

An Investigation into The Online Assessment and The Autonomy of Non-English Majored Students in Vinh Long Province

Ho Le Thanh Phuong^{1*}, Doan Ngoc Anh Huy¹, Dinh Thi Lich¹

¹ Mien Tay Construction University, Vinh Long, Vietnam

*Corresponding author's email: hltphuong@mtu.edu.vn

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5019-8754>

 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ictcp.2334>

Received: 25/11/2022

Revision: 19/12/2022

Accepted: 26/12/2022

Online: 06/01/2023

ABSTRACT

Keywords: online assessment; learner autonomy; online tools; English learning and teaching

Recently, the COVID-19 pandemic has strongly impacted human life and brought various challenges and difficulties for learning and teaching all over the world. The massive development of information technology has brought solutions to deal with this new phase. Teachers implement online assessments to support learning and teaching English. There are previous studies about the effect of E-learning, but research about online tools such as Liveworksheets or Google Forms were rarely conducted, especially in Vinh Long province. Therefore, during the academic year 2021-2022, the researchers started a study on 120 students who used Liveworksheets and Google Forms as their assessment in class and even their homework during their Basic English course. After using these tools, students completed a survey that reflected their job with those online tools during their semesters. An online questionnaire was used in this study to collect data from 120 students in a university in the Mekong Delta. The current study is designed as descriptive research. In addition, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used. The results show positive impacts on learner autonomy and learners' listening skills by using Liveworksheets rather than Google Forms. Besides, the study illustrates students' responses that gave both advantages and disadvantages of those tools. These results may be helpful for both lecturers and students to promote themselves in teaching and learning English.

Introduction

Background of the study

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools have changed their educational model from face-to-face to online learning. Therefore, online assessments play a significant role in helping both teachers and students interact with each other effectively. Mien Tay Construction University (MTU) is in Vinh Long province. Civil Engineering and Architecture are the school's main majors, and are taught for 45 years at MTU. Additionally, English is one of the compulsory subjects that is required in the curriculum. MTU students need to achieve an English certificate - level B1 to graduate and to be able to communicate in English to get good jobs or promote to higher professional positions in those fields.

Furthermore, most of the students engage themselves in learning reading and writing skills, while listening and speaking skills do not receive much attention in the high school learning process. Otherwise, it turns upside down when they enroll and study English at the university. Teaching and learning English at MTU from the academic year 2018 – 2019 has changed to meet the transformation of the school curriculum in general. After taking the entrance test, students will be classified into different English class levels. This study focuses on students in Basic English 1 and 2. The Basic English one course consists of 25 meetings with 75 periods, and it takes 15 weeks to complete the first four units. The Basic English 2 course completes from Unit 5 to Unit 10, and it has the same periods as the Basic English 1 course. The course material is an "English File - Elementary" book and the learning process focuses on drilling listening and speaking skills.

The aims of the study

The study aims to determine students' attitudes after using two different online assessments during their English course. Then, the results of the study can be used to improve both English teaching methodology and students' personal skills in advance.

The significance of the study

There is no previous research about these online tools at Mien Tay Construction University. Therefore, the findings of this study provide valuable information about students' attitudes towards two online assessments, including Liveworksheets and Google Forms. Actually, the study findings hopefully contribute to the improvement of the teachers' pedagogical process and help students improve their self-esteem and self-regulation.

The scope of the study

The study collects data from 120 students in the academic year 2021-2022. Some students get used to those online tools in both semesters, but some students only use them in a semester. In the first semester of the school year, students take online English courses, but in the second semester, students directly learn in the school. The data collected from the authors' classes may not be representative of all the classes at the same time.

Literature review

Online assessment and learners' autonomy

In a study at Hanoi University, a group of authors Trinh, Pham, Phan, and Nguyen (2022) has done an investigation the factors influencing freshmen's acceptance of online learning and pointed out that students' acceptance of online learning is attributed to four different factors, including students' effectiveness expectations, students' efforts expectations, their attitudes towards online learning, and their technological skills. In general, learners' acceptance of online learning depends on their own subjective factors. However, evaluating the effectiveness of online learning requires the cooperation of both teachers and students.

Online assessment typically includes tests, quizzes, and questionnaires that teachers can administer to students so they can examine their progress in different learning areas. For example, they can include skill assessments, communication tests, and behavioral evaluations. Online assessment platforms allow teachers to create tests based on curriculum content or learning development needs. They also allow teachers to track student data for future reports, allowing them to create more targeted educational practices. Teachers may use these online assessment platforms to gauge a student's personality and response to a classroom environment;

evaluate a student's current skills, abilities, and knowledge; showcase a student's progress to their parents; help students transition to higher education or a future career.

On the other hand, Benson & Brack (2010) pointed out that there are four problems related to online evaluation management. They are “student assistance, technological problems, authentication/plagiarism, and administrative skills of the instructor”. Then, technological challenges are setting up evaluations, service disruption, and bandwidth. Besides, Spivey & McMillan (2014) asserted that students have the freedom to choose when and where to take the online examination. Therefore, they can do a trick on their assignments. Moreover, to evaluate students' performance, teachers need to know how to use the platform such as grading, uploading items, giving feedback, and helping students using tools. Those also challenge both instructors and learners in the teaching and learning process.

Uses	Examples
1. Submission of items for assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Essays: discursive, descriptive, analytical ▪ Reports: CBL, PBL ▪ Reviews: critical, analytical ▪ Media: image, audio, video, presentation
2. Automated assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Quizzes ▪ Multimedia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Multiple choice ▪ Short answer ▪ Calculation ▪ Matching ▪ Fill blanks ▪ True False ▪ Drag and Drop ▪ Simulations
3. Online discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forums: case analysis, project development ▪ Debates ▪ Allocated roles: lead, summarise, provoke ▪ Roleplays
4. Web publishing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ E-portfolios ▪ Webpages: blogs, wikis ▪ Shared documents: google documents

Figure 1: Uses of Online Environment for Assessment (Benson & Brack (2010))

On the contrary, Fitriyah, I. & Jannah, M. (2021) found that students' autonomous learning can be impacted by online learning and online assessment. Students controlled their learning process by themselves and through self-check results, they were "aware of their mistakes and marking themselves better learners". Furthermore, Rahman (2018) also presented results that teachers are supporting them to be more autonomous by making obvious instructions and targets for students. However, a previous study of Le and Nguyen (2022) showed that students found some difficulties with their self-regulating skills. They listed various skills that students struggled with, such as selecting materials, making plans or setting learning goals. The study also suggested solutions that teachers needed to help students gain more confidence in self-learning and train their autonomous learning skills.

Liveworksheets application

Liveworksheets is a tool that allows teachers to create interactive worksheets for their students. Teachers upload traditional print worksheets in PDF or as Word documents and can then transform these into interactive exercises using different formats such as multiple choice, drag and drop or join the arrows, which can include audio or videos if necessary. It is also possible to create speaking exercises where students have to record themselves using the tool's microphone. A variety of worksheets already created by other users can also be accessed. Moreover, Liveworksheets are a useful tool for creating interactive exercises for students. It is easy for teachers to use and can make learning more fun and enjoyable. Given the many different options available, however, teachers need to carefully select the most appropriate exercise format required for each learning activity.

Google Form application

Google Form is the second online assessment tool used in this study. It is a free online tool from Google which allows users to create forms, surveys, and quizzes as well as to collaboratively edit and share the forms with other people. Teachers can create multiple-choice or short-answer questions for students to complete, specify correct answers and points, and provide feedback for correct and incorrect responses. Moreover, it's a quick and simple tool to automatically grade quizzes as well as see fast results. For students, the simple and familiar background of this application helps students to do the quiz easily.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the survey was seeking to answer the following research question:

What are non-English major students' attitudes toward using online assessment tools, including Liveworksheets and Google Forms, during their English courses?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was conducted at Mien Tay Construction University in the academic year 2021-2022. The researchers randomly chose 120 students to participate in the study. In the first semester, they studied online Basic English 1 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, whereas in the second semester, they studied Basic English 2 at the school. According to students' responses, the researchers identified some common points among those students including that all of them had studied English for seven years in high school, that they are all adults at 18 to 19 years old, that they are non-English majors students, that most of them are majored in Civil Engineering and Architecture, that their predominant gender was male and that they all take part in Basic English course in the university.

For various reasons, a questionnaire is used as the main instrument in collecting data on students' attitudes and preferences towards online assessment tools, including Liveworksheets and Google Forms as well as the underlying reasons for their decisions. As Dornyei (2007) writes, questionnaires are nowadays extremely popular within social sciences, as they are versatile and make it possible to collect a large amount of data in a relatively small amount of time. Indeed, as the number of participants in the present study is 120 students, the questionnaire is by far the most suitable method to gather

information from them. Besides, a questionnaire is the most beneficial to the researcher in terms of time management and cost-effectiveness.

A Likert scale is a scale that is generally made up of five gradation points; one in the middle, one at each extreme, and one between the middle and each extreme. The use of a Likert scale for many of the questions meant that any statistical analysis performed on the data would be made easier. Data obtained from a Likert scale question is also easier to generalize than other methods of data collection. Moreover, there was also an opportunity for the researchers to ask open-ended questions about the reasons why the participant chose an answer. One of the aims of this research is to ascertain the reasons behind students' preferences for certain types of online assessment tools. The ability to use open-ended clarification questions meant that gathering data from the participants was freely written and hopefully objective.

Design of the Study

The survey data was collected online through Google Forms at the end of each semester. Depending on this research aim, the Descriptive method is chosen (Dulock, 1993).

Data collection & analysis

The procedure of the study

At the beginning of the Basic English course, students learned how to create an account and use interactive exercises on Liveworksheet. During their semester, teachers added assignments to their "workbooks" to review English lessons and focused on vocabulary, listening, and speaking skills. Meanwhile, the teacher also designed exercises on Google Forms which were at the same level and sent links to students.

At the end of the course, students did a survey reviewing the online assessment tools they had used. The survey did not collect any identifying information, including IP address. The data were kept in private for analysis and storage.

Tools and methods of analysis

According to the purpose of the research, the researcher applied the Likert scale (Vagias & Wade, 2006) to evaluate the practicality of both online tools. Some items used five point-level of satisfaction (1– Not at all satisfied; 2– slightly satisfied; 3– moderately satisfied; 4– Very satisfied; 5– Extremely satisfied). Moreover, some items used five point-levels of Quality (1 – Poor; 2 – Fair; 3 – Good; 4 – Very good; 5 – Excellent). Besides, some items used Frequency of Use 1 – Never 2 – Almost never 3 – Occasionally/Sometimes 4 – Almost every time 5 – Every time. On the other hand, some items are open-ended questions. The specific questionnaires are listed below.

Items 1 to 3 ask about the satisfaction of using Liveworksheet (used five point-level of satisfaction)

1. In which degree students are satisfied with vocabulary exercises on Liveworksheet.
2. In which degree students are satisfied with listening exercises on Liveworksheet
3. In which degree students are satisfied with speaking exercises on Liveworksheet

Item 4 asked about the quality of online assessment (used five point-levels of Quality)

4. In which degree students qualify Liveworksheet for learning English

Item 5 asked about the frequency of doing online assessment (used Frequency of Use)

5. How often students do homework on Liveworksheet

Item 6 to item 8 asking about students' perspective on online assessment

6. Which students' preference: Liveworksheet or Google Form

7. What students' opinions on using Liveworksheet

8. What students' opinions on using Google Form

On the other hand, teachers observed students' attitudes toward using Google Forms. Teachers sent a Google Form link and let students do it at home. The exercises have the same contents as exercises in Liveworksheet. Then, teachers ask students to complete the survey at the end of the English courses. After collecting data, the Descriptive method was used to describe the results of the study.

Results and discussion

The result of the data collection is presented below.

Item 1 In which degree students satisfy with vocabulary exercises on Liveworksheet

Table 1. Students' satisfaction with vocabulary exercises on Liveworksheet

	N	Minimu m	Maximu m	Mean	Std. Deviation
Vocabulary exercises	120	4.00	5.00	4.9083	.28976
Valid N (listwise)	120				

Table 1 shows the degree of satisfaction with doing vocabulary exercises among non-English majored students. Most of the students expressed a high level of satisfaction (Mean=4.9083), and there is not much difference between scale 4 and scale 5. This means that students loved learning and doing online vocabulary assessments, and they enjoyed their studying process.

Item 2 In which degree students satisfy with listening exercises on Liveworksheet

Table 2. Students' satisfaction with listening exercises on Liveworksheet

	N	Minimu m	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Listening exercises	120	3.00	5.00	4.8417	.40987
Valid N (listwise)	120				

As can be seen from Table 2, the satisfaction with listening exercises is significant (Mean = 4.8417). Listening is quite hard for those students who are not used to practicing frequently. However, the results pointed out that live listening raised the students' attention so that they could finish the task, kept doing different worksheets and got better results at the end of the course.

Item 3 In which degree students satisfy with speaking exercises on Liveworksheet

Table 3. Students satisfaction with speaking exercises on Liveworksheet

	N	Minimu m	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Speaking exercises	120	4.00	5.00	4.8417	.36658
Valid N (listwise)	120				

According to table 3, students revealed their positive contentment with speaking English practice at a Mean score of 4.8417. In a class, with more than 35 students, teachers cannot cover all students who practice English speaking and correct their mistakes. Then, students could do a worksheet at home and correct pronunciation and sentence structures by themselves. Therefore, they could be more confident in speaking English.

Item 4 In which degree students qualify Liveworksheet for learning English

Table 4. Students evaluate Liveworksheet for learning English

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Evaluating	120	3.00	5.00	4.8583	.39526
Valid N (listwise)	120				

After using Liveworksheet for about 3 months, students give high evaluations at a Mean score of 4.8543. This means this online assessment is useful and appropriate for learning English.

Item 5 the frequency of doing an online assessment

Table 5. Frequency of using Liveworksheet

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 3.00	6	5.0	5.0	5.0
4.00	25	20.8	20.8	25.8
5.00	89	74.2	74.2	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

Based on the data collected from table 5, students usually do their workbook every day (at 74%) and only a few students sometimes do it (at 5%).

It can be seen from the total score of the questionnaire results. From table 1 to 5, it is obvious that students showed positive perspectives toward the use of Liveworksheet as an online assessment tool for English teaching and learning. This was the same as the previous study conducted by Spivey & McMillan (2014) that students prefer doing online assessments anywhere and anytime and managing their own learning process.

Item 6 Which students' preference: Liveworksheet or Google Form

Table 6. Prefer Liveworksheet or Google Form

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Liveworksheet	106	88.3	88.3	88.3
Google Form	14	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	120	100.0	100.0	

It can be seen from the results that students prefer using Liveworksheet to Google Forms in their learning of English (Table 6). There are about 106 students chosen for the Liveworksheet

(estimated at 88.3%). To give a better understanding of the similarity and differences between those tools, researchers summarize some main points in table 7 below.

Table 7. Comparison between Google form and Liveworksheet

Criteria	Google form	Liveworksheet
1. Type of questions		
Short answer	X	X
Paragraph	X	X
Multiple-choice	X	X
Checkbox	X	X
Drop-down menu/Selection boxes	X	X
Linear range	X	0
Quiz grid	X	X
Checkbox grid	X	X
Drag and drop	0	X
Join with arrows	0	X
2. Score announcement		
Immediately after each submission	X	X
Then after manual evaluation	X	0
3. Settings appear to respondents		
Wright and Wrong answer question	X	X
Point value: total score	X	X
Point value: the number of points received for each question	X	0
Default score value for question	X	0
Show grades with or without decimals; text (very good, fair,etc.) or images of evaluation	0	X
4. Manage how answers are collected and protected		
Collect email addresses	X	0
Send respondents a copy of their response	X	0
Save all students responses in a workbook	0	X
Allow editing answers	X	0

Allow repeating exercises full page or only errors	0	X
Shuffle the order of questions	X	0
Disable autosave for all respondents	X	0
Checking options (Ignore punctuation marks; Ignore capital letters; Ignore accents)	0	X
Show multiple results of each student in the same class	0	X
Export result file in excel format	X	X
Export general results of each class	0	X

Most students were chosen Liveworksheet and enjoyed the learning process. It could be explained by some different functions of this tool, including "checking point" immediately without teacher controlling; saving all students' responses in a workbook so that they can review from beginning to end of their lessons in the semester; repeating exercises full page or only errors that help students realize their own mistakes. This was in line with the statement of Fitriyah, I. & Jannah, M. (2021) that online assessment influences students' autonomous learning and motivates them to learn effectively.

Item 7 students' opinions on using Liveworksheet

Most students' responses on what they like on Liveworksheet is its grading. After doing the exercises, they knew their scores and answers immediately. Besides, Liveworksheet has an auto-checked function that checks exactly the spelling of each answer, even the space, comma, or period. Therefore, students could recheck and learn the words effectively. Furthermore, they can review their workbook at any time, anywhere, and remember the lessons in an interesting way. The interaction on Liveworksheet is quite easy and simple for students to follow and complete the tasks. Especially, students prefer doing Listening tasks with this tool. They said that it is convenient and useful to practice by themselves and improve their abilities effectively. Moreover, the design on Liveworksheet is attractive and colorful, which comforts students' feelings and motivates them to stay within schedule and finish exercises on time.

However, responders pointed out that because Liveworksheet auto-checking is accurate, some students gave correct answers but the checking system marked them "incorrect". They might add more "blank space" or lack of "question marks", periods, and commas. Those errors might not be important in particular tasks, so the teacher needed to re-check and re-score their worksheet. In addition, depending on the internet connection, if the working process was interrupted, all their work could be unsaved, and they had to do that worksheet again.

Item 8 students' opinion on using Google Form

It is a simple platform and easy to interact with. It could save their process if the internet was interrupted. However, they sometimes needed the teacher's permission to know their scores exactly. Then, they could not see the overview of their work because each exercise was sent in a different link.

Conclusion

The current study provides useful information about students' attitudes and preferences toward online assessment tools, including Liveworksheets and Google Forms. Students appreciate the helpfulness of Liveworksheets as well as Google Forms in improving their English skills. Besides, Liveworksheets is preferable because the exercises designed on Liveworksheets are more interesting and interactive. Moreover, such interactive and colorful worksheets can include sounds, videos, drag-and-drop exercises, arrow connections, or multiple-choice exercises. These forms of exercises motivate students to complete tasks assigned by the teacher. Furthermore, after accomplishing the task on Liveworksheets, students immediately get their marks and correct answers. This function shows students their progress in learning and their mistakes so that they can improve themselves and encourage self-study.

Despite the useful information analyzed, the research consists of a few unavoidable limitations. First, the participants' size should be larger to make the findings more convincing. Second, the data could be more convincing if interviews were organized after questionnaires. Through interviews, the reasons for participants' preferred online assessment tools can be clarified more.

The current research studies students' attitudes and preferences toward online assessment tools at a university in the Mekong Delta. From the data, a simple picture was illustrated. However, future research with a larger population and interviews can help to achieve better views. Moreover, it needs an observational study in order to determine students' attitudes toward online assessment tools, including Liveworksheets and Google Forms used by teachers in the classroom.

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our gratitude to our colleagues and the participants in our research. Without their help, our research could not be accomplished successfully.

We would like to show our appreciation to our colleagues who allowed us to visit their classes to collect the data. Besides, their support and care during our research time are really appreciated. In addition, we also treasure the cooperation of all participants. With their help, useful information could be collected.

References

- Agung, B., Syaefulloh, S., Ridwan, I. M., Mamun, A. M. H., Sumpena, D., & Yulianti Zakiah, Q. (2018). Google Form-Based Learning Assessment. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 253, 529-531.
- Amalia, D. (2020). Quizizz Website as an Online Assessment for English Teaching and Learning: Students' Perspectives. *Jo-ELT (Journal of English Language Teaching) Fakultas Pendidikan Bahasa & Seni Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP*, 7(1), 1-8. <https://doi.org/10.33394/joelt.v7i1.2638>
- Benson, R., & Brack, C. (2010). *Online learning and assessment in higher education: A planning guide*. Chandos Publishing.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics. Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Dulock, H. L. (1993). Research Design: Descriptive Research. *Journal of Pediatric Oncology Nursing*, 10(4), 154–157. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104345429301000406>
- Fitriyah, I. & Jannah, M. (2021). Online Assessment Effect in EFL Classroom: An Investigation on Students and Teachers' Perceptions. *Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 5(2), 265-284.
- Trinh, H. L., Pham, D. L., Phan, V. V., & Nguyen, H. T. (2022). Factors Influencing Freshmen's Acceptance of Online Learning: A Study at Hanoi University of Industry. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(5), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22251>
- Le, H. T. Q., & Nguyen, T. H. (2022). A study on Non-English Major Students' Learner Autonomy: Difficulties and Solutions. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, 2(3), 197–207. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.222313>
- Rahman, Abd. (2018). Building autonomous learners in English as a foreign language (EFL) Classroom. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education in Muslim Society (ICEMS 2017)*. International Conference on Education in Muslim Society (ICEMS 2017). <https://doi.org/10.2991/icems-17.2018.44>
- Spivey, M. F., & McMillan, J. J. (2014). Classroom versus online assessment. *Journal of Education for Business*, 89(8), 450–456. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08832323.2014.937676>
- Vagias, W. M. (2006). *Likert-type scale response anchors*. Clemson International Institute for Tourism & Research Development, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. Clemson University, Clemson. <http://www.clemson.edu/centers-institutes/tourism/documents/sample-scales.pdf>

Biodata

Ho Le Thanh Phuong has been a lecturer at Mien Tay Construction University since 2013 and she works as a lecturer in the English Section. She holds a Master's Degree in TESOL from the University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Ho Chi Minh city. Her research interests are in the areas of teaching and learning a foreign language in The Industrial Revolution 4.0; curriculum development, university-industry relationships; online learning development.

Doan Ngoc Anh Huy, an English lecturer at the English Department at Mien Tay Construction University, Vinh Long Province, Vietnam, has 9-year experience in teaching English to non-English majored students and has research interests in the field of assessment strategies and teaching methodologies.

Dinh Thi Lich with more than 10 years of consulting experience in international cooperation at Mien Tay Construction University, Vietnam; and 3 years of experience in teaching English to adults (15-40 years old) as well as for non-English majored students. Developing metacognitive awareness, basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), and some further different aspects of TESOL methodology are my research interests.