not much interaction among students, and between students and teachers, the results revealed a rather distrustful attitude of students toward online language learning. The paper concludes with some implications for improving student engagement in the context of distance learning and teaching.

Keywords*: online learning, students' involvement, Emergency Remote Teaching, interaction*

INTRODUCTION

When Covid 19 spread through Vietnam, wreaking havoc on the whole socioeconomic and educational systems, the authority implemented a social distancing policy that urged people to self-quarantine. As a result, our educational system was forced to shift to a different mode of teaching and learning, turning from traditional classrooms to online platforms. In that case, ERT is regarded as the most appropriate solution for all educational institutions' required changes (Hodges et al., 2020). Because the shift was unplaned and sudden, both instructors and students did not know exactly what to prepare, leading to being under a stressful and pressurised situation. In terms of institutional or system-level factors, the University of Houston (2020) published a report summarizing

faculty perceptions of the transition to a remote teaching model, revealing significant variation in terms of technology tool implementation and mode of instruction. While the transition was said to have gone smoothly under the circumstances, only a small percentage of those polled did not encounter any difficulties. Also, as technology became students' only channel to interact with teachers and peers, social isolation and lack of interactivity were viewed as major shortcomings of emergency remote teaching (Dong et al., 2020). Accordingly, it is basic for instructive organizations to know about what elements might affect students' fulfillment and their eagerness to consider online later on, so they can be prepared for any unforeseen changes that might emerge. To acquire a careful comprehension of students' points of view on the job of ERT in language learning, the author did an examination with students at a University in Ho Chi Minh City.With the above-mentioned goal in mind, this paper was written to find answers to the following questions:

(1) How do students feel about emergency remote teaching for language learning in the context of Covid-19?

(2) What factors influence students' participation in emergency remote teaching?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of online learning in the world and in Vietnam

Online learning refers to learning and other supportive resources accessed via a computer. (Carliner, 2004). Online learning enables students to work at a time and location that is convenient for their learning needs. Several instructors and students remarked on their ability to concentrate more on course content and less on issues such as parking, traffic, and other issues that may arise when attending a traditional class setting. (Thomson, 2010). Taking an interest in conversation discussions, watching instructional exercise or talk recordings, perusing materials given by instructors, submitting schoolwork, sitting tests, or rehearsing language practices are for the most part normal learning exercises in web-based learning frameworks. Others accepted that web-based learning could convey customized and separated guidance (Archambault et al. 2010; Christensen & Horn, 2008; Waldeck, 2008; Watson & Gemin, 2008) through a variety of mechanisms that provide instant formative feedback on a student's performance (Dennen 2005; Rice et al. 2008) or through modularized content that allows for the learning of EQUIVALENT content at different levels of learning.

The principal COVID-19 flare-up in Vietnam happened toward the finish of January 2020, and from that point on, the public authority has taken a firm position, shutting every single instructive organization. Following that, schools and colleges were told to progress their guidance to a web-based organization. Until May 2021, there were almost 60

colleges in Vietnam moving to instructing on the web (Vietnamnet, 2021). Web based learning has been presented for a long time however has gotten little insight from both students and schools in Vietnam (Vietnam Economic Times, 2018). Colleges in Vietnam had no real option except to consider web-based learning plans during the flare-up, and hence the pandemic has allowed them a fantastic opportunity to assess their ICT framework, the preparation expected to run online examples, and an assortment of different components (Nguyen & Pham, 2020).

Emergency remote teaching

Because of the serious impact of the Covid 19 outbreak, which forced people around the world to seriously impose social distancing, leading to schools being closed, only virtual communication is possible to continue learning, a new term called emergency remote teaching has emerged (ERT), referring to a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode (Hodges et al, 2020). As a result, online learning and ERT are still significantly different because some universities are unable to transition to digital operations immediately. In that case, ERT is dispatched to deal with the unexpected situation. ERT should be viewed as a short-term solution to a pressing issue (Golden, 2020) rather than a day-by-day and thorough web-based learning educational plan that requires a very long time to finish for the researchers' academic undertakings during the pandemic, (Lawson et al., 201), ERT has the essential objective of offering informative help that is solid yet simple to make during the emergency (Hodges et. al, 2020). In short, ERT is a temporary but vital replacement for online learning due to the ongoing suspension.

Online language learning

Consistently, numerous scientists discussed the benefits and burdens of web-based learning. Above all else, the web, what capacities as a virtual library, permits language students to get to archives and other learning materials that are legitimate and helpful to their language obtaining. Therefore, the web's benefit is accessed (LeLoup & Ponterio, 2000). “As the internet became more widely available, institutions expanded their use of online language materials and course delivery systems” (Chapelle, 2001; Liu, Moore, Graham, & Lee, 2002, as cited in Pino, 2008). Chantel (2002) accepted that ESL students expected to "comprehend and accept the idea of the new, innovatively based education" in additional conventional parts of proficiency like perusing and composing. Having the option to utilize online language learning materials is consequently viewed as a significant stage forward in the securing of a second language for ESL students. One more benefit of the web for language students is intelligent, sight and sound introductions which will give reasonable learning encounters. Recordings, livelinesss, and melodies, for instance, make exercises really captivating when contrasted with exercises found in a reading material or exercise manual. Such introductions work with learning for ESL

understudies, however they additionally fill in as inspirations for them to attempt online language learning exercises. Young (2003) found that a PC intervened correspondence environment could bring down students' mental boundaries, permitting them to uninhibitedly offer their viewpoints and convey effectively on the web, and "that it could also improve their critical thinking, problem solving, and communication skills" (p.447)

Outside of organized instructive settings, language students presently have more freedoms for casual learning. Web-based media stages like Facebook and Twitter (Lamy & Zourou, 2013), web-based gaming stages like World of Warcraft (Thorne et al., 2009; Bytheway, 2015), virtual universes, or other web interest networks, like fanfiction (Sauro, 2017), empower 'in the wild' experiences (Wagner, 2015). The new advanced media offer an assortment of section focuses into settings where language is utilized as a necessary evil instead of an end all by itself. It enables students to wander past the limits of the classroom and into a world in which they can immerse themselves and where language is capable as in excess of a bunch of theoretical ideas and rules. In this manner, versatile innovations permit students to assume greater responsibility for their own learning (Kukulska-Hulme, 2016; Lee et al., 2019). Furthermore, Pellerin (2014) demonstrated that even youthful students could plan their own language learning encounters by collaborating with cell phones.

However, there are still some noticable drawbacks of online language learning. The biggest problem is of technological issues such as delays and helpless association, which frequently bring about an abatement in two-/three-way communication (Lawsonet al., 2010; Wang, 2004; Yang & Chen, 2007). The distortion of audio and video signals affects turn-taking and leaves students participating in internet based community learning frustrated (Capdeferro & Romero, 2012), or a lost feeling among themselves and the remainder of the class, or the flow of the lesson (Coverdale-Jones, 2000). As Örnberg Berglund (2009) discovered, a more noteworthy number of long monological turns in online lessons is often caused by technological issues. It was difficult for teachers to facilitate interaction and collaborative learning. In short, poor integration of online learning may result in unwelcome challenges ranging from poor communication to feelings of isolation and frustration.

METHODS

Participants

There were 242 students from Banking University Hochiminh City, with 37.2% of them being freshmen, 32.2% sophomores, 15.7% juniors and 14.9% seniors, participating in the research. Not only are they students of the author, they also come from other classes in the University, who were asked to fill the survey by author’s colleagues.

Instruments

The research data was gathered in a mixed mode, with online surveys for quantitative information and simple qualitative data in the form of open-ended questions. The initial three questions gathered demographic information, such as students' present scholarly year, related knowledge with distance learning, and mechanical applications utilized in web-based language during ERT. The following two questions used a 1-to-5 Likert scale to assess students' preferences for online or offline learning, as well as students' perceived success of online learning versus language learning in traditional classrooms. Finally, there were open-ended questions about students' desire as well as limitations regarding lessons during the ERT that they could answer without revealing their identities. In the following session of the survey, it is the questionnaire including 23 items divided into three types of student engagement during the online learning activity. It was designed and emailed to students at the end of the summer semester at Banking University for their evaluations and comments. This instrument includes three components: student engagement with the content, student engagement with the instructor, and student engagement with other students.

Data collection and data analysis

The reactions were gathered digitally, and the data was automatically saved in.csv design by the Google Form. The document was changed over to.xlsx format. The data was cleaned and formatted in an Excel spreadsheet. The survey employed the Likert scale, with responses ranging from strongly disagree to disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree, and the Likert scale was converted from 1 to 5, respectively. The last item mentioning isolated feeling of students, however was contrarily interpreted, from 5 to 1. Various frequencies on variables were determined in Excel after converting the Likert Scale from text to numbers.

RESULTS

Research question 1: How do students feel about emergency remote teaching for language learning in the context of Covid-19?

The first research question asked participants if they had any prior knowledge with online language learning. Results from the survey exhibited that half of students (49.6%) had already had insight with internet instructing and learning prior to ERT due to Covid-19. It can be explained by the fact that it is now the 4th wave of Covid-19 in Vietnam, so students may count their experience in the previous waves.

The subsequent survey question, which is about kinds of technology utilized by students, has uncovered the main choice of computerized and interactive platforms incorporated in

the lessons. Virtually all students had the involvement in web conferencing (99.2%) including Zoom and Google Meet as the primary platforms for communication, offering scheduled instructing meetings. This was followed by social networking sites (0.8%), maybe because of some teachers intergrating them into their courses to better and more quickly interact with their students. Digital games and blogs have no use since they might be not much appropriate to help deliver lessons.

The next two questions focused on students' preferences for and perceptions of the effectiveness of ERT learning versus traditional offline classes. When it comes to overall preference, the minority of participants expressed a preference for online methods of language learning (Mean = 2.64, SD = 1.13). In terms of perceived effectiveness, participants were skeptical of the effectiveness of online language learning, (Mean = 2.42, SD = 1.05). It is worth noting that a sizable proportion of students (38%) chose the neutral option, implying that these students were undecided about the answer to the question.

An overwhelming number of comments in the qualitative data emphasized the convenience of online learning mode, stating that they could save time on travel, learn regardless of time and space, and be more self-disciplined.

Response 1: “Learning online is much convenient. I can look at the lesson more clearly.”

Response 2: "I'm relieved that I've found my learning style and that I won't feel embarrassed or nervous when answering teachers' questions."

Response 3: "I don't have to go to school, especially since it's raining."

Response 4: "Online learning allows students to practice self-study at a higher level than traditional classroom learning." At the same time, it teaches students how to improvise in a variety of situations."

On the other hand, a disproportionate number of comments focused on distractions, lack of stable Internet connection and a lack of interaction or motivation. The most complained-about issue was communication among peers and among understudies and educators, which is why some students avoided online language learning.

Response 5: "Because my Internet connection is occasionally unstable, I struggle to study and submit homework while also being unable to contact my teachers."

Response 6: "There are so many things at home that can divert my attention away from the lesson."

Response 7: "Teachers and students do not have very effective interactions."

Response 8: “I don't have many chances to ask the teacher what I don't understand”

Response 9: "It's difficult for me to absorb knowledge, which is affecting my academic performance."

There is even a concern about health problems when working with the screen too much.

Response 10: "I need to look at the computer all day, which makes my eyes tired."

One recognized that some of his peers were not there while their names still appeared on the screen.

Response 11: "My classmates were away when teachers called, and sometimes I had no partners to figure with".

In general, many participants stated that they preferred ERT over onsite classes because of the convenience, adaptability, simple admittance to learning materials, and anonymity. However, the effectiveness of ERT was called into question due to an inconvenience by technical issues and an absence of connection.

Research question 2: What factors influence students' participation in emergency remote teaching?

To answer research question 2, the author took interactions within three categories: student-content interactions, student – instructor interactions and student- student interactions into consideration.

According to the data collected, the most items that contributed to student-content interactions were completing all assigned work (Item 1, Mean = 4.07), frequently visiting to the course website (Item 2, Mean = 3.88), and putting forth a lot of effort in class (Item 4, Mean =3.88). However, students' capacity to organize their own learning and personal effort on readings had slightly lower means. In terms of student-instructor interactions, the highest mean was for instructors to be responsive when students had questions (Item 11, Mean = 4.28), followed by instructors to be present (Item 10, Mean = 4.07). Students also said the instructors were approachable (Item 13, Mean = 4.00). Despite some obstacles, not many students feel isolated in classes (Item 23, Mean = 2.11) because they can help each other learn (Item 22, Mean =3.88). Furthermore, they can easily contact their peers on a personal level (Item 18, Mean = 3.83).

Table 1

Results of questionaire

Items	Mean	SD
Student - Content Engagement		
1. I finish all of the class work assigned to me	4.07	0.87
2. I visit the course website regularly	3.88	0.98
3. I really like to learn the course material	3.71	0.93
4. I made a lot of effort in class	3.88	0.88
5. I am well organized in my learning	3.60	0.85
6. The course is well organized	3.79	0.87
7. I will get good marks after the course	3.69	0.85
8. I stay caught up on readings	3.61	0.90
Student - Instructor Engagement		
9. The course rules are clear	4.00	0.88
10. My teacher participated actively in class discussions	4.07	0.99
11. My teacher responds quickly when I have questions	4.28	0.94
12. Course rules are consistently enforced.	3.98	0.96
13. I know that I can contact my teacher when I need to	4.00	1.02
14. I have faith in my teacher to handle inappropriateness in class interactions	3.98	0.95
Student - Student Engagement		
15. I participate actively in online discussions	3.49	0.93
16. When I don't understand something in a discussion, I ask questions	3.64	0.95
17. I interact with classmates on course material	3.75	0.94
18. I connect personally with classmates	3.83	0.97
19. I enjoy interacting in my class	3.39	0.90
20. I help my fellow classmates	3.70	0.86
21. I share personal concerns with others	3.55	1.01
22. I am committed to collaborating with my classmates so that we can all learn together	3.88	0.92
23. I feel isolated in the class	2.11	1.01

As the survey results revealed, the technology used in students' learning process is both advantageous and disadvantageous for them. On the one hand, students could take advantage of online learning to personalize their study, such as choosing their own ways to take notes or utilize learning materials. On the other hand, the majority of them complained about the unstable Internet connection, leading to being hard to interact with teachers and classmates. Some students also do not have enough gadgets, like a webcam and a microphone, even a laptop; so two- or three-way communication was discouraged. Teachers asked questions and students typed answers can be commonly seen in most online classes.

Response 1: "My dorm's wifi connection is occasionally unstable, which makes it difficult for me to study online with my teacher and friends. When my teacher asks me to do something but I don't understand what he or she is asking, it can be difficult for me to respond."

Beside that, there is also a recommendation about updating the platforms used so that necessary functions are integrated and students do not have to log in so many applications.

Response 2: "I hope I can only log in to one website to learn." Now I have to log in to a slew of websites to complete my assignments."

Take an example of Google Meet, it does not provide Break-out rooms for group discussions, so there is no use when students need to do pair work or group work. Zoom supports that function, but not for all accounts, except the pro ones. Some teachers use Google classroom to assign homework. When it comes to the final exam, students have to log into LMS of the University. Also, to inform students more quickly, teachers tend to use social networking sites, like Facebook or Zalo, creating a group for their classses and posting there. It is rather annoying for students since they have five or six groups like that each semester (corresponding to the number of subjects they registered).

DISCUSSION

Students accepted ERT and still made an effort in their progress, but they still prefered traditional offline language classes.

According to the findings, most participants preferred offline learning over ERT. The interaction with the instructor and time management were cited as the main reasons for the preference. This supports the findings of previous studies that, despite technological advancements, the classroom remains a popular mode of skill acquisition. Due to a lack of awareness, training, and ease of use, many learners are hesitant to try out new learning technologies.

This finding is consistent with the findings of Arora (2019), a lack of integration of online learning can result in unwelcome challenges such as poor communication, feelings of isolation, and frustration. Nambiar (2020) also conducted an online survey to ascertain instructors' and students' attitudes toward online classes (Covid 19). According to the findings, there is a need for quality and timely interaction between students and professors, as well as the availability of technical support. Furthermore, the study emphasized the importance of developing "a structured and user-friendly environment for online mode of education" (p.792). Finally, the study concluded that it is critical to provide adequate technological training to teachers regarding methods of conducting online classes."

This result, however, contradicts the one confirmed in a study conducted by Baber (2020), who investigated students' attitudes toward online learning in India and South Korea during the Covid19 pandemic. He discovered that students had a positive attitude toward aspects of online learning such as interaction, motivation, course structure, instructor knowledge, and facilitation. As a result, they perceived themselves to be satisfied with the learning outcome. The difference in results, in this case, could be attributed to the urgent context of teaching and learning in the midst of the Covid-19 outbreak. Teachers and students saw ERT as "the practicalities of delivery via video conferencing" rather than new forms of learning and teaching (Lawson et al., 2010). Regardless of students' fluency in daily use, the reason could be a lack of access and literacy for CALL instruction (Sander, 2005).

ERT for language classes can provide some effectiveness, but it could not guarantee engagement and interaction.

As reasons for supporting online learning, advocates for ERT cited convenience, time savings, and inclusive participation. However, a large number of respondents claimed a lack of engagement, including both student-student and student-instructor engagement. Participants repeatedly mentioned a lack of opportunities, willingness, and appropriate technology for peer work, teacher feedback, and group discussions. This finding is supported by several studies on the same topic, which found that there was often less interaction in online learning environments, and that when there was, it was frequently initiated by teachers (Andrews & Klease, 2002; Saw et al., 2008). Tichavsky et al. (2015) investigated students' motivations for preferring face-to-face or online learning. The authors discovered that interaction (90%), specifically interaction with professors (50%), was important for students and was one of the most frequently mentioned reasons for choosing face-to-face over online learning. Tichavsky et al. (2015) discovered that students perceive themselves as poor self-motivators, so they rely on others to regulate and direct their learning experience. The importance of verbal reminders and actual human interaction cannot be overstated.

CONCLUSION

In the current situation, when Covid19 is still uncontrollable, the need for emergency remote teaching is undeniable. Flexibility (Smedley, 2010), interactivity (Leszczyski et al., 2018; Wagner et al., 2008), self-pacing (Amer, 2007), and opportunities are all advantages of online learning. However, whether or not it is effective for language teaching and learning is still debatable. While a number of participants showed their preference toward ERT learning due to some benefits such as convenience, flexibility, and easy access to learning materials, the majority still insist on traditional classrooms. They believe that face-to-face communication among members in class are vital for absorbing knowledge.

The paper still has some drawbacks, for instance, the small sample size, the narrow setting (only English majored students in a Vietnam University), but to some extent it does reflect how ERT is working at the present. Maybe more research should be conducted, involving more students from various universities, and lecturers as well.

It is critical that not only students, but education institutions and lecturers are advised to be ready and well prepared for any unexpected situation in the future. Schools should always upgrade their LMS systems, integrate sufficient functions so that students can find it easy and effective to use it for their study. Some teachers are not tech savvy, so it is really a big help for them to join some technical training sessions provided from schools before teaching online. Students are also encouraged to be more autonomous, responsible for their study and ready to raise their voice whenever troubles occur.

THE AUTHOR

Mr. Nguyen Van Nguyen is currently a lecturer of English at Banking University HCMC, mostly teaching English skills and ESP, especially in the field of Banking and Finance. He has 10 years experience of teaching various levels of English learners. He loves to inspire students so they can enhance their autonomy on their own.

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LEARNER ATTITUDES TOWARDS BLENDED LEARNING IN AN ENGLISH WRITING COURSE

Ms. HONGGUO XUE

Northwestern Polytechnical University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China

ABSTRACT

This paper draws on constructivist theory to study the efficacy of blended English writing teaching and students' attitudes towards it. During the 2020–2021 fall semester, an English writing course was taught through a combination of online and in-class study. The course was a 48-hour, 3-credit course that lasted for 16 weeks. A total of 71 students were enrolled. They participated in several massively open online courses before class and attended classroom sessions, discussing complex concepts and asking questions about material encountered in the online lecture. At the end of the semester, all the students were asked to complete a questionnaire about the efficacy of the course. Fifteen of the students were also interviewed about the course design and teaching quality. All the students thought that the blending teaching method was more effective than traditional classroom teaching. A majority of the students were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the blended learning model, and all the interviewed students thought that they had improved their writing and self-study abilities. Therefore, this study concluded that a blended learning approach could substantially enhance the efficacy and quality of an English writing course.

Keywords: *efficacy; massively open online courses (MOOCs); higher education; blended learning; self-regulated learning; constructivist theory; writing pedagogy*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Internet has changed people's lives and study methods. Students can learn online, and online education has become an important means of meeting students' individual learning needs. Massively open online courses (MOOCs) have received much research attention and have the potential to reshape higher education (Littlejohn et al., 2016). They have become popular due to their openness, flexibility, convenience, rich resources, and massive audience. Students can engage in learning at no or minimal cost. However, studies have expressed concern about this online learning approach because MOOCs have not had as profound or immediate an impact on education as initially anticipated (Hew & Cheung, 2014; Ma & Lee, 2019; Gillani & Eynon, 2014).

Devin (2013) noted that MOOCs have several limitations because little interaction occurs between teachers and students in the MOOC environment. A pure online learning approach was demonstrated to fail to keep learners engaged (Reich & Ruipérez-Valiente, 2019). In addition, students' online learning lacks supervision, and its efficacy is hard to evaluate. Students are inactive in discussion, and the passing rate is low (Baturay, 2015). Traditional classroom teaching can overcome these limitations of online teaching. Teachers can supervise their students' learning and interact with students in class. However, the teaching resources are limited in traditional classroom teaching. To solve the shortcomings of both online teaching and classroom teaching, blended learning has been used in education. Blended learning is a new learning model in a blended teaching that integrates MOOCs and traditional classroom teaching. It has gained popularity in recent years because it is flexible and can accommodate content delivery in multiple media. The in-class component of blended learning may complement the online section by offering students additional instruction and help, such as summarizing the main points of the course content, explaining difficult issues, and answering questions that students encounter in online learning before class (Ma & Lee, 2021). Therefore, blended learning has been widely used in college English teaching and has proven to be effective (Lu, 2021; Liao, 2021; Lu et al., 2018). However, few studies have examined the application and effectiveness of blended learning in English classes for graduate students. Therefore, this study focused on student attitudes and the effectiveness of an English writing class for first-year graduate students. The study results can provide benefits for the future of blended learning.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

This study was designed in accordance with the theory of constructivist theory, which is one of the major theoretical framework of Bruner (1960). One of the principles of constructivism is that learning is an active process and students construct concepts based on their past knowledge or new knowledge they acquire. Another principle is that teachers should facilitate students' learning (McLeod, 2019). In the blended learning model, students are the center of the class, and teachers guide and aid the students. They assign MOOC content and direct the students to engage in self-study before class. They design the class activities and divide students into small groups to allow the students to discuss problems and difficulties encountered in online learning during class. Therefore, in blended learning, students become the center of the class and teachers serve as facilitators, trying to encourage students to discover principles by themselves through active engagement in class activities.

RELATED STUDIES

Blended learning employs several teaching and learning resources to achieve better teaching results, and it makes good use of the advantages of both online learning and traditional classroom learning (He, 2011). This teaching approach was formalized by Driscoll (2002). He proposed that blended learning consists of adopting different technologies, theories, and techniques to achieve increased teaching efficacy. Singh et al. (2001) stated that blended learning can be carried out in different forms to realize an optimum balance between learning cost and learning result. They proposed that blended learning should include the combination of the following five dimensions: blended offline and online study; blended self-paced study and collaborative study; blended structured and unstructured course design; blended custom content and off-the-shelf content; and blended work and study. Through the combination of these elements, blended learning can integrate different teaching styles, courses, and situations.

In China, blended learning has been studied since the 1980s. As MOOCs have became widely used, MOOCs blended with traditional classroom teaching have become popular. Several researchers have applied blended learning in English listening and speaking classes and determined that blended learning is an effective way for teachers to determine their students' study progress and promote interactions between teachers and students (Yang et al., 2017). Lv (2021) explored the application of blended learning in college English teaching and determined that blended learning helped students improve their learning efficiency. However, most studies have focused on blended learning in undergraduate education. Few papers have addressed blended learning in graduate student education. To fill this gap and provide insights to benefit future applications of blended learning in courses for graduate students, this study investigated the effect of blended learning in an English writing course for first-year graduate students. The study aimed to answer the following three questions:

(1) What are students' attitudes towards blended English writing instruction?

(2) Can blended writing instruction help students improve their English writing ability?

(3) Can blended writing instruction enhance students' self-regulated learning abilities?

METHODS

This study adopted a mixed qualitative and quantitative approach. This method permits a more complete and synergistic utilization of data than separate quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis do. Data were collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews.

Research Context

During the 2020–2021 fall semester, an English writing course was conducted through a combination of online (16 hours) and in-class (32 hours) study for first-year graduate students in a Chinese university. It was a 3-credit course and lasted for 16 weeks. The entire blended learning procedure was divided into three parts: lead-in before class, classroom session, and assessment after class. The procedure is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Blended learning Procedure

Teaching Procedure	**Teaching Arrangement**	
Lead-in before class (online)	Teacher	Assign MOOC content and questions, collect MOOC data
	Student	Finish watching MOOC lectures and answer previewing questions
Classroom session (in-classroom)	Teacher	Explain difficult points, help students solve problems based on data from the MOOC, organize class activities
	Student	Participate in group discussion, complete writing peer review, and engage in other deep learning activities
Assessment after class (online)	Teacher	Assign homework and tests and give timely feedback
	Student	Finish assignments and tests, do peer review and self-assessment

Lead-in before class. All the 71 students were in one class. A Teacher (the author) performed a lead-in before class. Based on the course content, students' learning ability, and the lesson plan, the teacher designed learning tasks for students and posted the tasks on the Chinese MOOC platform Online Classroom (Xuetang Zaixian). The tasks included participating in the MOOC "Advanced English Writing" and other MOOCs, participating in online discussion, taking quizzes, and submitting questions. Students needed to spend 16 hours during the semester participating in the MOOCs. During the preview before class, the MOOC platform automatically recorded students' learning performance, such as the time students spent viewing MOOC content, their scores, and problems and difficulties they encountered.

The classroom sessions. Students attended classroom sessions for a total of 32 hours. Based on the online study record, the teachers and her students discussed difficult concepts and challenging questions encountered in the online lectures. Next, she divided students into 10 groups of approximately 7 students each in the class. They discussed the questions posted by the teachers, analyzed sample essays, and reviewed each other's essays. At the end of the class, each group had to post their answers or one of their essays on the discussion board of the MOOC platform for other groups and teachers to evaluate.

Assessment after class. The teacher gave timely feedback to the answers or essays posted by students. They also assigned further essays and quizzes to allow students to practice writing and improve their writing. Students finished their homework, performed a self-evaluation of their work, and completed a peer review of their group members' work so that they could help each other improve their critical thinking abilities and learn to analyze a problem from different perspectives. All these activities were carried out online after class. The teacher could track students' performance on the platform and learn about the difficulties students encountered in doing their homework. Homework helped students improve their English writing and informed the teachers and students about their progress towards mastering the writing skills.

Participants

The study participants consisted of first-year graduate students in a Chinese university. A total of 71 students participated, and their ages ranged from 22 to 25. Participants were randomly selected from students who enrolled in an English writing course. None of them were English majors; most of them majored in science and technology and had learned English for more than 10 years before taking the course.

Data Collection

Questionnaire

At the end of the semester, we designed a questionnaire to collect data on students' viewpoints about the implementation of the blended format and distributed it on Wenjuanxing, a platform for designing questionnaires and collecting data. The questionnaire contained 10 items, which followed a 5-point Likert-type format (I strongly disagree / I disagree / I partially agree / I agree/ I strongly agree). All the items focused on students' attitudes towards the blended English format and their perceived efficacy of the format. The original version of the questionnaire was examined by two experts to ensure its validity. A minor adjustment was made according to the experts' suggestions.

The questionnaire was written in Chinese so that students could understand the questions clearly and give more accurate responses. All the 71 students completed the questions, and all the questionnaires collected were valid. The Wenjuanxing platform was used to analyze students' responses.

Semi-Structured Interviews

After the students filled out the questionnaires, we conducted semi-structured interviews with 15 of the students to obtain an in-depth understanding of students' viewpoints. The interview consisted of two questions in English. However, to ensure reliability, all interviews were conducted in Chinese and were audio recorded with students' consent. The two questions were (1) "What have you learned from this blended writing course?" and (2) "What are the advantages and disadvantages of the blended writing approach?"

Data Analysis

Data were first analyzed quantitatively to provide an overall summary, and quantitative data was subsequently used to understand students' learning experiences (Tian & Louw, 2020). After the questionnaire was conducted, the results were automatically calculated by the Wenjuanxing platform. In addition, interview recordings were transcribed and coded by the researcher.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Questionnaire Survey

The results of the questionnaire survey are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2

Students' Views on Blended learning

No.	Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Partially agree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Being able to practice through the computer or mobile device makes it convenient for me to participate in writing MOOCs.	0%	1.33%	1.39%	48.61%	48.67%
2	Participating in MOOCs before class helped me to improve my self-study ability.	0%	0%	11.11%	51.39%	37.5%
3	Blended learning enhances in-class interaction and communication.	0%	0%	0%	33.33%	66.67%

4	Blended learning allows more learning materials to be provided.	0%	0%	3.14%	45.31%	51.55%
5	I was satisfied with the blended learning model for writing.	0%	1.39%	12.51%	45.54%	40.56%
6	Blended learning has effectively stimulated my interest and attention in English writing.	0%	1.29%	10.61%	45.27%	42.83%
7	Blended learning has improved my teamwork spirit and developed my collaborative ability.	0%	2.18%	13.89%	50.28%	33.65%
8	Blended learning has helped me develop receptive skills.	0%	4.28%	5.56%	43.86%	46.3%
9	Blended learning has helped me to improve my analytical and critical thinking abilities.	0%	2.78%	9.72%	51.39%	36.11%
10	The course has helped me substantially improve my English writing ability this semester.	0%	1.39%	12.51%	43.05%	43.05%

The percentages of students who agreed or strongly agreed that it is convenient to participate MOOCs with phones or computers were 48.61% and 48.67%, respectively. It was convenient for them to participate in MOOCs using their phones or computers, and they could study whenever or wherever they wanted. In addition, 88.89% of students agreed or strongly agreed that learning MOOCs improved their self-study abilities. This indicates that the majority of students were positive about using MOOCs to study. Student 1 expressed a similar viewpoint in her interview. She commented, "we have to study hard and finish watching the online MOOC videos and the exercises of each unit before class because our professor often check our preparation by administering quizzes or asking questions, which fosters our self-study abilities." However, 11.11% of the students only partially agreed with these viewpoints. Student 6 explained, "we often use cellphones to watch MOOCs videos, but we are often distracted by WeChat messages, entertainment activities, or games. We sometimes cannot concentrate on watching MOOCs, and sometimes skip the videos if we do not have enough time." Online learning requires

students to be self-regulated. If students have enough self-discipline, they can achieve satisfactory learning results and develop their self-study abilities further. But if students' self-regulation abilities are weak, they may not improve their self-study abilities through online learning.

Concerning in-class interaction and communication (Item 3), 100% of the students thought that blended learning enhanced interaction and communication in class. Because students participated in MOOCs in advance, teachers only explained the key points during class, which saved class time and increased student–teacher and student–student interactions during class. Student 8 said, "in the blended writing class, my professor often asked us to do group discussions. These activities helped us to be more engaged in class and feel more confident in communicating with our classmates." Therefore, blended learning can help students enhance their communication abilities.

In terms of students' satisfaction, Item 5 demonstrated that most students were satisfied with blended learning. Overall, 86.1% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with the blended learning model. Only 1.39% of the students did not agree; 12.51% of the students partially agreed. This demonstrates that the blended learning approach was favored by most of the students. This is consistent with the results from Yang et al. (2017). This is likely because the quality of the MOOCs was high and teachers were available to assist students with difficulties.

As for the stimulation of attention and interest (Item 6), 88.1% of the students agreed or strongly agreed that blended learning can effectively attract students' interests and attention in class. Student 2 stated, "In class, teachers can facilitate our study; they explain the purpose of the online videos and summarize the main points and key writing techniques and answer any questions that came up in online learning. They organize the peer review and group discussions. All these activities can attract our interest and attention in class." Therefore, in-class teaching can attract students' interest and attention and retain it during the course. This is consistent with the findings by Long and Lee (2021).

Regarding students' comments on the effectiveness of blended learning, a large percentage of students thought that blended learning enhanced their team spirit, ability to work collaboratively, analytical and critical thinking abilities, and English writing ability (Items 7, 8, 9, and 10). A total of 83.93% of the students agreed that blended learning improved their ability to work collaboratively. During class discussion or MOOC discussion, students participated in group activities and became more confident when cooperating with others. Students commented that "it is beneficial to discuss questions with my professor after we watched the video," and "in the class we can discuss in groups or in pairs and improve our communication ability and collaborative ability. But when

we learn alone, we may feel isolated and disconnected." In addition, blended learning improved their receptive ability because they had access to more learning materials and more guidance from their teachers than in traditional teaching. Moreover, during the peer review, group discussion, and model essay appreciation sessions, students could improve their analytical and critical thinking abilities. Most importantly, blended learning helped students improve their writing competence; 86.1% of the students agreed that blended learning helped them to substantially improve their English writing and 12.51% of the students said they made some progress. This is consistent with results from Liao (2021). Only 1.39% of the students disagreed that their writing improved. Overall, almost all the students felt that they improved their English writing after participation in the blended learning course.

Semi-Structured Interviews

One week after students finished filling out the questionnaires, 15 students were randomly chosen to participate in follow-up interviews. They were asked about their perceptions of and experiences with the blended learning model and its advantages and disadvantages. All 15 students felt they had improved their English writing abilities. Students believed that blended learning provided more convenience for them because they could participate in MOOCs from any time and place. In addition, the quality of the MOOCs enabled them to broaden their horizons. They also felt more confident because they had opportunities to be exposed to course content from well-known top universities in the world This finding is in agreement with Yousef's (2015). One student appreciated the alternate perspective provided by the MOOCs: "In the Advanced English Writing MOOC, three parts were taught by two American professors. This has broadened my views about writing and provided knowledge that I never had before." Another student said: "Participating in MOOCs improved my self-regulation ability; I can participate in MOOCs at my own pace." During class time, students had more time to discuss difficult problems with their teachers and classmates because they previewed course content through the MOOCs before class. They also had time to do peer review of each other's papers, which exposed them to their classmates' perspectives on issues and improved their critical thinking skills. One student remarked that "blended learning can take advantage of both MOOCs delivery and classroom teaching and is more effective than classroom teaching." All the students interviewed confirmed that they had improved their English writing skills after 16 weeks of blended learning. Moreover, students felt that they had more opportunities to express their ideas in class and were more engaged in class. Student 10 said: "Blended learning can give me more opportunities to talk in class and discuss questions with my classmates." These findings about students' perceptions on the blended writing align with the results from other works (Vu & Bui, 2020; Han, 2019).

However, students also talked about the disadvantages of blended learning. Student 12 said: "Sometimes the Internet connection is poor, which affects my online study. It is time-consuming and frustrating sometimes." Student 10 said: "A few of my classmates do not discipline themselves and cannot engage in online study." Student 15 said: "While watching online lectures, I may be disturbed by games and sometimes skip the lecture videos to play games instead." In summary, students thought blended learning helped them improve their English writing abilities and communication abilities although students also faced limitations due to poor Internet connections or poor self-regulation abilities. Similar findings were also reflected in Lv's study (2021).

CONCLUSIONS

After a semester of teaching English writing with a blended learning model, the study results demonstrated that blending teaching had many advantages. First, students could make full use of the rich online MOOCs. This not only helped them to learn more skills and techniques of English writing but also improved their self-study abilities. Teachers could evaluate students' performance through MOOC tests or data and ascertain the difficulties encountered during online coursework so that they could prepare class activities related to these difficulties. Second, blended learning enabled more interactions between teachers and students. Because students previewed the MOOCs before class, time was saved for face-to-face activities during class. Teachers mainly spent class time explaining the difficult points to students, and students had more time to do discussion or other class activities. Third, integrating MOOCs with classroom teaching provided the advantages of both MOOCs and traditional classroom teaching. The rich resources of MOOCs, including the flexibility and the different teaching styles of the presenters, were all factors that attracted students to studying online. Finally, most of the students held the view that they had improved their English writing abilities in the course and were satisfied with the blended learning model.

However, unstable Internet connections sometimes caused problems, and some students lacked the discipline to study well on their own. Universities should prioritize improving their Internet speeds so as to enable blended learning. Universities should also incorporate self-discipline training as part of competency-based training for students.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Hongguo Xue, Associate Professor of English, School of Foreign Studies, has been teaching English as a second language at Northwestern Polytechnical University for 27 years. Her research interests lie in applied linguistics, and she has published more than 15 articles and books.

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THE USE OF ORAL PRESENTATION TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILLS IN THE COLLEGE

Ms. NGUYEN LE PHUONG OANH

College of Technology and Industrial Management (CTIM)

ABSTRACT

Nowadays, many college students in Viet Nam have limited time to speak or practice English prior entering colleges. However, these students want to succeed in college environment and in their future jobs. It's necessasy for them to express their ideas clearly and effectively in spoken English. Using oral presentation provides teachers with several useful opportunities that can be used in the language classroom as an effective tool to improve their students' speaking skills. This paper outlines some benefits of conducting group oral presentations in the language classrooms in a college as well as some of difficulties involved using oral presentations. Forty two students in C21QT1 class at College of Technology and Industrial Management (CTIM) have participated in this survey. In this research, questionaires and interviews were designed and administered to collect the data. The descriptive percentage was used to analyse the collected data. Based on the findings, some recommendations will be raised to draw certain lessons to maximize the application of group work presentations in English language teaching. The result of this research also highlights that the use of oral presentation is not the same in all language classroom. It should be adapted to the context of a specific classroom accordingly.

Keywords: *Group work, oral presentation, group contribution, peers, oral perfomance, speaking activities.*

INTRODUCTION

It is said that language is one of the best means to express our ideas, feelings and emotions (Ias Buargoub, 2019). In addition, language learning assesssment has been an important mearsure in education. Nobody can deny that English language is the most widely used in the world. It's a compulsory subject applied in the whole educational system in Vietnam. More interestingly, Vietnam has joined the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and become the 150th member of the World Trade Organization (WTO). As a result of this international integration, Vietnam is chosen by several foreign investors as an attractive destination to establish production bases and other business activities. However, Vietnamese workforce has not met the requirements of the

employers in term of communicative competence in English. For instance, from a study by Ha, 2007, the author emphasizes that a large number of university and college graduates have not been employed by foreign companies due to their poor English listening and speaking skills. Therefore, the role of teachers is very important to help students to perform speaking activities at their best in the classroom. For decades, one of the biggest challeges in teaching English as a second language is to prepare learners with the ability to use the language skills adequately in order to achieve the educational goals (Sheeba & Karthikeyan, 2018). Developing students' four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing has been a vital goal in teaching English as a foreign language. Among the four language skills, speaking is considered one of the most difficult aspect of language learning. In adition, speaking skill is important because it's a basis to perform a conversation. This shared the same results with Pinter's study in 2006, cited in Juhana (2012) that teachers should make efforts to develop students' ability to speak because learning speaking is considered as the biggest challenge for almost language learners. However, many language learners find it difficult to communicate and express themselves in English. From a study (Pham, 2005) named " "Imported" Communicative Language Teaching: Implication for Local Teachers", the author adds that the traditional pedagory is still focusing on the acquisition of vocabulary and grammar rather than communicative competence in teaching and learning English in Vietnam. As a result, many students learn English grammar very well and even get high marks in their written test, but their speaking skills are poor and they are too shy or embarrassed to engage in English conversations.

The purpose of this study was to find out the effectiveness of group work, collaborative work in enhancing speaking skills of learners, student awareness of participating with team work in giving oral presentations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As Hadfield (2004) pointed out, the purpose of learning a language is to communicate in that language. Although speaking English activity is one of the productive skills to encourage students to use language and communicate effectively in teaching English (Richard, 2008), it is the skill that students seem to be passive to grasp or practice. Teaching speaking is a vital part of the language education which helps learner to interact in the target language successfully. However, it's still challening for many English teachers to teach speaking skills. In the real circumstances, teachers have also applied many methods and activities in speaking classes to develop students' speaking skills.

Several studies have been carried out with the aim to investigate the factors which prevented students from their speaking performance in the language classroom. Burns and Joyce as cited in Nunan (1999) conducted a study to determine the psychological

factors prevented students from speaking. The findings showed that anxiety, lack of motivation, lack of confidence and fear of mistakes are common factors impeded students' speaking activities.

According to Mu-hsuan C (2011) in other research, cooperative learning in language classroom is a good way to increase learning and teaching effectively as well as learner motivation and collaboration between learners. Cooperative learning with peers provides students several opportunities to practise the target language by exchanging ideas and discuss together. Amir Mohamad M. (2020) stated that the use of oral presentation brings a plenty of

benefits in the language classroom in terms of students-centered learning, the use of four language skills and students'motivation. In line with this research, Thornbury (2005) also emphasized that presentation provides learners a real way to practice English, develop communicative skills and critical thinking skills.

In Vietnamese contexts, group work has been applied in English classes since 1980s (Pham, 2009). This brings some benefits to teachers and students in teaching and learning language. One of the benefits is that working in a group requires students to work together in order to plan and prepare for their tasks. In this language classroom, the learning-certered teaching practices were hightlighted and students can discuss, learn and help fom each other. Generally, students also prefer group activities rather than having to answer to the teacher's question in front of the class, because they can experess their views without being pressured to fear of being wrong. Additionally, a group work is also a technique of effective classroom management, especially in the classroom with 40 or 50 leaners. In a study in 2009, Hovane also points out: "Practically speaking, it improves learners' interaction skills, it encourages learners' intrinsic motivation, and also creates a classroom culture of cooperative learning".

This research was conducted in order to recognize student satisfaction on group presentation and reveal the findings for two following questions:

1. What students' perceptions of the difficulties they face in oral presentation as a form of assessment?

2. What are the students' reflections on the application of group work of oral presentations in the English classes?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The research was conducted at CTIM college located at 15 Tran Van Tra Street, Ward

Tan Phu, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City. CTIM was established in 1999 under the decision of Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. Besides, CTIM is the college under the management of Ho Chi Minh City Export Processing and Industrial Zones Authority (HEPZA). Up to now, it has trained seven main majors including Business English, Accounting, Finance Banking, Business Administration, Information Technology, Electrical and Electronic Engineering and Mechanical Engineering. The participants taking part in these research questions were students who had been learning in C21QT1 class majoring in Business Administration. According to CTIM's training programme, all students in every major have to learn Basic English as a compulsory subject in two first semesters before they will learn their major subjects. Basic English program at CTIM is divided into Basic English 1 and Basic English 2 with total one hundred and twenty learning hours. Students will learn Basic English 1 in the first semester and Basic English 2 in the second semester. In this survey, students in C21QT1 class, aged from eighteen to nineteen year old were leaning Basic English 2. The number of participants in this research was 42 which comprised of 28 female students and 14 male students. Before entering CTIM, each student had at least five years learning English in Vietnamese state schools, in both the rural area and urban area. They have learnt English for seven years in the secondary school and high school according to the program of Vietnam Ministry of Education and Training. In Vietnamese context, English is considered as the foreign language to people and students still find complex tasks in learning. There is also a difference between students in the rural area and in the urban area in learning English in terms of the learning facilities, learning environment and the teaching methods. In many language classrooms, traditional methods of teaching that lack leaner-centered approach are still in use. More importantly, learners are not given the chance to speak English in front of their classmates or give an oral presentation. In other research, Richards and Rodgers (2001) indicated that in the traditional teaching methods, the speaking skill was ignored in the classrooms where reading and writing skills were emphasized.

Context

In this course, the class lasted in 12 learning sessions, equivalent to 12 weeks. Each session was conducted in four hours in the morning from 7:00am to 11:00am on every Wednesday instructed by the Vietnamese teacher. It is important to students that they have to understand the genre of oral presentation to start with. Hovane (2009) stated that giving students examples of presention is the best way to illustrate them what and how they are required to present in. Since oral presentation consists of multiple language and communication skills. So the teacher instructed students presentation skills such as presentation structure, the use of gesture, eye contact and even voice projection. In this course, the teacher delivered eight topics based on the content of English textbook to students to choose for their presentations in the sixth week. The participants taking part

in this research were 42 which comprised of 28 females and 14 males. It means that each group has five students and the left group has seven students. They were required to prepare topics in five weeks and presented in the eleventh week. Their performance is evaluated as one of their process learning scores.

Measures

The research was undertaken with a group of 42 college students taking Basic English 2 course in their first year of college. Data was collected by using questionnaires, analyzed with the percentages and short interviews. In this research, for the first stage, the teacher instructed the lessons in the textbook in order to provide students enough knowledge, grammar and vocabulary to present their topics. The second stage, students were assigned topics to prepare for their performance. Then, students could ask the teacher if there were any issues that they could not catch up. The third stage, students presented their presentations observed by their teacher and classmates. All students' presentations were recorded and students were asked to watch again at home to learn from experience for their next oral performance.

Data Collection and Analysis

Students finished their oral presentations in the eleventh week. In the twelfth week, I spent thirty minutes delivering the prepared questionaires. Those questionaires were designed for the purpose of determining their reflections and feelings after learning an English class with the application of group oral presentations. Then I could ask some students randomly with unprepared questions for the left time. In the afternoon of the same day, 42 questionaires and 7 interview sheets were collected with full response.

In this research, the descriptive percentage was used to analyse the data which was a collection of responses from the questionnaire. Since Loeb et al. (2017) stated that the aim of quantitative description is not a deep understanding of a personal perspective of a phenomenon, but a general understanding of patterns through a number of interests. In this case, the student's response was calculated by this formula:

$$\mathbf{P} = \frac{\boldsymbol{E}}{\boldsymbol{N}} \boldsymbol{x}\ \mathbf{100}$$

Explanation:

P = Percentage

E = Frequency

N = Total respondent

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionaires were delivered on the last learning day. All the students attended the lesson as they were informed the scores, given feedbacks for their oral presentations by the teacher. Anongnad P. (2012) pointed out that giving feedbacks plays an important role in language learning and teaching. This both helps teachers and students to meet teaching goals and motivate students in their next stage of learning. According to Topping (2009), the role of

a teacher involved in the process of students' performance is to monitor the situation, encourage students to participate in activities positively as well as fix the problems as soon as possible.

Chart 1: *Gender*

As mentioned above, the study was carried out in C21QT1 class at CTIM and the findings were revealed through the viewpoint of 42 students consisted of 28 females (66.7%) and 14 males (33.3%) illustrated in chart 1 as following:

Figure 1

Gender

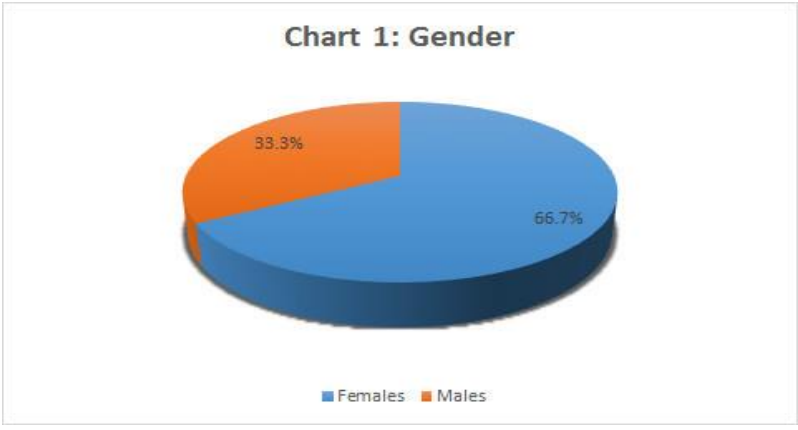

Table 1

Student's perception in pre-speaking presentation

Statements	***N***	***Frequency***	***Percent***	***Level of Agreement***
1. I don't like the kind of oral presentations.	42	28	66.7	Agree
2. I like to give an oral presentation in a group.	42	14	33.3	Agree
3. I feel very nervous before an oral presentation.	42	32	74.4	Agree

Statements	*N*	*Frequency*	*Percent*	*Level of Agreement*
4. I feel uncomfortable when I give an oral presentation in English.	42	30	71.4	Agree
5. I am worried because of my English speaking ability.	42	22	52.4	Agree
6. On presentation day I skip class.	42	38	90.5	Strongly Disagree

As can be seen in table 1, statement 1 and 2, most learner in C21QT1 class strongly confirmed that they were not interested in giving an oral presentation (66.7%) or working in group presentation (33.3%). This is not surprising since they were not given chance to practice and give a presentation in front of their classmates during their learning time in high school. This shared the same result with Gavin and John's study in 2014 that most students in high school are not instructed how to give a presentation.

Related to statement 3 and 4, most learners (74.4%) reported that they feel nervous before an oral presentation and 71.4% of students said that they feel uncomfortable when they give an oral presentation in English. This shared the same results with Radzuan and Kaur's study in 2011, cited in Nowreyah et al. (2015) that anxiety impedes students's performance and achievement. Leichsenring (2010) also emphasized that the lack of presentation skills was an important reason of student's feelling or anxiety.

Statement 5 showed that half of learners (52.4%) were worried due to of their English speaking ability. Although, they confirmed not to skip class when there were oral presentation assessments (statement 6). This lack of familiarity with oral presentations causes most Vietnamese students to feel uncomfortable and shy when they are required to participate in English activities in front of their peers. To solve this problem, it is important for teachers to create a supporting learning atmosphere in which students can build their confidence and learn cooperatively in order to minimize their negative emotion. Related to a possible solution to overcome shyness, Pesce (2011) cited in Juhana (2012) adds that teacher should create a friendly and open classroom atmosphere. This way, students will feel fine to take part in speaking activities in the language classroom.

Table 2

Students' reflection on the ongoing oral presentation

Statements	***N***	***Frequency***	***Percent***	***Level of Agreement***
7. When I start my oral presentation, I forget everything I wanted to say.	42	18	43.8	Agree
8. I bring notes with me during my oral presentation even if I am well-prepared	42	33	78.6	Agree
9. I feel shy during oral presentation.	42	23	54.8	Agree
10. I feel worried even if I have prepared well beforehand.	42	23	54.8	Agree
11. During oral presentation, I think my speech in Vietnamese then translate it into English	42	27	64	Agree
12. I prefer to see someone's presentation before starting my own	42	35	83.3	Strongly Agree

Statement 7 revealed that nearly half of students (43.8 %) tend to forget everything when they want to start their presentation. As Nowreyah, Muneera and Hanan (2015) pointed out that students have a number of difficulties related to personal traits including students' fear of assessment, avoidance of teachers' eyes, and forgetting what they intend to say.

Related to statement 8, a large number of students (78.5%) revealed that they need to read from the notes during oral presentations. Zappa-Hollman (2007) found that non-native speakers of English were familiar with reading from their notes during their oral performance. This is in line with Chuang's study in 2011 that most participants were reported reading from the notes and trying not to make eye contact with their teacher and peers. This also supports the answers of statement 10 in which over half of students reported to bring their written notes, even they were well-prepared.

Statement 9 showed that 54.8 % of students they found difficult to produce a presentation due to their shyness. To solve this problem, Chinmoy (2007) indicates that it's important for teachers to encourage and motivate students to be more confident in their speaking activities. Students should look at shyness as a thing to overcome and do not think about failure or success. Students should be encouraged to realize that shyness is not a good thing, because it will impede language learners from speaking performance.

Statement 11 indicated that 64 % of students are used to thinking their speech in Vietnamese then translate it into English during the oral presentation. Ballard (1996) cited in Jin Yan-Hua (2007) conduded the study to investigate that students fail to take part in English discussion because of lack of vocabulary problems and fear of making mistakes prevented them from speaking English well. Take a look at Zappa-Hollman's study in 2007, the findings revealed that students prefer to see a peer's presentation before they give their own perfomance. Concerning this concept, almost students (83.3%) in this research reported that they need to see a peer's presentation before they do their own work (statement 12).

An example of student's performance at CTIM

Table 3

Students' reflection in the end of oral presentation

Statements	***N***	***Frequency***	***Percent***	***Level of Agreement***
13. The language course is not enough to improve my speaking skill.	42	25	57.5	Agree
14. I feel nervous because the teacher is watching my performance.	42	24	57	Agree
15. I feel scared when a lot of people are watching me.	42	23	57.5	Agree
16. I worry that my classmates will laugh at me when I speak English.	42	27	64.3	Agree
17. I prefer to be evaluated by written exams rather than oral presentations.	42	25	59.5	Agree
18. I prefer to apply group oral presentation in other English classes.	42	19	45.2	Agree

Importantly, more than half the students (57.5%) indicates that the language course is not enough to improve their speaking skill (statement 13). However, there are no courses designed for the development of oral presentation skills. So students obtain presentation skills by practising and performing them in other courses.

Joughin (2007) stated that students tend to feel nervous or even scared when speaking English in front of their peers. This is not surprising for the statement 14 and 15, 57% of students feel nervous and 57.5 % of students feel scared during their oral presentation. Additionally and Subasi (2010) and Mazdayasna (2012) cited in Nowreyah et al (2015) suggest that the reasons behind students' anxiety and uncomfortable feeling due to lack of vocabulary. In this case, students were advised to choose a familiar topic and practice citeda lot (Zappa-Hollman, 2007).

64.3 % of students reported that they were afraid of being laughed at by their classmates when they speak English (statement 16). This is the same emotion as being scared of making mistakes. In addition, Ballard (1996) cited in Jin Yan-Hua (2007) says that students think speaking English as a stressful activity if they have to perform and use English patterns. Therefore, teachers should not expect students to speak English perfectly. Additionally, teachers should encourage students and create a comfortable atmosphere that can reduce students' fear of making mistakes in English speaking. It's important for teachers to advise students that making mistakes is not a really bad thing, because no one can avoid making mistakes. Importantly, they can get a chance to learn from their mistakes during their performance.

Related to students' preferences for assessment (statement 17), more than half the students (59.5%) preferred written exams. This is similar to Chuang's (2010) findings on the study that nearly half his participants (46.3%) showed that taking a written test would be less daunting than an oral performance. Although, Joughin (2007) argued that oral presentation assessment is equally demanding as the written assignment. According to Tuan & Neomy (2007), it is necessary to equip students with both advanced written and oral skills in higher education.

Related to statement 18 to find out the viewpoint to see whether students wanted to apply group oral presentation in other English classes or not. In this statement, 45.2% of studentss still wanted to give oral presentation in other English classes. We can understand that in the viewpoint of most teachers, students should be encouraged to apply the oral presentation in many courses in order to impove student's speaking ability despite of its difficulties.

As I mentioned above, on the last day of teaching, I had some quick interviews with seven unpredicted students with unstructured questions for the left time, three of them confirmed that the kind of presentation assignment was a breakthrough to help them braver when speaking in front of a lot of people.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to investigate whether the students in CTIM satisfy with group work activity in speaking sessions by using the oral presentations during their course or not and find out their difficulties during their perfomamce. Moreover, we also got their contributions for the application of collaborative work in other English classes. The students gained many advantages from their oral presentations. They could overcome the fear of speaking English in front a lot of people and the fear of making mistakes. Besides, we can recognize that students had improved their speaking skills step by step. Although, some students did not confirm strongly that the teacher was totally fair in evaluating their learning progress. Interestingly, most of the students were happy with the group activities for their oral presentation and the way they was assessed.

Another advantage of oral presentation is that students use four language skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking naturally in the preparation for their presentations. This also shared the same result with Gavin and John's study in 2014.

However, some limitations could be recognized in this study since it was conducted in a college classroom where were quite different conditions from Vietnam states schools, both in the rural area and the urban area.

Another restriction from this study was that this survey was just conducted by students who were only in one class of Business Administration major. I haven't applied for students in other English classes such as in English for Specific Purpose (ESP) classes and other different majors. It is recommmended that the same application should be conducted in different language classrooms to evaluate the actual role and have better findings to contribute to the language teaching and learning. In addition, the time for speaking sessions was not as mush as it was in specialized language course. The data is just based on the students' subjective feedbacks of the small size of the sample. It is recommended that the same application of group

oral presentation should be carried out on a larger scale in the semesters in my college, state schools and English centers in order to get better findings. Moreover, using presentation is a tool to help students improve their English speaking skills, build up their confidence as well as their critical thinking ability that can help them a lot in their future career.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Nguyen Le Phuong Oanh is currently working as the Vice Dean of the Department of Foreign Languages at the College of Technology and Industrial Management (CTIM). She is also a visiting lecturer at UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City. She holds a master's degree in TESOL. Her research interest is in language teaching and learning.

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THE USE OF MULTIMEDIA ANNOTATIONS IN ENHANCING INCIDENTAL VOCABULARY ACQUISITION THROUGH READING TEXTS

Ms. NGUYEN THI BICH DUYEN
UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

Reading articles and passages have been regarded as a rich language input for learners to acquire vocabulary incidentally, but these reading sources are often embedded with new words and terms, which may act as a hindrance to learners' reading comprehension. A few decades ago, learners purely turned to textual marginal glosses or printed dictionaries for meanings and pronunciation of a word. However, with the advent of technology, this conventional approach has been gradually replaced by computer assisted language learning (CALL) which allows learners to be exposed to various forms of language inputs enriched with multimedia. With the aid of multimedia annotations, it is believed that learners are provided with additional opportunities to enhance cognitive ability through interacting with multimedia environment, and thus gain better understanding of new incidental vocabulary when encountering them in texts and retain them in a long-term memory. The integration of multimedia into language teaching and learning has been a topic of great interest for many scholars and researchers. As a result, a plethora of research on the efficacy of multimedia-based annotations has been conducted. This article attempts to provide a literature review on the effects of different types of multimedia annotations on acquiring vocabulary incidentally through extensive reading, and recommend some implications of multimedia annotations for language teaching and learning, material development, and instructional design.

Keywords: *multimedia annotations, incidental vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension*

INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary acquisition is regarded as one of the most crucial aspects of language learning, which has led researchers and scholars to delve into the most effective strategies and approaches for vocabulary gain and retention. Lewis (2001) stated that dearth of vocabulary knowledge acts as a deterrent to comprehensible communication, so there is

an imperative need for a large vocabulary source which enables learners to function in English and achieve communicative competence. The question as to what is the best strategy employed to make an ease on learning process and help learners to acquire adequate vocabulary range has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers and scholars.

Intentional and incidental vocabulary acquisitions are the most discussed vocabulary learning strategies and a number of investigations over the efficacy of these two strategies have been carried out for ages. While intentional vocabulary acquisition mainly occurs in classroom in which teachers aim at providing learners with forms and meanings of selected vocabulary, incidental vocabulary learning takes place naturally when learners attempt to comprehend words they encounter in a context (Huckin & Coady, 1999). According to Schmitt (2008), the number of words required for reading ranges from 8,000 to 9,000, and 5,000 to 7,000 for speaking. However, Hulstijn et al. (1996) argued that in order to gain such a large number of words, learners cannot place sole reliance on intentional word-learning strategies, but employ incidental vocabulary learning. In the theory of Comprehensible Input suggested by Krashen (1989), he claimed that vocabulary is acquired incidentally through rich comprehensible input provided by extensive reading activities, which is preferable to learning vocabulary deliberately through explicit instruction. Therefore, learning new words incidentally is believed to be conducive to perpetual naturalistic acquisition from different contexts, which takes place throughout a learner's lifespan rather than in a limited amount of time (Wyra and Lawson ,2018).

With the emergence of technology-assisted learning environment known as CALL and availability of electronic gadgets, multimedia annotation is employed as an effective facilitator for incidental vocabulary learning through extensive reading. Multimedia annotation serves as an instructional intervention temporarily distracting learners from reading to direct their attention to the form and meaning of annotated words for a while (Salaberry, 2001). This approach has been proved to enhance vocabulary knowledge gain and improve overall reading comprehension.

In order to have a deeper insight into the use of multimedia annotations in incidental vocabulary learning, it is crucial to examine elemental issues concerning the understanding of incidental vocabulary acquisition, the role of reading passages in incidental vocabulary learning, the effects of multimedia glosses on vocabulary learning, and pedagogical implication including some tasks and strategies that can be employed to provide learners with right lexical insight for inference in vocabulary acquisition.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Incidental vocabulary learning

Incidental vocabulary acquisition is defined as a word learning strategy by which vocabulary gain is a by-product of a primary activity with direct attention to meaning rather than form (Hulstijn, 2003). In other words, new words are learned naturally and unintentionally while another activity like reading or listening is taking place (Rieder, 2003). In incidental vocabulary learning, learners are expected to activate their cognitive mechanism and decipher contextual clues to infer unknown words embedded in the given texts. Unlike intentional vocabulary learning which takes place within a particular period of time, results in larger vocabulary gain at a faster pace, and is recommended at the early stages of language learning, incidental vocabulary learning strategy enables learners to be engaged in a deeper learning process including making inference, consolidating, thus retaining incrementally acquired words in a long term, and achieving higher levels of language proficiency in second language learning (Nation & Webb, 2011). To some extent, incidental vocabulary learning strategy has some advantages, compared to deliberate efforts paid to explicit learning. To illustrate, learners have exposure to contextual vocabulary embedded in authentic reading materials, which is conducive to obtaining a richer insight of use and meaning of vocabulary. As a result, this will help learners develop pragmatic competence in second language acquisition.

Incidental vocabulary learning through reading passages

Extensive reading is a pleasurable situation in which learners are encouraged to select reading materials of their interest to enhance reading fluency, and improve reading comprehension at their proficiency level (Schmitt, 2008). By this way, learners are able to not only consolidate prior structures and vocabulary but also have better vocabulary growth than any deliberately explicit instruction could ever do. Harmer (2003) concluded that there is a close correlation between incidental vocabulary acquisition and extensive reading. That is to say, vocabulary knowledge can be obtained incidentally through extensive reading. In line with Harmer, Krashen (2003) also asserted that extensive reading provides learners with comprehensible input as a necessary condition for language acquisition. The more texts learners are exposed to, the better chance they stand of having repeated encounter with same words, and phrases. This frequent exposure leads to better vocabulary gains with longer retention.

To prove the efficacy of extensive reading on incidental vocabulary gain, a great amount of research has been conducted. Cho and Krashen (1994), leading proponents of using extensive reading for language development, examined vocabulary gains of four learners who were supposed to read a series of books for four months. After the extensive reading

treatment, the vocabulary pick-up rate measured was 62% on average. This finding indicated an significant increase in vocabulary growth thanks to extensive reading. In line with Cho and Krashen, Lee (2007) conducted a series of three experiments on Taiwanese EFL learners to compare the effectiveness of extensive reading on incidental vocabulary acquisition and traditional instruction. During the 12-week period, learners involved in extensive reading showed almost the same vocabulary growth as those who learned through conventional instruction. However, when the researcher extended the study for another 2 years, it revealed the reverse findings. Learners experiencing extensive reading made more significant improvement in vocabulary knowledge than those who were exposed to traditional instruction. The findings of the investigation suggest that extensive reading results in long-term and cumulative effects of vocabulary acquisition.

Effects of multimedia annotations on incidental vocabulary learning

Traditionally, learners tend to turn to dictionary to look up meanings of unknown words that they encounter while reading, but the problem that may arise and confuse learners is that they do not know which is the most suitable meaning of the definitions given in dictionary (Nation, 2001). To address this problem, annotations or glosses were invented as a facilitator offering contextual meanings intended in the given texts, which enhances learners' reading fluency and overall comprehension, as claimed by Beatty (2005). In addition, they are conveniently presented in the side or bottom margins where learners can get ready access to. With the help of annotations, people will acquire vocabulary incidentally and thus become more independent and autonomous language learners. As defined in dictionary, annotations or glosses are vocabulary learning aids providing learners with explanations or comments of difficult or unfamiliar words and phrases. With the proliferation of CALL, annotations are no longer limited to solely verbal forms. Instead, different modalities are employed to assist vocabulary learning such as auditory glosses (sound), visual glosses (pictures, text, video), and integration of both audio and visual modes. On PDA (personal digital assistants), unknown words are connected with hyperlink. Once learners click the hyperlink, a window pops up, showing explanations of the word.

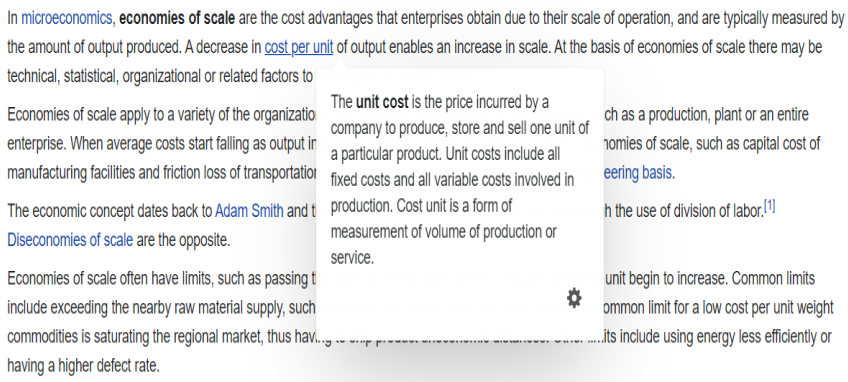
Textual Annotation

As Davis (1989) stated, one of the greatest advantages of hypertext annotation is that learners are not distracted or interfered during reading process since multimedia textual glosses are invisible until learners click on the hyperlinked words. To investigate the effects of multimedia textual annotation on incidental vocabulary learning, Lyman-Hayer et al. (1993) carried out a study with participation of 264 learners of French language. The participants were then required to read a 181-word French text for general comprehension. The results of both immediate and delayed post-test showed that the

participants working on multimedia text annotation outperformed those working on traditional printed text annotation. They drew a conclusion that text annotation in multimedia environment enhances learners' vocabulary retention more significantly than printed annotation.

Figure 1

Economies of Scale (Source: Wikipedia, 2021)



Integration of different types of multimedia annotations

Kellogg and Howe (1971) claimed that imagery representation is one of the most effective visual aids facilitating language acquisition. Underwood (1989) claimed that learners are more likely to have long-term vocabulary retention if target words are associated with pictures. Brown (2003) carried out a study to examine the effectiveness of pictorial aids on L2 French vocabulary inference. The study indicated there is a strong relationship between pictorial glosses and the extent to which French learners employed pictorial annotations to infer an unfamiliar French word. However, Yoshii (2006) cast doubt on the accuracy of word inference using pictures since pictorial cues cannot thoroughly illustrate and explain meaning of a word, which may lead to misunderstanding. Therefore, it is suggested that further investigations should be conducted to examine the effectiveness of combining different modalities at once to better learners' understanding of vocabulary, thus enhancing incidental vocabulary acquisition.

Visual glosses are no longer limited to static pictures, but expanded to animated videos which are believed to provide more vivid illustrations of a word, thus enhancing vocabulary learning. In an effort to compare the effectiveness of the combination of different modalities namely text-picture glosses and text-video glosses, Al-Seghayer (2001) conducted a study on a group of 30 ESL learners who were asked to read a 1,300-word passage including 21 target words, seven of which glossed with text only, another 7 with text and video, the others with text and picture glosses. Then they were supposed to take an immediate test consisting of recognition and production tasks. The results

revealed that the most effective annotation in vocabulary acquisition is the integration of text and video. In a similar study conducted by Plass et al. (1998), the findings showed a stark contrast. There were 103 American university students studying German as a second language participating in the research. They are also exposed to different forms of glosses as used in Al-Seghayer (2001) to read a 762-word passage on computer, then take a vocabulary post-test requiring them to provide L1 translation for the target words. However, the researchers found that the performance was the best when learners went for the combination of text and picture modes, followed by text-video glosses, and textual cues respectively. The explanation for such inconsistency in the results could be that these two studies were conducted in different contexts and the post-tests were administered in distinctive formats. Having said that, both of the studies confirmed the effectiveness of dual glosses integrated by textual and visual modes over one single textual gloss.

It is evident that researchers and scholars have not paid sufficient attention to aural annotations which provides learners with a richer lexical source including pronunciation, sample sentence, and definition of a target word in spoken form. Little research has been done on audio glosses only, but in combination with other glossing modes. In the recent research, Karbalaei et al. (2016) aimed at comparing effectiveness of text-picture gloss and audio-picture gloss on vocabulary immediate recall. 62 participants were selected from two advanced English classes of a language center in Iran and divided into 2 experimental groups: one using auditory and pictorial annotation, the other using textual and pictorial annotation, and a control group. The results of the post-test lent support to audio-picture annotation. Thanks to the exposure to visual and aural environment, learners were able to memorize both meanings and pronunciation of the given words and retain them in longer term memory.

CONCLUSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The use of multimedia annotation in incidental vocabulary acquisition can be categorized into single, dual, and multi-glossing modes. Based on the previous research, there is a solid conclusion that extensive reading materials glossed with different multimedia annotation have beneficial effects on incidental vocabulary acquisition compared to those with one single glossing type. However, which combination is the most workable has remained inconclusive and left a lot to be investigated.

As for pedagogical implications, language proficiency is one of the important factors that should not be neglected when teachers deliver instruction through multimedia annotations. That is to say, teachers should investigate learners' language competence to decide which glossing mode is the most appropriate and the extent to which multimedia glosses are combined to facilitate vocabulary learning without distracting learners too much away from reading comprehension. Material designers are also expected to consider

the choice of multimedia annotations suitable for each language proficiency level. For example, imagery annotations are regarded to be more appropriate for low levels while textual glosses are more intended to advanced level because there are complicated words that are hardly explained by pictures (Choo, Lin, and Pandian, 2012).

As for material and instructional design, developers should take into consideration how to present information using different glosses without intervening and confusing learners. Hypertext annotations can be highlighted to differentiate themselves from the rest of the text, but sometimes this visibility may affect reading fluency. Therefore, it is suggested that these glosses be invisible and if learners really need to know the meaning of a word or phrase, they can click on the word and have definitions or explanations at their disposal. Also, the glosses should also be presented in a comprehensible way and fit the context of the text in which the target words are embedded, which are conducive to learners' reading comprehension.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Nguyen Thi Bich Duyen has been working as an English teacher for almost 10 years. She was conferred a Master's Degree in TESOL by Edith Cowan University (ECU), Western Australia. Her research interests include material assessment, vocabulary learning and teaching, and English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI).

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UNDERSTANDING LEARNER ENGAGEMENT IN ONLINE LEARNING

Ms. HO DINH PHUONG KHANH

UEH University, Ho Chi Minh City

ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has affected day-to-day life in all aspects and education is not an exception. To maintain student learning, online teaching has been adopted and promoted on a large scale. Although there are noticeable benefits such as convenience and flexibility, one of the commonly-cited obstacles is that students may easily get distracted or demotivated; thus keeping students interested and focused may be a real challenge. The purpose of this article was to understand the factors affecting learner engagement and investigate the extent to which the students perceived their online English lessons in terms of engagement and satisfaction. The data were collected using several instruments such as attendance records, task completion rates and a questionnaire. 130 first-year students from UEH university responded to the learner engagement questionnaire after they took online English classes in the previous semester. The findings indicate that the students had a high level of behavioral and cognitive engagement in the course, yet several adjustments need to be made to improve the quality of online teaching and learning.

Keywords: *learner engagement, online learning, learner satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

Learner engagement plays a crucial role in building good learning experiences. It is one of the key factors contributing to a number of positive outcomes such as enhanced motivation and successful achievement of learning goals (Hu & Ching, 2012; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Banna et al., 2015; Gunuc, 2014). Learner engagement has also been found to be of great importance to the learning process. With a high level of engagement, students take part in the lessons with excitement, thereby improve their performance and show commitment to completing the course. In their studies, Rajabalee and Santally (2021) and Karabiyik (2019) have found that learner engagement correlates with satisfaction and academic achievements. Specially, in an online environment where there is a lack of direct teacher support, learner engagement may be affected by factors such as instructor involvement, task difficulty, resources, assessment and interaction. The

findings of this pilot study provide useful information for the author to make adjustments for her online classes. Understanding the factors affecting engagement level among the students, the author can come up with strategies to improve teaching and learning quality. Results from the questionnaire help the author keep track of her students' reflections on the online course and make necessary changes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definitions of engagement

Learner engagement or student engagement has been a popular topic for research in educational settings. According to Bernard (2015), learner engagement is a process which involves cognitive, affective and behavioral elements. Hu and Ching (2012) defined student engagement as student involvement or student commitment, which is demonstrated through students' willingness to take part in classroom activities, such as attending class, doing assignments and following instructional guidance. Learner engagement is also defined in terms of interest, effort, time-on-task and motivation in some studies.

The importance and benefits of learner engagement

Although learner engagement comes in various models and definitions, it is said to contribute to a number of outcomes including persistence, satisfaction, achievement and academic success (Hu & Ching, 2012). Martin and Bolliger (2018) also suggested that student engagement can motivate students to learn, reduce negative reactions, and improve student performance. In their study, Rajabalee and Santally (2021) found that engagement level and satisfaction are positively correlated. In an online environment, engagement is of great importance because the students do not have many opportunities to connect, interact and engage with the learning content as well as the teacher. Engagement can contribute to students' cognitive development and lead to success in the learning process (Banna et al., 2015). A high level of classroom engagement can lead to positive outcomes, such as enhancing academic achievements (Gunuc, 2014). Karabiyik (2019) carried out a quantitative study among 294 undergraduate students found that engagement correlated positively with midterm exam scores. Highly engaged students remain interested, motivated and involved in the learning process, which leads to improved knowledge retention and self-development.

Types of learner engagement

In their study, Halverson and Graham (2019) proposed that it is essential to take cognitive and emotional engagement into consideration as they are the key factors indicating engagement level.

Cognitive engagement

Cognitive engagement, which is defined as the investment students make in their learning (Gunuc, 2014), consists of factors such as attention, effort and persistence, time on task, absorption (deep concentration) and curiosity. Among these factors, attention is a fundamental element; it is one of the most basic indicators of students' mental efforts. Attention can be measured using classroom observation or tracking eye movement or gross body language, which may be impractical techniques in online teaching and learning. Effort, persistence and time on task, which are difficult to measure in online contexts, are considered to be closely related to academic achievement. When learners are cognitively engaged, they feel good about their study, proactively engage with the learning content and come up with learning strategies, which all enable them to master new knowledge. Well-designed courses and consistent training content can contribute to the enhancement of cognitive engagement.

Emotional engagement

Gunuc and Kuzu (2014) suggested that emotional engagement includes students' attitudes and interests in response to the teacher, peers and course content. Emotion is labelled as the fuel for behavioral and cognitive engagement (Skinner & Pitzer, 2012). Research has noted that positive emotions can assist learning in many ways. For example, enjoyable lessons can make students feel happy and confident, helping them pay more attention and process materials more easily. On the other hand, negative emotions include boredom, confusion, frustration and anxiety. Such emotions resulting from lack of interest, interaction or difficult materials may reduce the quality of the learning process. Negative feelings can be prevented and emotional engagement can be fostered through careful course design and implementation as well as strong support from instructors.

Behavioral engagement

Behavioral engagement includes students' efforts, attendance and participation in classroom activities (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014). In their study, Nguyen et al. (2016) suggested that behavioral engagement should be considered in 3 aspects: students' classroom behaviors, participation in activities, and interest in the tasks. Compared to the other types of engagement, behavioral engagement is more observable and easier to measure. For example, to find out about when and what students engage with when they study online, teachers can utilize the reports generated from the Learning Management System (LMS), such as submissions, total time spent on tasks, completion rate, etc. Behavioral engagement is, however, also the shallowest form of engagement. Such data available on LMS are not enough to ensure that students actually learn and are able to apply new knowledge. In other words, students need sufficient levels of cognitive, emotional and behavioral engagement in order to complete the whole course and improve their skills and knowledge.

Factors affecting learner engagement

Studies on learner engagement have found numerous factors that influence level of participation in the online environment. Deep understanding of these factors can help teachers effectively design and facilitate their online courses.

In their study, Wei and Chen (2006) pointed out that the involvement of instructors can help assist and facilitate the online learning process. Level of academic challenge in terms of task difficulty can trigger motivation and determine the efforts students will make (Hu & Ching, 2012). Dixson (2010) reported that a variety of activities can make students feel more engaged. Others factors like competence gain and supportive environment also affect how much students engage in their learning.

Assessment plays an important role in keeping students intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn. In his study, William (2004) claimed that learners can have more incentive to take part in the course if their work is graded in a timely manner. King (2014) also asserted that sufficient teacher feedback is valuable in helping students make progress in the learning process.

Furthermore, research found that students can be stimulated to take part in the course through social interaction (Cronje et al., 2006). Lear et al. (2010) also claimed that there is correlation between interactivity and learner engagement. In online courses, interaction can foster student learning, help reduce feelings of isolation and contribute to lower dropout rates (Conrad & Donaldson, 2004). Nguyen et al. (2016) highlighted the importance of teacher-student interaction and student-student interaction in engaging students during class. Learner-to-instructor engagement can create rapport and collaboration, which leads to success in learning. Learner-to-learner engagement can prevent negative emotional and psychological reactions such as boredom and isolation (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Learner engagement survey

It has been found that learner engagement correlates with level of satisfaction and learning outcomes. A student engagement survey, therefore, ask questions related to the conditions of the learning environment, how students connected with their facilitators and the course materials. By asking formulated questions about course design, task difficulty, the learning environment, support, etc., teachers can collect, analyze the overall data and come up with specific adjustments and improvements to better student learning.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This paper used a quantitative research approach with a questionnaire to collect data related to students' opinions and reflections on their online English classes (see Appendix 1).

Sample

The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and administered to 164 first-year students in four UEH Intake 46 English Module 2 classes, who have been taking online English classes for at least one semester. There were 130 respondents in total.

Data collection instrument

As learner engagement comes in various definitions and models, several instruments were used to collect data. First, attendance records noted and collected by the teacher through attendance check in every class meeting on Google Meet (see Appendix 2) and LMS reports that show in-class and after-class behavioral engagement through task completion rates were used (see Appendix 3).

The second source of data was collected through an online survey. The questionnaire consists of 17 items related to the factors affecting learner engagement found in the literature review. The questionnaire uses a 5-point Likert-scale as follows: Strongly Disagree (SA), Disagree (D), Neither Agree nor Disagree (N), Agree (A) and Strongly Agree (SA). The items, which ask the students to reflect on their engagement level, were selected, modified and classified into 5 groups: Learning Stimulation, Competency Development, Effective Assessment, Resources and Support, and Overall Satisfaction.

The Learning Stimulation part was comprised of 5 questions related to the factors affecting cognitive and emotional engagement such as task difficulty, interaction, course content and learning activities.

The Competency Development part, which consisted of 3 questions, aimed to find out whether there were improvements in the students' skills, knowledge and learning strategies, which relates to cognitive engagement.

The Effective Assessment and Resources and Support parts each included 3 questions about factors that might make students intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn, such as assessment, learning materials, teacher feedback and support.

The Overall Satisfaction part looked at the students' opinions on course design and their satisfaction with the whole course.

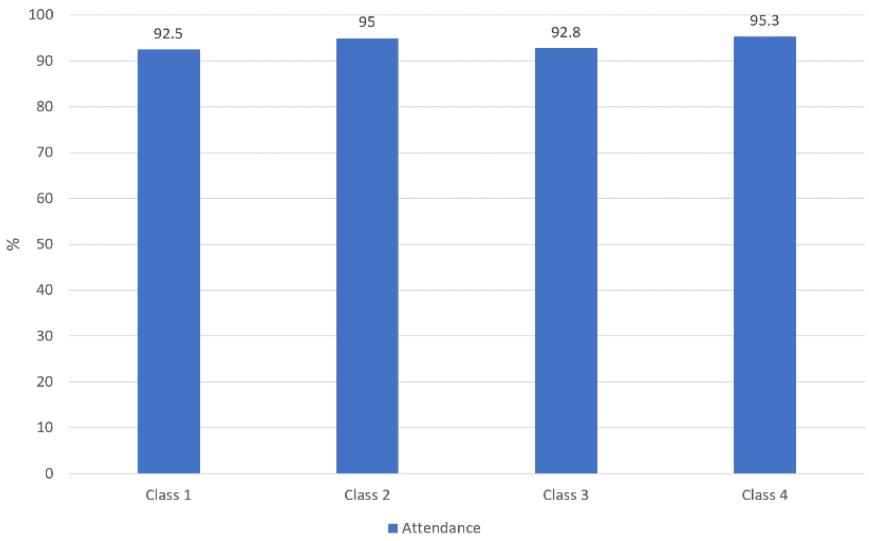
Once the data have been collected, descriptive analyses were applied.

FINDINGS

To begin with, course participation represented by attendance can be seen as an indicator of behavioral engagement (Gunuc & Kuzu, 2014; Nguyen et al., 2016). The bar chart below shows that the students had a high level of engagement, with over 90% attended and completed the course in all the four classes.

Figure 1

Students' attendance



Data extracted from LMS reports, which consist of statistics on specific tasks completed and scores, were re-calculated and converted to task completion rates as shown in the following pie charts. The data partly show students' involvement in the learning content and their effort in meeting classroom requirements.

Task completion rates were apparently different among the classes, but only a minority of the students completed less than half of the assignments on LMS. The percentage of students who completed more than 80% of the total learning tasks and activities is relatively high in the four classes, with 2 classes having 73% and 2 classes having more than 50%.

Next, results from the questionnaire provide more in-depth data related to student engagement.

Figure 2

Task completion rates

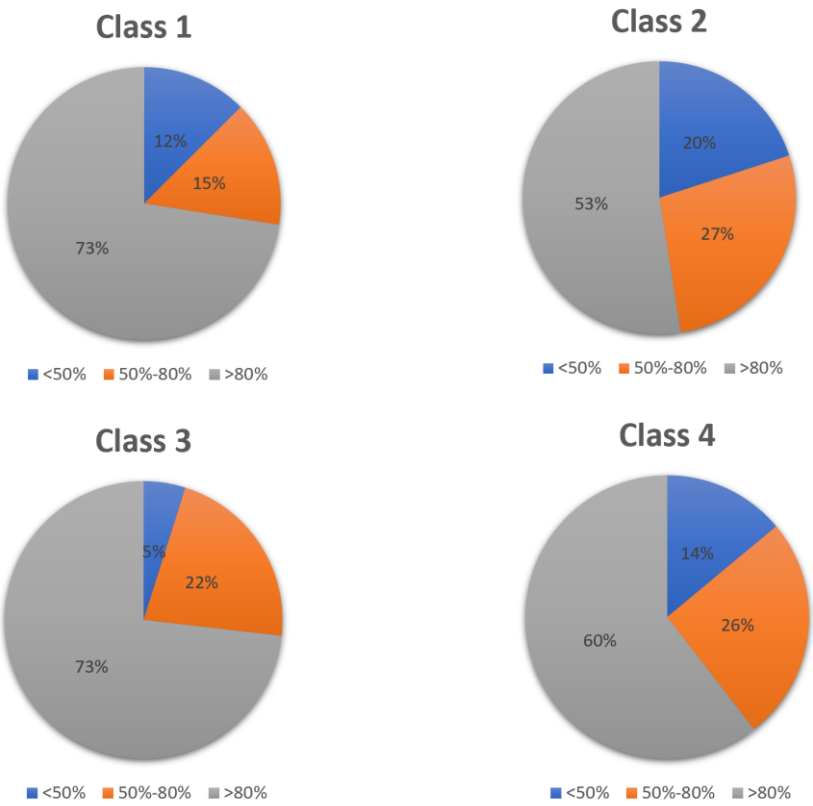


Table 1

Learning stimulation

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
The training used up-to-date materials.	1	0.8	4	3.1	33	25.4	80	61.5	12	9.2
The amount of work I had to do was reasonable.	2	1.54	13	10	36	27.7	64	49.2	15	11.54
The training was at the right level of difficulty for me.	1	0.8	9	6.9	29	22.3	56	43.1	35	26.9
There were a wide range of learning activities.	0	0	4	3.1	19	14.6	67	51.5	40	30.8
I could interact with others.	3	2.3	34	26.1	25	19.2	43	33.1	25	19.2

Table 1 shows students' feedback on learning stimulation.

The respondents reported quite positive reflections on materials, workload and level of difficulty, with 60-70% showing agreement. There was a certain level of disagreement, but academic challenge may enhance motivation and boost students' efforts (Hu & Ching, 2012). The majority of the students gave good feedback on learning activities. The statement "I could interact with others", however, received the highest percentage of disagreement, which came as no surprise because interaction is a major issue in online teaching and learning. Interaction is an area that needs improvement as interaction and engagement are closely related and it is important to enhance interaction in online learning (Martin & Bolliger, 2018).

Next, table 2 demonstrates data that reflect students' cognitive engagement level.

Table 2

Competency development

	SD		**D**		**N**		**A**		**SA**	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
I developed skills and knowledge.	1	0.8	5	3.8	1	0.8	59	45.4	64	49.2
I learned to work with others.	0	0	4	3.1	8	6.1	55	42.3	63	48.5
I learned to plan and manage my work.	0	0	5	3.8	5	3.8	52	40	68	52.3

With regard to the development of knowledge, skills, and learning strategies, more than 90% of the participants showed positive reflections and a strong level of agreement (around 50%) was reported. Therefore, it can be said that the students were cognitively engaged in the course, as cognitive engagement is related to understanding and mastering the knowledge and skills explicitly taught in schools (Yazzie-Mintz & McCormick, 2012).

Table 3 and table 4 represent students' reflections on assessment and support.

Table 3

Effective assessment

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
I received useful feedback on my assessments.	1	0.8	6	4.6	1	0.8	69	53.1	53	40.8
Assessments were based on realistic activities.	1	0.8	4	3.1	6	4.6	64	49.2	55	42.3
The way I was assessed was a fair test of my skills and knowledge.	0	0	4	3.1	4	3.1	63	48.5	59	45.4

Table 4

Resources and support

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Resources were available when I needed them.	2	1.5	5	3.8	5	3.8	60	46.1	58	44.6
I received sufficient support from the teacher.	1	0.8	6	4.6	4	3.1	58	44.6	61	46.9
I was encouraged to ask questions.	1	0.8	9	6.9	3	2.3	45	34.6	72	55.4

The majority of the respondents gave good feedback on assessments and agreed that the learning environment is supportive. Although teacher feedback, assessments and support do not directly demonstrate the students' level of engagement, they can affect how much the students feel engaged and contribute to the enhancement of motivation and commitment, which is in accordance with what Dixson (2010), William (2004) and King (2014) stated in their studies. The statement "I was encouraged to ask questions" received the highest percentage of disagreement (9%), so this kind of student-teacher interaction should be improved.

Finally, table 5 shows the students' overall satisfaction with the course.

Table 5

Overall satisfaction

	SD		D		N		A		SA	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
I found the course design visually attractive and engaging.	1	0.8	2	1.5	5	3.8	50	38.5	72	55.4
The course met my expectations.	0	0	4	3.1	4	3.1	45	34.6	77	59.2
Overall, I am satisfied with the training.	0	0	1	0.8	3	2.3	43	33.1	83	63.8

It can be seen from the table that 93.9% of the students found the course engaging and 93.8% showed agreement with the statement "The course met my expectations." Furthermore, 96.9% reported that they were satisfied with the training, indicating that they were engaged in the course as learner engagement has been found to correlate with satisfaction (Halverson & Graham, 2019; Martin & Bolliger, 2018; Hu & Ching, 2012).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the findings revealed the students' positive reflections on their online English lessons. It could be pointed out that the students had a relatively high level of behavioral and cognitive engagement in the course. In general, a high level of satisfaction was reported, which partly reflect the student's engagement level in the course. One limitation was that emotional engagement was difficult to measure when it comes to teaching and learning in an online context. Another limitation is small sample size, which may not provide sufficient data for the interpretations of the findings. Future studies are, therefore, necessary in order to have a complete understanding of the topic. This pilot study, however, can help the author find out which areas need improvements. Interaction, which is commonly cited as a major drawback of online teaching and learning, was found to be quite negative in the students' reflections; thus should be fostered in many ways. To boost student engagement, student-content, student-instructor, and student-student interaction should be developed. For instance, multimedia teaching tools can be used to enhance learner engagement with the materials. Contacts between teacher and students can be maintained and optimized using various communication channels. In addition, there should be more activities that involve cooperation such as group work tasks and students should be encouraged to share ideas with others through forums, chatting and the social networks. In short, online teaching can only be used as a situational alternative

in times of the Covid-19, it is no substitution for the conventional teaching process. As Halverson and Graham (2019) suggested in their study, blended learning, which may support cognitive engagement through reflection and emotional engagement through face-to-face interactions, might fully engage students in their learning.

THE AUTHOR

Ms. Ho Dinh Phuong Khanh is currently an English lecturer at the School of Foreign Languages, University of Economics Ho Chi Minh city. She obtained a Master's degree in Applied Linguistics from Curtin University in 2011. She is interested in applying new teaching methods and technology to provide students with better learning experiences.

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APPENDIX 1

Learner Engagement Survey

In this questionnaire, the term 'training' refers to your online learning experiences with the English class in the previous semester.

Please provide one response to each item on the form.

1: Strongly disagree 2: Disagree 3: Neither Agree or Disagree 4: Agree 5: Strongly agree

Learning stimulation

	1	2	3	4	5
The training used up-to-date materials.					
The amount of work I had to do was reasonable.					
The training was at the right level of difficulty for me.					
There were a wide range of learning activities.					
I could interact with others.					

Competency development

	1	2	3	4	5
I developed skills and knowledge.					
I learned to work with others.					
I learned to plan and manage my work.					

Effective assessment

	1	2	3	4	5
I received useful feedback on my assessments.					
Assessments were based on realistic activities.					
The way I was assessed was a fair test of my skills and knowledge.					

Resources and Support

	1	2	3	4	5
Resources were available when I needed them.					
I received sufficient support from the teacher.					
I was encouraged to ask questions.					

Overall satisfaction

	1	2	3	4	5
I found the course design visually attractive and engaging.					
The course met my expectations.					
Overall, I am satisfied with the training.					

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