

Implementations of AI Tools for Language Teaching and Learning

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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear beloved Language Educators,

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you the Proceedings of the 4th International Conference of TESOL & Education (ICTE 2024), held under the theme “Implementations of AI Tools for Language Teaching and Learning”. This collection of papers reflects the collective efforts of educators, researchers, and practitioners worldwide who are exploring innovative approaches to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) into language education.

The mission of this proceedings is to provide a platform for disseminating cutting-edge research and practical insights that bridge the gap between technological advancements and their pedagogical applications. As AI continues to revolutionize education, its role in language teaching and learning is becoming increasingly significant. This proceedings captures the essence of this transformation by showcasing studies that offer innovative solutions, promote learner engagement, and address challenges faced by educators in the digital age.

The papers included in this volume span a wide range of topics, including AI-driven chatbots for language practice, automated feedback systems, AI tools for improving pronunciation and speaking skills, and the use of machine learning to personalize learning experiences. Several studies delve into the ethical considerations of AI integration, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a human-centric approach while leveraging technology for language education.

The diversity of perspectives presented here highlights the global impact of AI on language teaching and learning. From empirical research to case studies, these contributions provide valuable insights into how educators can harness AI tools to foster learner autonomy, enhance communicative competence, and support inclusive learning environments.

This proceedings would not have been possible without the dedication and hard work of numerous individuals. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the contributing authors for sharing their research and innovative ideas, which form the backbone of this volume. I also wish to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the reviewers, whose rigorous and constructive feedback has ensured the high quality of the published papers. Lastly, my sincere thanks to the members of the editorial board for their unwavering support and commitment throughout the publication process.

It is my hope that this proceedings will inspire educators, researchers, and policymakers to continue exploring the transformative potential of AI in language teaching and learning. May these contributions serve as a foundation for further innovation and collaboration in this ever-evolving field.

Thank you for your continued support and interest. I wish you an enriching and insightful reading experience.

Thanks God for everything!

Warm regards,



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho
Editor-in-Chief
ICTE Conference Proceedings

The Influence of the ChatterKid App on the English-speaking Skills of Tertiary Students

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: English-speaking skills, ChatterKid, English, attitude

Educators around the world have employed different technology-based learning tools to smooth the studying experience of learners in various fields. English teaching is no exception because English is an international communication tool that is used in many countries and communities. English speaking is considered to be one of the most challenging skills that requires mastery to be fluent in English. Numerous studies have examined the advantages and drawbacks of using technology to teach English-speaking skills. However, the number of studies focusing on the ChatterKid app is limited. Based on the mentioned facts, this study was implemented to evaluate the influence of using the ChatterKid app on students' speaking skills at Thai Nguyen University of Education in Vietnam. Ninety first-year students participated in this quasi-experimental study for 12 weeks. The tests and questionnaire were applied to collect data; SPSS analyzed the data to draw the conclusion for the study. The findings indicated that the ChatterKid app significantly improved the speaking level of students, especially fluency, and students had positive attitudes towards the use of this app.

Introduction

English is an international communication tool that should be fostered by tertiary students worldwide. Many universities include English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum for all majors; students must reach a certain level of English to be eligible for graduation. Speaking is considered the most difficult skill for learners when learning English; however, this skill is the most important because it creates and maintains face-to-face communication. Tertiary students encounter various difficulties when mastering their English-speaking ability (Phuong & Ngoc, 2023), which requires finding more effective teaching and learning methods to help students become fluent in English speaking.

These days, the use of technology in education is no longer a new field among teachers and students who accept that technology provides a productive learning environment and practical experiences (Qizi & Qizi, 2024). Numerous technology tools are introduced to support the learning and teaching process; with reasonable applications of these tools, users can ease their process of learning English in general and speaking English in particular. Technology

integration in English learning helps students improve testing scores and provides opportunities to practice reading, writing, listening, and speaking in an effective environment (Rintaningrum, 2023). In addition, using apps enhances students' speaking level (Luu et al., 2021; Nguyen & Tran, 2024). Besides their effectiveness in improving students' speaking performances, studies reveal positive attitudes among students towards the use of technology tools in speaking classes because these tools help to reduce stress and increase motivation and confidence (Asratie et al., 2023; Sosas, 2021; Hezili, 2018; Le & Doan, 2023; Nguyen, 2021).

ChatterKid is an easy-to-use app that allows users to take photos and record their voices to make a short animation video (Ralph et al., 2023). Users can also choose the pictures in the app storage to make their videos with various decorations. Although this app can be used in both visual and oral channels, the number of studies exploring the effect of this app on students' speaking skills and attitudes towards this app is very limited. Therefore, this study was conducted to assess the effect of ChatterKid on the speaking performance of students at Thai Nguyen University of Education and examine students' attitudes towards using this app.

The results of the study can be beneficial for teachers and students because they can choose ChatterKid as a powerful learning tool to develop students' speaking ability; moreover, this tool is also useful to create a joyful and productive learning environment for students because it motivates students to talk in freedom of pressure or anxiety. In addition, the study also brings to other researchers a new research field that can examine various aspects of language learning.

Literature review

Speaking performance

Speaking performance in certain aspects refers to the ability to start and maintain a conversation. This study's speaking performance includes grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and discourse management. According to Aziz and Kashinathan (2021), grammar is the process of organizing words into sentences with no mistakes. Speakers with a broad knowledge of grammar can speak English more easily. Vocabulary is the core aspect of every language skill because speakers cannot say anything if they have no vocabulary. Pronunciation refers to the ability to pronounce a word with no mistakes. Speakers can be understood easily with good pronunciation. Fluency is the speaker's ability to speak smoothly without difficulty finding words or ideas. Discourse management is the ability to develop ideas fully and successfully with clear organization.

Technology in English-speaking teaching and learning

Technology has proven its role in the process of learning and teaching the English language, especially speaking skills. The use of technology not only promotes the interaction between teachers and students but also creates opportunities for students to develop their skills. Technology provides teachers with effective tools to teach and students with an autonomous, healthy learning space, leading to improved outcome results (Mustafa, 2018). Alsuheim (2017) confirmed that the application of technology provides students with a productive and effective learning and practicing environment. The integration of modern technology in English-speaking classes helps increase students' speaking performance (Khanh, 2021). Together with the advancement of technology, various technological tools are introduced to assist students in English-speaking development, namely communication software, video conferencing, podcasts, artificial intelligence apps, and online learning platforms, which provide students with plenty of choices for their study process. ChatterKid is an app that allows users to add voice

and text to images. Users can take or upload photos to edit videos on this app through five easy steps, which are instructed in a short video appearing when opening the app. When an image is successfully added, students can create an open mouth on the image. When recording the voice, the mouth on the image starts talking as a lively animated film. The final version of a video can be shared in different ways. Although the maximum length of each video created on ChatterKid is thirty seconds, students can combine many videos into a longer one.

Students' attitudes towards the application of technology in speaking class

Asratie (2023) concluded that students revealed positive attitudes towards the use of educational technology and teaching tools. Students perceive the application of technology in English-speaking classrooms as a means of proving their motivation, interacting with teachers and peers, and helping them develop their speaking performance. There is a need to encourage the use of technology in English-speaking classes because of its benefits (Khan et al., 2021; Hamouda, 2020).

Many scholars have tried to explore the influence of technology on students' speaking ability and their attitudes about the use of technology in their study process. Lai et al. (2021) implemented a study to examine the influence of Flipgrid on students' speaking skills. Eighty Vietnamese students in Ho Chi Minh City, divided into two groups, participated in the study setting with the application of Flipgrid for one group. The findings indicated the development of students' speaking skills when using the Flipgrid app to study English speaking, which implied the use of apps for learning English speaking. Bui et al. (2023) investigated the learners' aims and attitudes toward using mobile phone apps to learn English in Vietnam. With the participation of 123 Vietnamese students from universities in southern Vietnam, the study indicated that students had positive attitudes when using smartphone apps, which implied more use of smartphone apps in English learning in Vietnam. Ngoc and Thanh (2023) conducted a study about non-major students' perceptions of applying Elsa Speak to improve English pronunciation. The study was carried out at Can Tho University with a total of 180 participants. The findings indicated that a majority of students revealed positive perceptions regarding the process of practicing pronunciation through the Elsa Speaking App. In addition, using this app also results in an increase in students' learning outcomes, which emphasizes the integration of artificial intelligence in language education. Thuong and Tham (2023) explore the attitudes of 101 first-year students majoring in English in Ho Chi Minh City. The findings were that students had positive attitudes towards mobile applications and would like to use these apps to study English listening skills. Duong and Suppasetsee (2024) explored the development of 30 Vietnamese students' speaking skills when using artificial intelligence voice chatbots to practice speaking. The results showed that students had significant growth in their speaking skills, including grammar, hedging words, vocabulary, and structures, which left a gap in exploring the effects of other voice chatbots on students' English-speaking skills.

Research Questions

To fulfill the aims of this study, there are two research questions posed as follows:

1. How does the use of the ChatterKid app affect the English-speaking performance of first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Education?
2. What are the attitudes of first-year students at Thai Nguyen University of Education towards the use of the ChatterKid app in English-speaking classes?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The context of the study was at the Thai Nguyen University of Education, where English is a compulsory subject; students must pass three courses, namely English 1, English 2, and English 3, to graduate. The course book used in these courses was Life A2-B1, which includes 12 units; students study 4 units in each course. When finishing the English 3 course, students are expected to reach the B1 level. The study was implemented in 12 weeks in the first semester, from September to November 2023.

90 first-year students, comprising 53 females and 37 males, participated in this study. The students who majored in mathematics were randomly divided into classes A and B (hereby named the Control and Experimental groups, with 45 students in each) by the Department of Education at the beginning of the semester. It could be said that there were no significant differences in the study context and background of the two classes, which were the reasons why the researcher chose these students to be the participants in this study. The researcher asked for the agreement of the participants and the university before conducting the study.

Design of the Study

This is a quasi-experimental study using the ChatterKid app for the experimental group. The researcher was also the teacher of these two classes to guarantee that the design of the study was strictly followed. The data gathered from the pre-test, the post-test, and the questionnaire was analyzed quantitatively by SPSS (Independent Samples Test for test results and One-sample T-test for the questionnaire results) to answer two research questions.

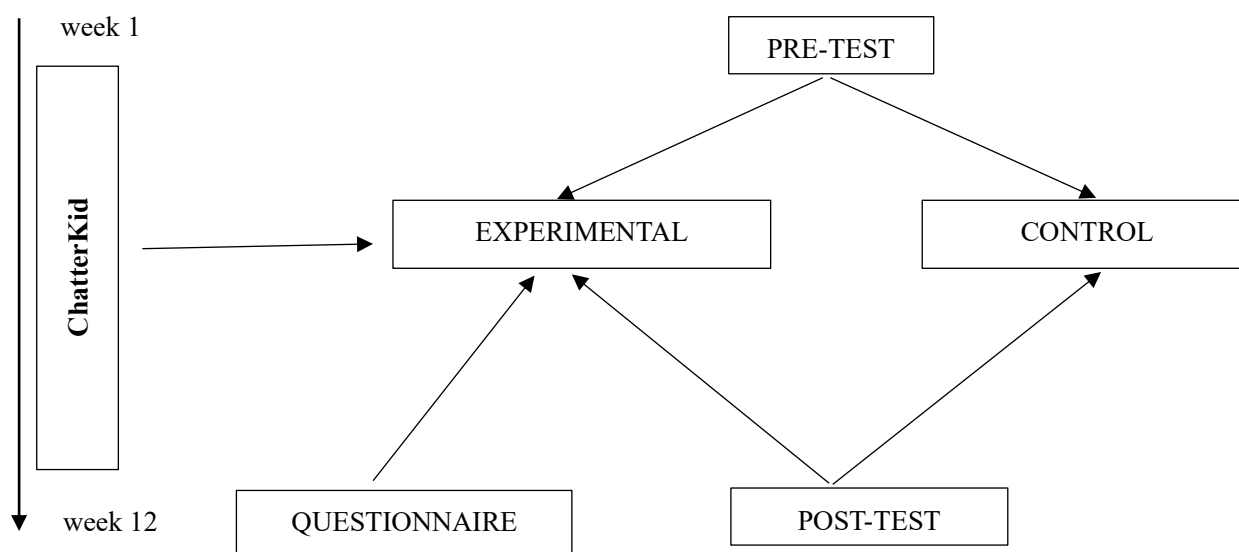
Data collection & analysis

In the first week of the study procedure, the researcher instructed the use of Chatterkid students in the Experimental group and had students complete a short demo video to ensure all students knew how to use the app. From the second week, the students in the experimental group were required to make a video (students must record their voices and answer the given topics) on the ChatterKid app and submit the video to the researcher through Google Classroom every week. The files on Google Classroom were set open, and students were encouraged to watch others' videos and give comments. Students in both groups attended the English 1 course, which was scheduled by the university (3 periods each week; students had the same learning contents and experienced the same teaching method during the study). The requirements of each video were designed based on the topics that students studied in class each week. The study topics that appeared in this study included lifestyle, competition, transport, and changes. The requirements for video making could be taken from the course book or designed by the researcher, for example: "What is your eating habit?".

Figure 1 illustrates the study's procedure. In week 1, the students in both groups were required to sit the pre-test; during the next 11 weeks, the students in the experimental group used the ChatterKid app to fulfill the researcher's tasks. In week 12, the post-test was used for both groups, while the questionnaire was delivered to the students in the Experimental group via the Google form to collect data.

Figure 1

The study procedure



The tests were adopted from VSTEP speaking tests with an evaluation of five aspects: grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and discourse management; the band score ranged from 1.0 to 10. This form of the test has been used to evaluate the speaking outcome of students in all 3 English courses at the university for three years; therefore, students were familiar with this form of the test. The examiner was an invited teacher who completed the VSTEP speaking and writing marking course to guarantee the validity of the study results. The tests were employed to collect data that answered the first question of the study. The tests include three separate parts and last about 12 minutes. The first part is social interaction, with 3–6 questions the examiner asks and the student answers. The second part is solution discussion; in this part, the student is provided with a situation and three different suggested ways to tackle the situation. The student has to choose the most suitable solution to the situation and reasons for not choosing other options. The last part is topic development. The student talks about a given topic and can use the suggested ideas to develop an answer. The examiner can ask the discussion questions at the end of part 3. The questions for the test are taken from the question banks of the university, which guarantees that the level of difficulty of the pre-test and post-test are the same and that the questions cover the study contents. The format of the test was announced to the students at the beginning of the study. The tests were set in a private room, and the scores of students were recorded on specialized record papers. The personal information of the students was kept secret as per their expectations.

The questionnaire was adapted from the questionnaire of Asratie et al. (2023), who conducted a study about the effects of three educational technology tools on students' speaking performance. The questionnaire comprised 11 items, separated into two parts: the first part was about students' interest in using the ChatterKid app in learning speaking; the second part was about the stances of students about the effectiveness of the ChatterKid app in learning speaking. In the reliability test, Cronbach's alpha was 0.71, which is a good value, according to Taber (2018).

Findings and discussion

Test results

Table 1

The comparison of speaking performance between the two examined groups

Group Statistics					Independent Samples Test		
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
						Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	Control group	45	1.68	0.58	Equal variances assumed	0.68	0.72
	Experimental group	45	1.63	0.58	Equal variances not assumed		0.72
Post-test	Control group	45	2.83	0.44	Equal variances assumed	0.78	0.000
	Experimental group	45	3.21	0.46	Equal variances not assumed		0.000

The statistical results (Table 1) show that in the pre-test, the speaking performance of the Control group (M=1.68, SD=0.58) and the Experimental group (M=1.63, SD=0.58) was not significantly different. The results of the Independent Sample test ($p=0.72 > 0.05$) confirmed the similarity in the speaking performance of the two examined groups.

In the post-test, it is noticeable that the test results of the Control group (M=2.83, SD=0.44) and the Experimental group (M=3.21, SD=0.46) had a statistical gap. Regarding the Independent Sample test, Levene's Test had $p\text{-value}=0.78 > 0.05$, while the t-test for Equality of Means had $p\text{-value}=0.000 < 0.05$. These results indicated that the speaking level of the experimental group was considerably higher than that of the control group, which implied that the application of the ChatterKid app helped improve the speaking level of the students. This finding was reinforced by Luu et al. (2021), Alsuhaimeh (2017), Khanh (2021), and Rintaningrum (2023), who stated that the employment of technology could enhance the speaking performance of the students. In addition, this finding was in line with the statement of Lai et al. (2021), which emphasized the growth of students' speaking skills when using apps to study speaking English in the Vietnamese context.

Table 2

The comparison of the speaking skills between the two examined groups

Group Statistics					Independent Samples Test		
	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances	t-test for Equality of Means
						Sig.	Sig. (2-tailed)
Grammar	Control group	45	2.58	0.62	Equal variances assumed	0.000	0.18
	Experimental group	45	2.738	0.45	Equal variances not assumed.		0.18
Vocabulary	Control group	45	2.98	0.54	Equal variances assumed	1.00	0.70
	Experimental group	45	3.02	0.54	Equal variances not assumed		0.70
Pronunciation	Control group	45	2.78	0.60	Equal variances assumed	0.01	0.09
	Experimental group	45	2.98	0.50	Equal variances not assumed		0.09
Fluency	Control group	45	2.87	0.66	Equal variances assumed	0.02	0.000
	Experimental group	45	3.89	0.96	Equal variances not assumed		0.000
Discourse management	Control group	45	2.84	0.74	Equal variances assumed	0.60	0.09
	Experimental group	45	3.11	0.71	Equal variances not assumed		0.09

The comparison of the speaking skills between the two investigated groups is demonstrated in Table 2. It could be said that although the Experimental group performed better in Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, and Discourse management, the difference between the two groups

in these skills was not significant. However, Fluency showed a striking prominence when the outcome of the Experimental group ($M=3.89$, $SD=0.96$) was significantly higher than the achievement of the Control group ($M=2.87$, $SD=0.66$) and the p-value of Levene's Test and the t-test for Equality of Means was 0.016 and 0.000 (<0.05) respectively. This result revealed that the use of the ChatterKid app improved the fluency of students, which is in line with the finding of Asratie (2023), who concluded that the use of technology learning tools improves the students' speaking performance, including fluency. Moreover, the findings are in accordance with the study results of Duong and Suppasetserree (2024), which confirmed the use of apps could increase students' speaking sub-skills in Vietnam.

In short, after 12 weeks of the study, the ChatterKid app showed a significant role in developing students' speaking performance, especially their fluency. This could be explained by the fact that the ChatterKid app created a speaking environment for students outside the classroom, and with continuous practice week by week, students accumulated enough input to enhance their output.

Questionnaire results

Table 3

Students' interest in using The ChatterKid app

Items	N	Mean	Std.Deviation
I enjoy using the ChatterKid app for my speaking practice.	45	4.78	0.47
Using the ChatterKid app enhances my speaking performance.	45	4.49	0.55
I would prefer to use the ChatterKid app to complete speaking tasks.	45	4.53	0.59
I am better at speaking English when I use the ChatterKid app.	45	4.36	0.53
Using the ChatterKid app helps me to have more accurate pronunciation.	45	4.31	0.67
I would like to use the ChatterKid app in speaking classes.	45	4.44	0.62

Table 3 demonstrates students' high level of interest when using the ChatterKid app to study English-speaking skills (all items had $M>4.0$). Specifically, students had enjoyment using the ChatterKid app for their speaking practice ($M=4.78$, $SD=0.47$). Students confirmed that using ChatterKid enhanced their speaking performance ($M=4.49$, $SD=0.55$). They wanted to use the ChatterKid app ($M=4.53$, $SD=0.59$). They also believed that they became better English speakers when using the ChatterKid app ($M=4.36$, $SD=0.53$). Students showed a positive point of view when asked if using ChatterKid helped them have more accurate pronunciation ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.67$). In addition, students looked forward to the ChatterKid app in speaking classes ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.62$). The findings implied that the use of the ChatterKid app brought a positive experience to students, which is in accordance with Qizi and Qizi (2024), Asratie et al. (2023), Sosas (2021), whose confirmation was that the employment of technology provided students with a productive and low-stress learning environment. The findings also matched the confirmations of Bui et al. (2023), Ngoc and Thanh (2023), and Thuong and Tham (2023), which stated that Vietnamese students had positive attitudes when using technology for their studies.

Table 4

Students' viewpoint on the effectiveness of the ChatterKid app

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The ChatterKid app improves your English grammar.	45	4.33	0.71
The ChatterKid app improves your English vocabulary.	45	4.11	0.68
The ChatterKid app develops your English pronunciation.	45	3.93	0.72
The ChatterKid app increases your English fluency.	45	4.42	0.58
The ChatterKid app enhances your English discourse management.	45	4.02	0.72

Table 4 was about the students' perceptions of the effectiveness of the ChatterKid app. Students agreed that their English grammar had improved when using ChatterKid ($M=4.33$, $SD=0.71$). Students had similar attitudes about the effectiveness of this app on their vocabulary ($M=4.11$, $SD=0.68$). Students perceived that ChatterKid increased their English vocabulary with $M=3.93$, $SD=0.72$. The items with $M=4.42$ and $SD=0.58$ implied that students demonstrated an agreement that ChatterKid developed students' English fluency. Discourse management was also believed to be enhanced ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.72$). These findings align with the statement of Luu et al. (2021) and Duong and Suppasetsee (2024), which exhibited that the employment of technology in English classes helped develop students' speaking skills.

The questionnaire's findings indicated students' positive attitudes towards using the ChatterKid app to study English-speaking skills. These attitudes could be understood by the fact that with ChatterKid, students can make videos from their self-taken photos and make these photos unique with various decoration lists, which brings enjoyment to their studying process. In addition, this app allows students to speak in their own environment, easing anxiety when speaking in front of classmates and teachers.

Conclusion

To evaluate the influence of ChatterKid on the English-speaking performance of first-year students who are studying at Thai Nguyen University of Education and exploring students' attitudes towards the use of ChatterKid in English-speaking classes, the researcher conducted a 12-week study to seek answers to the questions raised at the beginning of the study. Considering the first research question, the results indicated that students' speaking performance significantly increased when comparing the test outputs of the Control group ($M=2.83$) and the Experimental group ($M=3.21$). In addition, the findings revealed fluency was the skill that had considerable development compared to other investigated skills, with the M of the Control group = 2.87 and the Experimental group = 3.89. In relation to the second research question, the students who used the ChatterKid app to learn English-speaking skills had positive attitudes towards the use of this app. The students had a high level of interest (all investigated aspects > 4.0), and the rate of effectiveness of this app in increasing their grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, fluency, and discourse management was significantly high (M ranging from 3.9 to 4.4). The results indicated that ChatterKid should be used as an English-speaking learning tool to help students improve their speaking performance with enjoyment and comfort.

The researcher realizes that certain limitations of this study should be mentioned to improve future studies. Firstly, the number of sample subjects in the study was small, which did not allow the researcher to analyze the influence of ChatterKid on a larger scale. Secondly, the topics that students practiced in this study were limited to the B1 level, possibly preventing them from expanding their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and discourse management. Hence, other researchers should conduct studies on a larger scale and on more varied speaking topics. Thirdly, more aspects, such as motivation and autonomy, should be investigated when using technology-based learning tools to study English. Lastly, studies that suggest more ways of applying technology to teaching English should be conducted in the future.

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Biodata

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Students' Perceptions of the Pros and Cons of Theme-based Instruction in English Classes

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Theme-based learning, Pros and Cons, English classes, Vietnamese students.

Researchers have investigated theme-based instruction to guarantee the efficacy of language acquisition and disciplinary content in the modern educational setting. In light of this, this study aimed to examine social science students' perceptions of both the pros and cons of theme-based instruction in their English classes. To address the research issues, I used a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, such as questionnaires and interviews with 100 social science students at Vietnam National University regarding the use of theme-based learning in the classroom. According to research findings, students' attitudes towards this approach in the course were positive in relation to three key areas: disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences, language acquisition abilities, and learning attitude. Additionally, the research revealed some main challenges students faced when theme-based instruction was implemented in language classrooms, particularly the lack of social science knowledge and the habit of using the mother tongue during class. I hope these findings will serve as the foundation for strategies that best support social science students' English language learning.

Introduction

Given the current globalization trend, English instruction needs to be strategic in the context of integration. While disciplinary-oriented English teaching is regarded as an essential component of general English instruction, it must be communication-focused to support a particular major or career. The audience for disciplinary-oriented English is broad and includes people from all scientific fields, including engineering technology, social sciences, economics, finance, and so on. In modern education, researchers use content-based instruction to guarantee the efficacy of language acquisition and disciplinary content. The term “content” has many different definitions. According to Crandall and Kaufman (2002), it was defined as an “academic subject”. However, Chaput (1993) and Genesee (1994) broadened their definitions. This term does not need to be academic; it can cover any subject that advances

students' knowledge of the language in general and the target language in particular, including non-linguistic topics of interest to the learner (Chaput, 1993; Genesee, 1994).

Among the three models of content-based instruction, the model proposed for this study is theme-based instruction. Theme-based teaching is one of the modern teaching trends, and it is being used in several Asian and global countries with encouraging outcomes (Le, 2021). As themes organize the material, it is easier to learn and remember. The information is coherent and meaningful, and it relates to the learner's motivation and interest and the learner's ability to develop expertise in a subject through a series of complex tasks (Rivers, 1992). According to Brinton et al. (2003), students would become proficient in writing skills, vocabulary, grammar, paragraph structure, communication skills, and writing styles (Kavaliauskiene, 2004; Shang, 2006).

At Vietnam National University (VNU), teaching majors in English is given particular emphasis because it is the key to helping students not only have solid disciplinary knowledge but also meet the requirements of using English according to international standards when they enter a professional and competitive working environment in the future. Therefore, disciplinary topics from the basic English teaching levels have been included in the English curriculum. For students of different social science majors at VNU, orienting and helping them become familiar with topics in the social science major right from the time they learn Basic English is extremely urgent. That can help students have a starting foundation when studying disciplinary subjects in humanities and society in the following years of university. This is the fact that inspired me to conduct this research to evaluate the pros and cons of applying theme-based instruction in English classes for social science students.

Literature review

The Concepts of Theme-based Instruction

Theme-based instruction is one type of content-based instruction (CBI) that “focuses on specific themes of interest and relevance to the learners” (Brinton & Snow, 2017, p. 5; Snow & Brinton, 2019, p. 8). Theme-based instruction is seen as a language-driven model of CBI, taught by a language teacher while covering concepts pertinent to the content class (Brown & Bradford, 2017; Lyster, 2018). Other CBI models include the sheltered model and the adjunct model.

The thematic teaching model integrates topical content into the teaching of language skills. The goal is to use disciplinary content materials to improve students' language skills and proficiency (Brinton et al., 2003). In addition, the theme-based teaching model also stands out because language teachers can completely implement it and does not require collaboration between language teachers and disciplinary experts. This model is self-sustaining, flexible, economical, and convenient to build. It can be easily implemented in most standalone programs without making fundamental changes in the program. The special attention to learners' linguistic needs in the theme-based model has the advantage of engaging learners in the same learning group, but with differences in their language proficiency (Cummins, 1992), a common phenomenon in college-level classes (Davies, 2003; Heo, 2006).

This technique is also regarded as a useful strategy that integrates four language abilities to improve the total second language abilities (Brown & Lee, 2015). Webb and Nation (2017) contended that CBI's skill integration can aid second language learners in speeding up their acquisition of incidental vocabulary. Similarly, according to Nation and Macalister (2020), theme-based instruction can also give students several chances to integrate more than one language skill in order to enhance their writing skills. Besides, Snow and Brinton (2019) noted that theme-based instruction is one of the most popular CBI models implemented in tertiary educational settings and can be applied at any level of setting proficiency. Therefore, theme-based teaching is truly the core of content-based teaching. It can be applied to a variety of teaching contexts based on disciplinary content, allows teachers and curricula to control disciplinary content, and can be incorporated into an integrated curriculum with certain add-on programs.

Review of Studies on the Application of Theme-based Instruction in International Setting

In the world, theme-based instruction is a topic that attracts the attention of many scholars. According to Velásquez-Hoyos (2021), theme-based instruction could enable students to increase oral fluency in terms of vocabulary, intonation, and fewer prolonged pauses when speaking English. Besides, the development of students' reading comprehension is also influenced by the use of theme-based language teaching in reading instruction (Wadi et al., 2021). Peng (2022) claimed that students' enthusiasm to study and their ability to read in English both improved with theme-based education. The study also showed that Chinese students could become proficient listeners of English if they get theme-based education, well-designed content, and productive practice (Peng, 2022). Besides, the results of Shibata's (2022) study demonstrated that theme-based instruction significantly improved the lexical diversity in their cause-and-effect essays. With the use of this pedagogy, the participants had numerous chances to obtain materials to enhance their writing skills and develop their understanding of the assigned issues, as well as socio-cultural scaffolding from the teacher-researcher and their peers (Shibata, 2022). Sharing the same opinions, Pan (2022) stated that teaching and learning benefited from the incorporation of a blended teaching style and a theme-based approach in medical English language instruction. By employing phrases in created medical settings and repeating them, students can become proficient in medical terminology related to particular subjects (Pan, 2022). Besides, Wang and Shen (2023) showed the effectiveness of theme-based teaching in English language education.

As regards social science discipline, theme-based instruction has many advantages. Over time, theme-based instruction facilitates students' ability to draw connections between related topics. Because they perceive these themes in isolation from one another, students frequently find it difficult to see the links between historical issues and occurrences. By assisting students in understanding the connections between historical and modern characters and events, thematic teaching helps to solve this challenge (Sheffield et al., 2022). Besides, according to Dilek (2007), thematic instruction is supposed to enhance students' psychomotor, emotional, and cognitive abilities. This method assumes that even though students lack some skills in these areas, they can demonstrate an interest in the subject and apply some particular skills to learn social studies (Dilek, 2007). From these studies, it can be seen that theme-based

instruction is relevant to the social science discipline.

Besides some advantages, a few authors mentioned some drawbacks of theme-based learning. Noviyanti (2022) reported three main disadvantages of theme-based instruction in aspects of teachers, students, and learning facilities and resources. Specifically, teachers' qualities include having a broad intellect, a strong sense of integrity and self-worth, and the courage to package and develop concepts. In terms of the students themselves, the theme learning approach stresses analytical, associative, exploratory, and elaborative skills; therefore, it calls for quite strong learning capacities from the students in both academic and creative domains. In terms of learning resources and facilities, reading a wide range of materials and information sources is necessary for thematic learning, maybe including online resources.

Review of Studies on the Application of Theme-based Instruction in Vietnam

In Vietnam, the application of theme-based instruction has received moderate attention from authors. Tran and Nguyen (2018) investigated the effectiveness of theme-based teaching approaches to physics subjects. The findings showed that through theme-based learning, students could apply their experience, knowledge, and abilities from a variety of subject areas to address real-world issues. Besides, the study of Nguyen (2019) presented the method of building a cross-curricular integrated theme to teach some natural sciences subjects to secondary school students. The results demonstrated how theme-based learning fosters the development of students' practical problem-solving abilities through the integration of information, expertise, and skills from numerous disciplines (Nguyen, 2019). In addition, Le (2021) proposed a five-step process using a variety of techniques to create a biology theme for secondary science education. The theme appears to be reasonably suited for secondary school students, according to the results of the pedagogical experiment. Moreover, Le's (2021) study aims to outline lecturers' perspectives on the use of content-based instruction in teaching legal English. The results demonstrated how the implementation of the theme-based approach aided in students' growth in legal English. Students got the chance to study and practice the target language in a setting where subject-matter expertise facilitated language acquisition (Le, 2021).

Research Gap and Research Questions

As we can see from the literature review, although theme-based instruction is a topic of interest for many foreign scholars, most research only highlighted the advantages of using theme-based teaching in the classroom. The difficulties were hardly mentioned. In addition, in Vietnam, it can be seen that in recent years, scholars have also conducted research on applying a theme-based model to teaching specific subjects. The literature review, however, reveals that the majority of Vietnamese researchers concentrated on studying subjects taught in schools; little research was done on theme-based instruction at the tertiary level. More importantly, although it has been proved that theme-based instruction can be relevant to social science students, few studies in the world have investigated the application of theme-based instruction in the field of social science. Especially in Vietnam, the studies were only related to subjects in the natural science discipline. Therefore, this study was implemented to examine the benefits and drawbacks of theme-based instruction in English classes, accounting

for social science students' challenges while applying this method in EFL classes. The following two research questions can help attain these goals:

1. What benefits did applying the theme-based instruction in English classes bring to social science students?
2. What difficulties did applying the theme-based instruction in English classes cause social science students to encounter?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to choose participants. The study included 100 students majoring in social sciences at VNU, to whom I was assigned as an English teacher at the beginning of the semester. These students come from 4 Basic English classes for social science majors, each of which has 25 students). I chose these groups of students because I was the English teacher directly teaching them, so collecting data and conducting interviews later became more convenient. Furthermore, these four selected classes include quite a diverse range of students from different social science majors, such as history, psychology, tourism, and socialization. These are also the topics that the Basic English program is designed to cover. Therefore, due to the relevance of disciplinary knowledge, the opinions from these student groups can be highly representative of drawing generalizable conclusions. This group of students has an entry level of A2 (equivalent to level 2) according to the 6-level foreign language competency framework for Vietnam and aims to achieve the output standard B1 (equivalent to level 3). Every participant is a citizen of Vietnam and ranged in age from 18 to 22.

The purpose of the English program for social science students is to assist them in developing their four core skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing - as well as their vocabulary and understanding of subjects related to the social sciences. This course can be regarded as the foundation for students to learn disciplinary English in the following years at university. Therefore, each week, students learned skills with content related to social sciences such as psychology, socialization, communication and media, education, culture, tourism, and so on. Besides practicing four language skills, students also practiced translating texts related to social science topics to increase their knowledge and vocabulary.

Data collection & analysis

To meet the objectives of the research, I combined quantitative and qualitative research methods.

First, since the questionnaire is the primary and most popular means of gathering quantitative data, it was utilized as the major tool to collect accurate and valid data (Taherdoost, 2022). I used the theoretical framework of benefits and drawbacks of theme-based instruction from the studies covered in the literature review to create the questionnaire. To ensure clarity and prevent bias, I also followed Harlacher's (2016) recommendations for designing the questions, including five steps: 1) determining the goals of the questionnaire; 2) defining the information

to address the goals; 3) writing the questions; 4) reviewing and revising the questionnaire; 5) organizing and formatting the questionnaire. Part 1 of the questionnaire includes 12 statements about the benefits of theme-based instruction. These benefits are divided into three key areas: disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences, language acquisition abilities, and learning attitudes. A 5-point Likert scale (totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, totally agree) was adopted to reveal participants' attitudes and behaviors. Participants only had to choose the number closest to their opinion; therefore, even those who were not enthusiastic could feel comfortable answering all the questions. Part 2, which is in a tick-box format, consisted of some main disadvantages of theme-based instruction. I proposed some main drawbacks of theme-based instruction for students to choose from (multiple answers can be selected) to investigate which aspects of theme-based instruction students found the most challenging.

Second, I used the interview method to clarify the information obtained from the questionnaire, thereby providing more accurate and reliable data for the research. Since interviews are one of the most promising methods for gathering qualitative data, they were employed as a research instrument in conjunction with the questionnaire to further examine the phenomenon (Taherdoost, 2022). The interview questions were designed to closely follow the content of the two research questions and unclear issues from the information obtained from the survey. I recorded the interview content, grouped the information according to issues, and coded it by students' names for convenient citation in the article.

The acquired data was processed using both statistical and interpretative methods. Initially, the results from the two instruments (questionnaires and interviews) were discussed using interpretive methods. The data obtained from the survey is presented through mean scores along with standard deviation to see the contribution of data around the mean value. To gain a deeper understanding of the gathered data, I contrasted and compared the responses from the interviews in each group. To provide further context, I also displayed my notes of the participants' interview responses as quotes. Secondly, the information was compiled and shown using tables and charts. After that, discussions were made concerning the previous studies covered in the literature review part.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: What benefits did applying theme-based instruction in English classes bring to social science students?

To investigate the benefits of theme-based instruction, a questionnaire was used, combined with students' opinions from interviews. The results obtained from part 1 of the questionnaire are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

Benefits of Theme-based Instruction

Benefits related to disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences	Mean	Standard Deviation
1. Learners acquire a comprehension of modern society and culture.	3.75	0.53
2. Learners master disciplinary vocabulary through themes.	4.15	0.50
3. Learners learn disciplinary contents in English	3.60	0.69
4. Learners improve writing skills on disciplinary themes.	3.95	0.51
Benefits related to language acquisition abilities		
5. Learners enhance writing skills in academic English.	4.22	0.73
6. Learners develop English reading and translation ability.	4.35	0.56
7. Learners gain knowledge and ideas for speaking and listening.	4.06	0.63
8. Learners advance structures with theme-based materials.	4.25	0.44
Benefits related to learning attitudes		
9. Learners become confident when reading articles on related subjects.	4.28	0.57
10. Learners feel interested and motivated by diverse themes.	3.90	0.61
11. Learners find reading and listening to English materials by topic easier.	4.11	0.65
12. Learners increase autonomy in researching disciplinary topics.	4.20	0.55

The mean scores in Table 1 vary from 3.60 to 4.35, indicating that students are generally positive about the advantages of theme-based learning. Additionally, every factor showed a low standard deviation ($SD < 0.8$), indicating that the data were narrowly dispersed around the mean.

First, in terms of benefits related to disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences, the two highest benefits in this group belong to mastery of disciplinary vocabulary, as well as improving the ability to write about disciplinary topics ($M = 4.15$ & 3.95). This demonstrates that students had several opportunities to enhance their disciplinary vocabulary when learning English on subjects related to their major. This would help them build their translation and writing skills on related subjects. Students also confirmed these benefits again during the interview. One student said, *“I feel that this English course helps me learn more vocabulary related to social sciences in general. This will be a very good foundation for my major later”* (S1). Another student shared the same idea, *“I feel more confident when writing about specialized topics in English. My ideas and vocabulary are improved through translated readings”* (S2). This finding was aligned with that of Shibata's (2022) study, which revealed that theme-based education led to a considerable improvement in the lexical diversity of the students' cause-and-effect essays. Similarly, Pan (2022) also reported that theme-based instruction enabled students to become proficient in medical terminology related to specific themes. Besides, in agreement, the findings of Nguyen (2022) and Vo et al. (2023) also show that subject-language integration has become increasingly popular in higher education over the past few decades. This approach helps students gain both disciplinary knowledge and language proficiency, and these educational resources can also potentially enhance teaching methods (Kalolo, 2019; Nguyen, 2021; Zhao & Boonyaparakob, 2022).

Second, as regards benefits related to language acquisition abilities, it can be seen that this benefit group has very high mean scores and is quite uniform across aspects (M= 4.06-4.35). The results showed that nearly all students participating in the study agreed that learning English on disciplinary themes is an effective way for them to improve their English skills. It has been shown that students' reading, translation, and grammatical skills can be particularly enhanced by studying English on specialist themes (M= 4.35 & 4.25). Some students shared:

I had a really hard time reading and translating English materials before I started studying English for Social Sciences. However, the program taught me how to read long documents and acquainted me with translated sentences ranging from simple to complicated. (S3)

Even though I studied grammar in high school, I found it rarely applied. When learning English by themes, students can read and understand complex sentence patterns in English, and their grammar knowledge can be improved. I find it very interesting. (S4)

This finding was reported by Wadi et al. (2021), who claimed that theme-based language teaching in reading instruction has an impact on students' growth of reading comprehension. Besides, Wang and Shen (2023) demonstrated theme-based instruction's efficacy in teaching English as a second language, especially in reading and translation. Besides reading, translation, and grammar skills, most of the students also appreciated the role of theme-based teaching in improving speaking expressions and listening comprehension. One student said, *"When studying topics specialized in social sciences, I feel expanded in related knowledge and vocabulary, from which I feel I can talk about more topics related to my major"* (S5). Similarly, Peng's (2022) research demonstrated that Chinese students could also improve their English listening comprehension if they get theme-based instruction.

Third, concerning benefits related to learning attitudes, since this approach gave them greater motivation, enthusiasm, and initiative to study subjects related to their major, students had a highly positive attitude toward theme-based learning. Students acknowledged that theme-based learning made listening and reading disciplinary topics simpler (M= 4.11), and they believed it would help them feel more confident when reading articles on themes that are comparable to those in the curriculum (M= 4.28). This finding was consistent with the study of Velásquez-Hoyos (2021), which asserted that theme-based training might boost students' confidence. However, the difference is that Velásquez-Hoyos (2021) emphasized that students' confidence increased when they became orally fluent in their use of vocabulary, intonation, and short bursts of speech in English, not in reading and listening. In the next two benefits in this group, students were inspired to learn more because they believed the translated texts chosen for the program were highly engaging. Besides, these motivations also helped students improve their learning autonomy in researching disciplinary topics. One student shared, *"I feel very excited when reading documents related to social sciences topics. It helps me expand my general knowledge about the area I am pursuing"* (S6). As mentioned in the study of Vo et al. (2023), students' motivation and involvement are important factors in their learning process. Students must meet the dual objectives of gaining language proficiency and subject knowledge within a theme-based learning and teaching framework.

From these findings above, it is clear that students had a very positive attitude towards theme-based instruction. However, they cannot avoid difficulties when combining learning English skills with topics related to social science majors. Some typical difficulties that students encountered were presented in the next section.

Research Question 2: What difficulties did applying theme-based instruction in English classes cause social science students to encounter?

Some of the difficulties in part 2 of the questionnaire are presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Drawbacks of Theme-based Instruction

Statements	Percent
1. Learners lack disciplinary knowledge in social sciences.	87%
2. Learners find reading a wide range of reading materials and sources hard.	85%
3. Learners still regularly use their mother tongue during English lessons.	83%
4. Learners lack knowledge in using four basic skills in English.	34%
5. Learners have difficulty understanding English syntax.	25%
6. Learners only focus on passing the final exam.	6%
7. Learners feel unsatisfied with teachers' quality in theme-based instruction.	0%

As can be seen from Table 2, students' lack of disciplinary expertise in the social sciences is the primary challenge that received the majority of their agreement (87%). This leads to the fact that students will not have many ideas or vocabulary to be able to express in English skills. One student explained, "*At the time of studying this English course, my knowledge of social sciences is still limited. Therefore, when I have to talk or write about these topics, I find it quite difficult to use vocabulary and develop ideas*" (S7). Besides, 85% of students agreed that reading from a variety of sources and materials can be challenging for learners. This result was reported in the study of Noviyanti (2022). For thematic learning, students must read various reading materials and information sources, which can be challenging for them (Noviyanti, 2022). Another challenge that also received the majority of students' agreement comes from the fact that students still had to regularly use Vietnamese during class (80%). During the interview phase, I became aware of this difficulty and discovered that there are numerous contributing factors. One student shared, "*The majority of social science and humanities majors take the university entrance exam without English subject*" (S8). Therefore, they likely did not spend much time studying English in high school. As a result, the majority of students lack confidence when it comes to expressing themselves in English in classes. However, according to some researchers (García & Wei, 2014; Zhou & Mann, 2021; Nguyen, 2022), due to the difficulties with those programs, such as being seen as monolingual bias and being a barrier for students who are not fluent in English, using the mother tongue has emerged as a solution to using English as the medium of instruction for non-native English learners. This is also a suggestion for teachers to consider choosing the most appropriate strategy in integrated disciplinary content classes.

Not many students had difficulty handling challenges related to the four basic English skills

as well as parts related to English grammar (ranging from 30%-35%). This finding is confirmed by Le (2021), who claimed that theme-based instruction gives students the opportunity to learn and practice the target language in an environment where disciplinary knowledge promotes language acquisition. In the interview, one student shared more about this: *"I feel that the level of the four skills is quite suitable for us, so we do not find it difficult to acquire the skills during class"* (S9). Another student said, *"I find that translated readings often use complex English vocabulary and sentence structures. I have also learned these structures before at high school. Even though I don't use them much, I still remember the knowledge"* (S10). Similarly, Kavaliauskiene (2004) and Shang (2006) stated that through theme-based learning, students would master vocabulary and grammar structures. This confirms that language and grammar skills are not an obstacle for students when they apply theme-based instruction in learning.

A minor obstacle that accounts for 6% of the problem is that students only concentrated on completing the final exam. I also learned about this challenge through the interview, and students shared, *"Sometimes, I only focus on getting points in the exam and therefore pay little attention to using English"* (S11). It can be seen that some students were only worried about scoring high on the exam, so the learning process was ignored. However, the number of these students is very small in the class. This is a positive result because, besides the goal of achieving good results in the final exam, most students were interested in the learning process to improve both their English skills and disciplinary knowledge of social sciences. Furthermore, no student expressed dissatisfaction with the teachers' theme-based instruction quality. This outcome differs significantly from Noviyanti's (2022) findings, which listed the qualities of the teacher as one of the three primary drawbacks of theme-based instruction. For educators, this will serve as both a motivator and a benefit in determining the best teaching strategies for successful student learning.

Conclusion

This study investigated students' perceptions regarding the benefits and drawbacks of theme-based instruction in English classes for social science students. I used survey questions and interviews to blend quantitative and qualitative research approaches to accomplish this objective.

The results have demonstrated the necessity and feasibility of applying theme-based teaching in language classes for social science students with three main benefits: disciplinary knowledge in the social sciences, language acquisition abilities, and learning attitudes. Among them, the greatest benefits are the development of English reading and translation ability and confidence enhancement in dealing with materials on related subjects. Besides the advantages, there are inevitable difficulties because students do not yet possess the necessary specialist knowledge or proficiency in the target language. Despite these challenges, it is evident that theme-based language teaching related to the social sciences creates a platform for teachers to integrate language teaching and general disciplinary content. At the same time, it allows learners to acquire disciplinary content and language skills at a higher level. Such an

approach can enhance learners' language learning motivation, maximize higher-level language input, and allow students to gain exposure to the target language related to future careers.

Simply put, teaching social science students English is a huge challenge. Teachers need to be aware of the issues that students face and make an effort to address them with practical solutions. Because just 100 students from the classes I taught participated in the study, I believe it to be fairly small in scope. As a result, it is impossible to extrapolate what is noted here to the whole student population. Therefore, if I get the chance to study further research on the application of theme-based teaching in language classes for social science students, I need to conduct more research with a larger number of students to prove the efficacy of this approach and further investigate its potential in EFL teaching and learning.

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Biodata


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A Study of Vietnamese Slang Used by Students in Daily Conversations

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: slang;
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Slang is unofficial language and is typically used by specific social groups in casual situations. The young generation widely uses slang, but it may cause a struggle for many people. Therefore, studies on slang may be useful for linguists who want to discover new language trends and non-linguists who want to better understand the youth. This study investigates the use of Vietnamese slang among students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. It aims to identify the frequency of using slang in the students' daily conversations, the most common types of slang used, and factors that affect the students' use of slang. Data was collected through a survey questionnaire with a sample of 300 students. The findings reveal that students use slang in their daily lives. The study also came up with a list of the most commonly used slang of the participants and explored the ways these expressions are formed. The researcher aims to find out factors affecting the students' use of slang. On that basis, some suggestions relating to the use of slang have been made.

Introduction

Language varies from one social group to another social group, from one situation to another situation, and from one place to another place. Variation shows that every speaker does not always speak the same way. Language varieties indicate that the speakers are distinct from members of other groups (Finegan, 2008). The millennial generation commonly uses slang, and it has become an integral part of teenage communication. Finegan (2008) suggests that slang is particularly common among teenagers and college students in general. Due to this reason, research on the students' use of Vietnamese slang in daily conversations has received substantial interest. This study aimed to identify whether first-year students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi (VNU) use Vietnamese slang frequently in their daily conversations, what the most common types of slang they use, and what factors affect their use of slang.

Literature review

Definition of slang

The Oxford Dictionary defines slang as a type of language that is considered to be extremely casual, is more frequently used in speech than in writing, and is typically restricted to a particular setting or group of people. According to Rezeki & Sagala (2019), slang is an informal register of language (words, phrases, and usages) used by members of special groups such as teenagers, musicians, or criminals to establish group identity. Kastrati (2017) defines slang as the language of a specific community, such as a youth subculture that uses slang in rap music to sound unique and different. Coleman (2012) notes that slang is usually short-lived and often belongs to a specific age or social clique.

Classification of slang

Slang can be categorized in a variety of ways based on morphological, lexical, and semantic factors. Eble (1996) discusses several techniques for producing slang, such as compounding, affixation, functional shift, shortening, and mixing. Eble continues by saying that these word formation processes contribute to the constructive emergence of both slang and broad vocabulary. Slang uses existing words and their current meanings in a variety of ways, frequently combining resources from the sound system, word-building processes, paradigms, and the speaker's cultural knowledge. Adams (2009) categorizes slang based on their word forms: compound words, single words, noun + noun, verb + noun, etc. Coleman (2012) categorizes slang according to where the words came from acquired terms, native words, etc. Partridge (2017) categorizes slang according to the methods used to produce them: adding new meanings, incorporating other languages, generating new words, substituting one or more components of phrases, etc. Khodjayeva (2022) identifies six main lexical mechanisms for the formation of slang units: affixation, abbreviation, compounding, conversion, and reduplication.

In this study, we combine the ideas suggested by Coleman (2012) and Khodjayeva (2022) in order to categorize the most commonly used slang collected from the survey.

Previous studies on the use of slang

Several studies have been carried out around the world on the use of slang among students, mostly in English. Hasanah (2022) conducts a study of English slang words used by 8th-semester students in daily conversations through a social network at the English study program of FKIPUIR, Universitas Islam Riau. Muhartoyo & Wijaya (2014) study the use of English slang words in informal communication among 8th-semester students of the English Department at Binus University by exploring the reason for using English slang, how students acquire English slang, and what kind of slang they mostly use. Namvar (2014) uses a pilot test in the research to show the amount of familiarity with slang, particularly American slang, among Malaysian undergraduate students of a public university. Burdova (2009) conducts research on the slang vocabulary of Czech and American students.

In Vietnam, several studies have been conducted on the language of the youth in general and of students in particular. Ly (2022) had a study on the use of social networking language by students of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University. Andreeva

(2021) conducts research to analyze lexical and semantic features of the phraseological subsystem of Vietnamese youth. Chuyên et al. (2020) explore students' social networking language characteristics from the structure dimension (through some forums under the Facebook social network). Hằng (2020) writes about the chat language of the 9X generation on Facebook. Thuận (2013) studies linguistic and cultural characteristics of the chat language of the youth in her MA thesis. Investigation into the language use of university students has been a topic of interest for many researchers in the past few years, such as Nguyen et al. (2022) and Nguyen et al. (2024).

In general, most authors have researched the linguistic features of the language used by a specific group of youngsters. There has been little research on the use of slang among youngsters, specifically on how often they use slang, what slang words are commonly used, and what factors affect their use. Therefore, this study aims to fill the research gap and investigate the use of Vietnamese slang among first-year students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi.

Research questions

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

1. How often do first-year students at VNU use slang?
2. What are the most common types of slang used by first-year students at VNU?
3. What factors affect the students' use of slang?

Methods

Pedagogical setting & participants

This study seeks to explore the use of Vietnamese slang amongst first-year students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi. By examining their habit of using Vietnamese slang in daily conversations, our aim is to help adults and non-slang users understand the youth more easily and improve communication with them. The participants in this study include 300 first-year students, both male and female, coming from various regions nationwide and majoring in various undergraduate programs at Vietnam National University, Hanoi, such as the English language (45%), information technology (24%), finance (27%) and logistics (4%). The participants are between 18 and 20 years old.

Design of the study

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the habit of first-year students at VNU using Vietnamese slang. The researcher then makes a list of the most commonly used slang and analyzes them to identify their type and formation. The survey questionnaire is constructed with both multiple-choice questions and open-ended questions so that the participants can fill in their answers.

Data collection & analysis

The electronic delivery of survey questionnaires by Google Forms facilitated effective data collection from 300 students. We provided instructions in Vietnamese to ensure the uniformity and validity of the answers. The data was then analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the frequency, percentage, and list of slang words that are most commonly used.

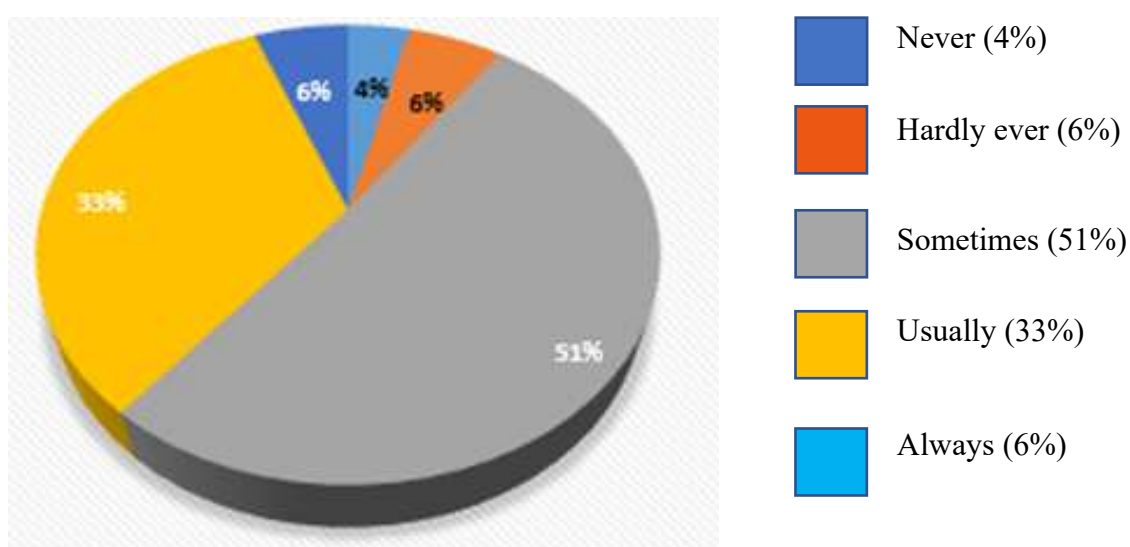
Results/Findings and discussion

The study reveals information about the habit of using slang in students' daily conversations, including how often they use slang, what slang words are commonly used, and what factors affect their use of slang.

The frequency of using slang among first-year students at VNU

Figure 1

Frequency of slang usage among students



As can be seen, the pie chart shows that more than half (51%) of participants sometimes use slang, while about one-third (33%) usually use Vietnamese slang in their daily lives. The minority of participants use “hardly” and “never” to describe their answers, and “always” accounts for the least (4%). It can be concluded that the majority of students use slang in their daily conversations, and the usage frequency is rather high. Kartina (2019) states, "Slang is a kind of code or secret language that some people or community group in society uses." In fact, slang is the language of GenZ - the generation of people born in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Oxford Dictionary) or the code of teenagers. Therefore, it is understandable why slang is so commonly used in students' daily conversations. This finding is in accordance with previous studies relating to the frequency of slang use among the younger generation.

The most commonly used types of slang

Having answered the question about the frequency of using slang, the respondents were asked

to list 3 to 5 slang words/phrases that they commonly use in their daily lives, together with examples of the slang used. After collecting the answers from all of the participants, the researchers came up with the list of 100 most commonly used slang among first-year VNU students, arranged in the order of frequency as follows.

Table 1

The most commonly used slang

1. <i>Sương sương</i>	26. <i>Fourk</i>	51. <i>Học ăn học nói học gói mang về</i>	76. <i>Bing Chilling</i>
2. <i>Vãi</i>	27. <i>Otp</i>	52. <i>Biết chết liền</i>	77. <i>Anti</i>
3. <i>Vãi chưởng</i>	28. <i>Cpink</i>	53. <i>Tém tém lại</i>	78. <i>Gato</i>
4. <i>Keo</i>	29. <i>No star where</i>	54. <i>Sang xịn mịn</i>	79. <i>Gấu</i>
5. <i>Mặn</i>	30. <i>Btw</i>	55. <i>Độc lạ Bình Dương</i>	80. <i>Ghê</i>
6. <i>Ét ô ét</i>	31. <i>Simp</i>	56. <i>Tám chiếu mới</i>	81. <i>Trầu</i>
7. <i>Xu cà na</i>	32. <i>Sorry</i>	57. <i>Cột sống</i>	82. <i>Chảnh</i>
8. <i>Gét gô</i>	33. <i>Drama</i>	58. <i>Chém gió</i>	83. <i>Áo</i>
9. <i>Xà lơ</i>	34. <i>Deadline</i>	59. <i>Cảm lạnh</i>	84. <i>Nóng</i>
10. <i>Nhức nách</i>	35. <i>Cute</i>	60. <i>Mi ngon</i>	85. <i>Hòny</i>
11. <i>Zì zậy trời</i>	36. <i>OMG</i>	61. <i>Ngon</i>	86. <i>Tâm hồn</i>
12. <i>Khum</i>	37. <i>Body samsung</i>	62. <i>Đào</i>	87. <i>Cháy</i>
13. <i>Ổ dề</i>	38. <i>Mai đệt ti ni</i>	63. <i>Hàng</i>	88. <i>Oách xà lách</i>
14. <i>Mlem mlem</i>	39. <i>Ơ mây zing</i>	64. <i>Luật hoa quả</i>	89. <i>Lít</i>
15. <i>Hong bé oi</i>	40. <i>Gút chóp</i>	65. <i>Quả táo nhãn lồng</i>	90. <i>Săn sale</i>
16. <i>Luật hoa quả</i>	41. <i>Đỉnh của chóp</i>	66. <i>Tỉnh tò</i>	91. <i>Nhây</i>
17. <i>Báo</i>	42. <i>Big c</i>	67. <i>Thả thính</i>	92. <i>Hơn nì</i>
18. <i>Cột sống</i>	43. <i>Trầm zn</i>	68. <i>Bồ kết</i>	93. <i>Trà xanh</i>
19. <i>Cảm lạnh</i>	44. <i>U là trời</i>	69. <i>Quẩy</i>	94. <i>Ao trình</i>
20. <i>Cái nịt</i>	45. <i>Toang rồi ông giáo ạ</i>	70. <i>Đu đưa</i>	95. <i>Chém gió</i>
21. <i>Xin lũi</i>	46. <i>Nước ngập lên não</i>	71. <i>Rụng trứng</i>	96. <i>Đội quần</i>
22. <i>Màu mờ</i>	47. <i>Lốp du chu cà mo</i>	72. <i>Mét</i>	97. <i>Cua</i>
23. <i>Fishu</i>	48. <i>Đã quá Pepsi oi</i>	73. <i>Ấm IC</i>	98. <i>Xì tin</i>
24. <i>Lémon</i>	49. <i>Chu pa pi mu nha nhỏ</i>	74. <i>Meme</i>	99. <i>Trong cái khó nó ló cái khăn</i>
25. <i>Thật chân</i>	50. <i>Chát</i>	51. <i>Anh hùng bàn ghế</i>	100. <i>Slay</i>

The list of most commonly used slang words is a key focus of this research, which not many previous studies could do. This can help non-slang users deepen their understanding of slang in

particular and the young generation in general.

Using the ideas suggested by Coleman (2012) and by Khodjayeva (2022), the slang in the list is classified under the three categories based on their formation: adding new meanings to original language units, using foreign languages, and creating new language units. In combination with the examples provided by the participants, the result of classification is as follows:

Table 2

Classification of the most commonly used slang

No.	Formation	Percent (%)	Slang	Example
1	Adding new meanings to original language units	61%	<i>swong swong, vãi, vãi chường, keo, mận, xu cà na, nhúc nách, xà lơ, ố dề, hong bé oi, luật hoa quả, báo, cột sống, cảm lạnh, cái nịt, màu mỡ...</i>	- Tối nay mặc swong swong thôi, đừng ố dề quá nha! - Ăn cơm khum ? - Mặc váy keo quá zậy !
2	Using foreign languages	22%	<i>fishu, lèmon, fourk, OTP, Cpink, No star where, btw, simp, sorry, drama, deadline, cute, OMG, body samsung, mai đệt ti ni, ơ mây zing gút chóp,...</i>	- Nhìn mặt thằng kia là biết lèmon rồi - OTP của tao mới ra phim mới đấy, xem không - OMG!! Biết drama gì chưa?
3	Creating new language units	17%	<i>BigC, trảm zn, u là trời, toang rồi ông giáo ạ, nước ngập lên não, lớp du chu cà mo, đã quá pepsi ơi, chu pa pi mu nha nhỏ, biết chết liền, tem tém lại nha, sang xịn mịn, độc lạ Bình Dương, tám chiếu mới...</i>	- Bài tập cuối kì làm tao trảm zn . - BigC thật đấy! - Mai nghỉ lễ rồi, đã quá pepsi ơi. - Quần áo tui sang xịn mịn phải biết.
	Total	100%		

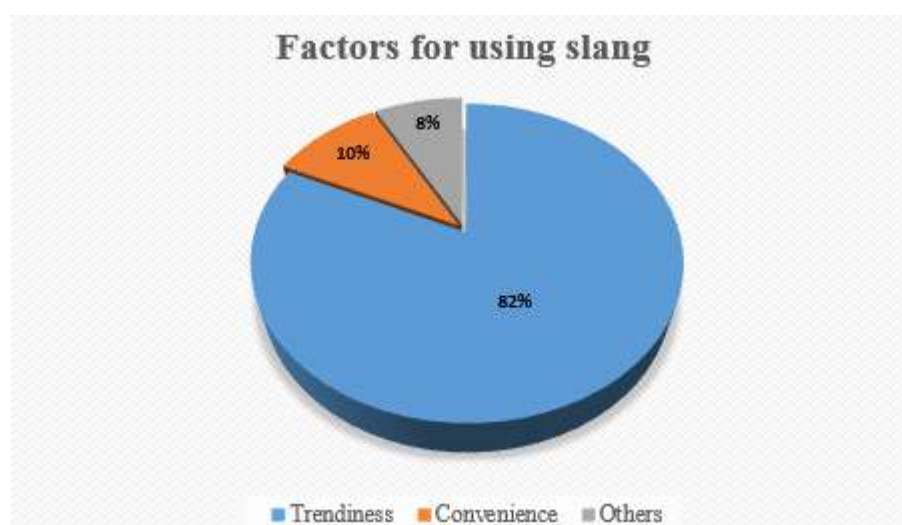
As can be seen from Table 2, slang, which is formed by adding new meanings to original language units, is the most popular type that VNU students are fond of, followed by using foreign languages and creating new language units. VNU students in the survey mostly use slang words with meanings different from their original meanings. This may cause miscommunication when these students talk to other people who do not understand the “hidden” meanings of the words. Their second choice is to use foreign languages, especially English, in their talks, sometimes with no change in form and meaning, sometimes with minor or major modifications that can show their own styles and characteristics. Current youngsters have formed a lot of slang by creating new language units from the known ones, and some students favour this trend. Outsiders may find this trend weird, but there are certain reasons for this, which will be explained in the following part.

Factors affecting the use of slang

To find out what factors affect the students' use of slang, participants were asked to write down their answers in a Google Form. The collected data is then summarized and illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2

Factors affecting the use of slang



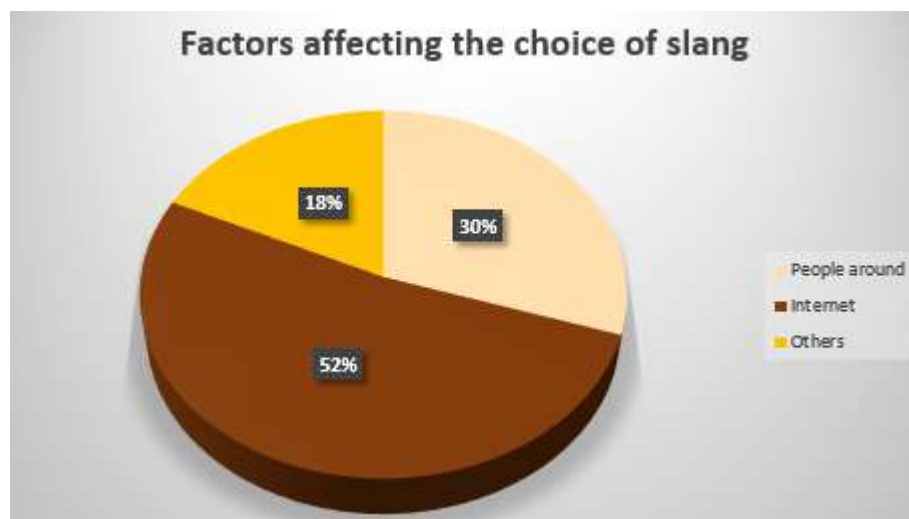
What can be concluded from Figure 2 is that the majority (82%) of participants use slang in their daily conversations because they want to be trendy. They want to be up-to-date with people around, as using specific slang for teenagers has become an increasingly popular trend nowadays. The number of slang words has increased notably, and those who do not use slang may be considered to be laid back. The other reasons for their use of slang include convenience (10%), possibly due to the popularity of slang; the students think they will not need to spend time expressing ideas if they use slang. Using slang may help them communicate both the message and the emotion in a convenient way. There are some other reasons for the students' use of slang, but they are not typical. For example, slang is funny and strange and makes them friendly.

The factors affecting the use of slang among the research participants are consistent with those

in previous studies, and trendiness is the key point.

Figure 3

Factors affecting the choice of slang



Another objective of this research is to explore the sources of slang that VNU first-year students use in their daily conversations, i.e., what factors affect the use of slang. The participants in the survey gave answers, as illustrated in Figure 3 above. The survey results reveal that more than half of (52%) participants use slang originating from the Internet, nearly a third (30%) use slang that they imitate from people around them, and 18% use slang from other sources. This result is completely understandable because the Internet has become increasingly popular in the current era of 4.0. The time span in which students are online is extremely long, and they may encounter slang without notice. Besides, slang used on the Internet is likely to be viral. That is the reason why the Internet is the most significant source of slang.

The factors affecting the choice of slang among the research participants are consistent with those in previous studies. However, in other research, television was mentioned as one source for students to acquire slang, but in this research, participants did not refer to television.

Conclusion

This study shows that first-year students at VNU frequently use slang in their daily conversations; the most common types of slang they use are formed by adding new meanings to original language units, using foreign languages, or creating new language units. The outstanding factor that makes them use slang so frequently in their daily lives is that slang is trendy, and they mostly use slang, which they learn from the Internet and people around them. The research also comes up with a list of the most commonly used slang words/phrases that are used by students in their daily conversations with the hope that individuals who do not have the habit of using slang may gain insight into the language of the youth nowadays.

However, the study has certain limitations, such as focusing on a specific educational institution, namely VNU, with students majoring in limited fields. Due to this reason, there

might be potential bias in the data. Moreover, simple data analysis by descriptive statistics mainly focuses on frequency and percentage. More complex analysis with more comparisons and more variants may provide deeper insights into students' use of slang. Overall, these limitations do not undermine the contribution of the findings. However, they highlight the need for more extensive research to fully understand the dynamics of slang used by contemporary students in particular and the youth in general.

Some recommendations can be made to improve the study, including choosing a wider range of participants from other institutions with various demographic features. Another way to further this research is to conduct a deeper and more comprehensive analysis by examining various slang categories used for various communication purposes in daily life.

The research helps to provide a comprehensive understanding of how students at Vietnam National University, Hanoi use slang. Nevertheless, additional research is required to transcend the mentioned limitations and make the research result more comprehensive.

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Biodata

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Postgraduate EFL Students' Use of Hedging Strategies in Academic Writing

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Hedging Strategies, Academic Writing, Discourse Analysis

In academic writing, hedging strategies help writers state uncertain scientific claims accurately, avoid personal responsibility and build better writer-reader relationships by addressing the need for deference and cooperation in gaining reader ratification. In Vietnam, little research investigates the hedging strategies employed by postgraduate students in academic writing. Therefore, the present study aims to investigate Vietnamese postgraduate students' use of hedging strategies in academic writing. The data were extracted from 30 written assignments in an academic writing course within a Master's program. The hedging strategies were analyzed and compared based on frequency, distribution, variety, and contextual use, employing Hyland's definition and taxonomy of hedging strategies. The findings revealed that postgraduate EFL students rely heavily on modal verbs, while nouns are the least favored. The findings suggest a need for further instructions and practice assignments on the use of hedging strategies in academic writing.

Introduction

“Academic writing is an important tool for academic learning and disciplinary practices” (Fang, 2021, p. 8). Proficiency in academic writing gives academics and students agency, power, and capital for disciplinary practices, knowledge construction, identity creation, social positioning, and professional advancement. As a result, academic achievement necessitates the ability to write academically. However, it has always seemed challenging for researchers to communicate in academic contexts, particularly in the written mode. One of the challenges commonly encountered is that researchers need to differentiate factual propositions that the discourse community has already accepted from claims awaiting evaluation by the community (Hyland, 2004).

Numerous studies and a body of literature have suggested that researchers consider several aspects of academic writing, from formal tone and academic language to discourse markers like

hedges and cohesive devices. Among those components, hedges have been considered crucial devices that assist authors in expressing their viewpoints in an academic discipline. Hyland (1998) asserts that scholars can integrate their assertions and argumentation when they use hedges in their writing. Additionally, hedges help the writers to withhold their commitment, present claims with precision, provide the readers with respect and acknowledgment, and refrain from unwarranted arrogance (Hyland, 1996). To put it another way, hedges allow researchers to present their viewpoint while also using probability and certainty to support it (Lakoff, 1972).

As part of academic curricula, postgraduate students usually get engaged in various types of academic writing, one of which is a research proposal - “a formal written plan which communicates ideas about a proposed study in order to obtain approval to conduct the study or to seek funding” (Onwuegbuzie, 1997, p. 5). It is an important stage in the creation of a research project since the quality of the initial proposal has a major impact on the task's success (Baker & Foy, 2008). However, little attention has been devoted to this essential first stage of a study (Baker, 2000a).

A multitude of empirical studies have also been conducted to discover various aspects of hedging strategies and practices in academic writing. In general, these studies appear to place a strong focus on identifying the types, frequency, and distribution of hedging strategies by analyzing a corpus of research articles (Demir, 2018; Hyland, 1998; Hyland, 2004; Hyland, 2005) or student essays (Hinkel, 1997), or comparing the use of hedging strategies between native and non-native English-speaking writers (Chen, 2012; Demir, 2018; Hinkel, 1997; Martinez, 2005; Tran & Tang, 2022), or the use of hedging strategies of writers from different disciplines (Hyland, 2004; Hyland, 2005; Vazquez & Giner, 2008). In the context of Vietnam, several studies have been carried out to investigate undergraduate students' use of hedging strategies in research articles (Trang & Tang, 2022; Nguyen, 2010; Pham, 2020) or to compare the use of such strategies between L1 and L2 learners (Nguyen, 2018). As previously mentioned, hedging strategies play a critical role in postgraduate students' success in academic writing. However, from this body of literature, there seems to be a lack of empirical evidence about how postgraduate EFL students make use of these strategies, particularly when they write their research proposals. To get this overall picture of the current situation, the current study is designed to investigate postgraduate EFL students' use of hedging strategies in their research proposals.

Literature review

Definition of academic writing

Fang (2021) defined academic writing as writing for academic purposes. In other words, academic writing is a means of producing, modifying, transmitting, evaluating, renovating, teaching, and learning knowledge and ideology in academic disciplines. Thus, this genre of writing is constructed in a different way from writing for everyday social interactions. Particularly, academic writing involves expressing your ideas that need to be "carefully elaborated, well supported, logically sequenced, rigorously reasoned, and tightly woven

together" (Fang, 2021, p. 4).

Definition of hedging strategies

The term "hedge" was first introduced by Lakoff (1972, p. 471) as words or phrases "whose job is to make things fuzzy or less fuzzy," suggesting that authors are not entirely devoted to the veracity of the references they include in their works. Later, Hyland (1996) defines hedging as "the expression of tentativeness in language use that represents an absence of certainty in describing any linguistic item or strategy employed to indicate either a lack of commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition or a desire not to express that commitment categorically" (p. 433). Similarly, according to Crompton (1997), a hedge is a linguistic device that a speaker employs to clearly indicate that they are not certain that a proposition they are making is true. Consequently, the writer can express messages that indicate detachment from categorical pronouncements by using phrases that can be examined as hedges. It can be seen that different researchers vary in defining the term. However, this paper employs Hyland's definition (1996), in which hedging will be treated as an expression of tentativeness and possibility in claim-making since it seems to cover the majority of characteristics of academic writing,

Taxonomy of hedging strategies

Different taxonomies (e.g., Crompton, 1997; Hyland, 1996, 1998; Salager-Meyer, 1994) have been employed to categorize hedging. For instance, by conducting a contextual analysis of written English discourse, Salager-Meyer (1994) developed a formal-functional taxonomy of hedging. In his taxonomy, hedging is categorized into five different categories: "approximators" (e.g., often, somehow), "shields" (e.g., suggest, tend), "expressions of authors' personal doubt and direct involvement" (e.g., I think, to our understanding), "emotionally-charged intensifiers" (e.g., surprisingly, extremely challenging), and "compound hedges" (e.g., it can be indicated that it would be suggested that). However, this taxonomy has encountered certain criticism because of its overlapping within the defined categories of hedging devices (Chen & Zhang, Citation 2017). Hyland's (1998) and Crompton's (1997) form/structured-based hedge taxonomy seem to share several similarities. However, there is a little distinction: Hyland's taxonomy includes lexical and strategic-based hedges but is limited to a selection of "items of language," or lexical items in Crompton's taxonomy. However, this study used Hyland's (1996, 1998) categorization, concentrating on lexical hedges since lexical hedges are the main hedging strategies used by authors in the academic community (Hyland, 1994) and appear to be accepted as hedges in the academic discourse community (Chen & Zhang, 2017; Varttala, 1999). Thus, modal verbs, lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns are the five main categories into which Hyland (1996, 1998) categorizes lexical hedges. Table 1 displays examples of lexical devices in each category.

Table 1.

Example of hedges, Hyland (1996, 1998)

No	Types of hedges	Examples
1	Modal verbs	can, cannot, may, might, could, etc.
2	Lexical verbs	show, suggest, indicate, appear, tend, seem, etc.
3	Adjectives	likely, possible, probable, etc.
4	Adverbs	most, almost, often, rather, etc.
5	Nouns	tendency, possibility, assumption, implication, etc.

Functions of hedging strategies

Hedging strategies play a multifaceted role in the realm of academic writing, such as demonstrating writers' politeness and respect (Brown & Levinson, 1987), maintaining writers' objectivity (Skelton, 1988), creating reader rapport (Myers, 1989), indicating the scope of claims (Salager-Meyer, 1994), or mitigating criticism (Crompton, 1997).

Hyland (1996) offers a more systematic view of hedging strategies in academic writing. Accordingly, hedging serves two main pragmatic purposes in academic writing: content-motivated and reader-motivated. The two subcategories of content-oriented hedges are writer-based hedges and accuracy-based hedges. Accuracy-based hedges are used to represent authors' claims more cautiously and accurately, especially in situations where interpretations could change (Hyland, 1996). The accuracy-based hedges distinguish facts from opinions and indicate that a proposition is founded on the writer's reasoning rather than being supported by solid evidence (Hyland, 1996). The employment of epistemic modal verbs, adverbs, and adjectives—all of which indicate the writer's limited knowledge—is canonically used to fulfill this type of purpose. Writer-based hedges also shield writers from accountability for their words and reduce the possible harm of making categorical commitments. Passive voice and existential subjects are often used to achieve this kind of function.

Reader-motivated hedges, on the other hand, "contribute to developing a relationship with readers by addressing the need for deference and cooperation in gaining the ratification of claims" (Hyland, 1996, p. 257). By understanding that readers can critically analyze and reach their own conclusions, these hedges indicate that claims are only provisional or tentative (Hyland, 1996). Hedges can serve this purpose by using deductive epistemic lexical verbs, such as personal attributions.

Research Questions

The current research aims at seeking to answer the following question:

What hedging strategies do postgraduate EFL students employ in academic writing?

What are the frequency of hedging strategies employed by postgraduate EFL students in their academic writing?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study involved 30 postgraduate students (15 males and 15 females) studying in a Master's Program in the field of Principles and Methodologies in Teaching English Language at a university in Can Tho City. The participants were selected randomly from different classes. All of the participants had already taken academic writing courses within the Master's Program. The data consisted of a corpus comprised of 30 research proposals as course assignments written by postgraduate EFL students during the Master's Program in the field of principles and methodologies in teaching the English language. The chosen research proposals were authored by postgraduate EFL students within the time frame of 2023–2024, because this enhances the possibility of illustrating current trends in the application of hedging strategies in academic writing.

Design of the Study

This study employed an exploratory descriptive-qualitative design that used a corpus-based approach. Reid-Searl and Happell (2012) suggest that employing a qualitative exploratory design enables researchers to delve into a subject with limited coverage in the existing literature. This approach also empowers study participants to contribute to the generation of novel insights in that particular domain. Therefore, this method was employed to look into the ways that postgraduate EFL students use hedging strategies in their academic writing in the current study.

Data collection & analysis

To collect the data, the researcher sent consent letters to the participants, asking them for their research proposals to be submitted to the researcher via email. In the consent letter, the participants were informed of the purposes of the study and how their research proposals were analyzed in terms of the use of hedging strategies. Furthermore, a research proposal possibly consists of the following sections: title, outline, introduction, literature review, definition of problem/ research questions and aims, methodology, and bibliography (Health & Tynan, 2010). Of all the sections of a research proposal, the “introduction” tends to withhold the fruitfulness of writers' arguments for the need of the proposed study. In other words, in this section, writers try to present the best arguments justifying the intended research and specifying why it is worth studying (Health & Tynan, 2010). On this basis, the current study focused mainly on the introduction section of students' research proposals.

This study examined the frequency of hedging strategies based on types using the concordance software Antconc (version 4.2.4), particularly the features that provide KWIC and File View.

We took several steps in analyzing the types of hedging strategies in this study. First, we identified hedged words based on the indicators provided by Hyland (1996). Then, we classified these hedged words in terms of their grammatical forms, as given by Hyland (1996). Those hedged words were then put in tables to show how they are distributed in percentages. By calculating the frequency of hedges, it would be easy to find out the tendencies of the subjects to use hedging strategies in writing academic texts.

Results/Findings and discussion

The overall distribution of hedging devices

Table 2.

The overall distribution of hedging devices

No	Types of hedges	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage
1	Modal verbs	200	9.62	53.76%
2	Lexical verbs	68	3.27	18.28%
3	Adjectives	51	2.40	13.71%
4	Adverbs	50	1.35	13.44%
5	Nouns	3	0.14	0.8%
	TOTAL	372	17.84	100%

The general distribution of hedging techniques found in the introduction section of research proposals authored by postgraduate EFL students is displayed in Table 2. Out of the 20,794 words that were analyzed, the raw frequency of hedging devices was 372, or 17.84 per 1,000 words. This figure is fairly high and consistent with the arguments made by Hyland (2004), Hyland and Jiang (2016), and Wang (2022) that hedging devices are more common in argumentatively driven subjects than in the hard sciences. For example, the frequency of hedging devices in research articles published in 2015 in the field of sociology was 14.87 per 1,000 words (Hyland & Jiang, 2016); in contrast, the number of hedging devices in scientific articles in the fields of psychology and sociology was approximately 16.07 and 12.61, respectively (Babaii et al., 2015).

Furthermore, it is evident that modal verbs—which appear 200 times—were the most commonly employed sort of hedging device, with "can" appearing the most frequently among all hedge types. Lexical verbs, with a frequency of 68 occurrences overall, were the second most frequently used hedging devices after modal verbs. Modal adjectives came in third with 51 occurrences, while nouns and adverb forms were used 50 and 3 times, respectively. This result is consistent with those of Wand and Tatiana (2016), Adrian and Fajri (2023), and others who also discovered that modal auxiliaries were the most widely utilized hedging devices. A thorough description of how each form of hedge is used is given in the sections that follow.

Modal auxiliary verbs as hedging devices

A summary of the modal verbs in the corpus that have been recognized as hedging devices is shown in Table 3. A total of 200 instances of modal auxiliary verbs were found in the analysis. "Can" was the most commonly used modal verb, appearing 100 times, or 50% of all the modal verbs that were detected. The modal verbs "will, may, should, must, might, could, would" were used after "can," with the exception of "will," which appeared 40 times.

Table 3.

Frequency of modal verbs as hedging devices

No	Hedging devices	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage (%)
1	Can	100	4.81	50
2	Will (not)	40	1.92	20
3	May (not)	18	0.87	9
4	Should (not)	11	0.52	5.5
5	Must (not)	9	0.43	4.5
6	Might (not)	8	0.38	4
7	Could (not)	7	0.34	3.5
8	Would	4	0.19	2
9	Cannot	3	0.14	1.5
	TOTAL	200	9.62	100%

The examination of the modal auxiliary verb "can" in the corpus of postgraduate EFL students is consistent with the results of Adrian and Fajri's (2023) study on the application of hedges by Indonesian writers in the soft science domain. Nonetheless, this finding contrasts with Abdollahzadeh (2019) and Demir (2018), who investigated how Turkish and Iranian writers employed hedges in applied linguistics and language education publications. They discovered, therefore, that native writers typically favor the modal word "may" as a hedging strategy, which is in line with other research (e.g., Hyland, 1998; Thuy, 2018). Furthermore, local writers frequently employ the modal verb "would" (Hyland, 1998; Thuy, 2018). However, in our study, the modal verb "would" comes in at number eight in the corpus of verbs. The disparity in hedging tactics employed by Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students and native authors could indicate cultural and linguistic disparities in their approaches to academic writing. According to the findings, writers who are native English speakers prefer to use the words may or would as a hedge to convey a degree of ambiguity and reduce the possibility of discrepancies with their audience (Thuy, 2018). Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students, on the other hand, seem to favor the modal verb "can," which could mean that they are more concerned with expressing the feasibility or capability of the occurrences or acts, thus demonstrating greater assurance.

The modal verbs were primarily employed in research proposals as accuracy-based hedges. Accuracy-based hedges indicate writers' intention to present their written work objectively and precisely. The use of this type of hedging strategy allows for the specification of the level of accuracy of the claims being made. Excerpts 1 and 2 are examples of accuracy-based hedges made with epistemic modal verbs.

- (1) In practice, thesis writing time might be shorter or longer.
- (2) Consequently, videos should be used as an alternative source instead of raw documents to maximize learners' learning engagement.

Lexical verbs as hedging devices

Lexical verbs are employed as hedging strategies to reduce assertiveness, particularly in academic writing. Table 4 displays the use of lexical verbs as hedging devices in the corpus.

The analysis shows a total of 68 instances, corresponding to a frequency of 3.27 occurrences per 1,000 words. The lexical verb "show" was employed the most frequently, with 16 occurrences, accounting for 23.53% of the lexical verbs used in the corpus. Following "show" were "indicate" and "suggest," which appeared 14 and 13 times, respectively. The other lexical

verbs, such as believe, claim, seem, report, and propose, were quite low in frequency. The limited use of lexical verbs may indicate that postgraduate EFL students usually encounter problems related to lexicon when writing academically (Ho, 2024). It can also be seen that there is a similarity in the pattern of hedging devices used between modal auxiliary and lexical verbs, which means that some hedging devices were much more dominant than others. For instance, “can” and “will” are modal auxiliaries, and “show, indicate, and suggest” are lexical verbs that writers use far more frequently.

Table 4.

Frequency of lexical verbs as hedging devices

No	Hedging devices	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage (%)
1	Show	16	0.77	23.53
2	Indicate	14	0.67	20.59
3	Suggest	13	0.63	19.12
4	Believe	7	0.34	10.29
5	Claim	7	0.34	10.29
6	Seem	5	0.24	7.35
7	Report	5	0.24	7.35
8	Propose	1	0.05	1.47
TOTAL		68	3.27	100%

This result, however, differs slightly from earlier research by others (Abdollahzadeh, 2019; Wang & Tatiana, 2016), who found that the verb "suggest" was the most often used as a hedging device; likewise, Adrian and Fajri's study (2023) found that the verb "indicate" ranked highest in terms of frequency of use. This difference may be the result of the influence of different academic disciplines, as the current study concentrated on the principles and practices of teaching English, whereas the prior studies were more concerned with linguistics and applied linguistics research papers (Hyland, 1998; Hyland, 2005). Nonetheless, in the previously cited research (Abdollahzadeh, 2019; Wang & Tatiana, 2016), the verb "indicate" was still one of the most often used lexical verbs for indicating mitigation while not being the most commonly used type of hedging.

Furthermore, the analysis showed that writer-based hedges were made with epistemic lexical verbs most of the time. Excerpts 3 and 4 show examples of writer-based hedges.

(3) Furthermore, the research shows an overview of teachers' views of scaffolding in the EFL classroom.

(4) Post-intervention results indicate a statistically significant improvement in speaking performance, as reflected in elevated mean scores from pretests to post-tests.

Modal adjectives as hedging devices

Table 5 provides an overview of several modal adjectives and their corresponding frequencies that are employed as hedging devices.

In the corpus of 20,794 words, 51 instances of adjectives used as hedging devices, or 2.45 times per 1,000 words, were found. With 86.27% of all adjectives in the corpus, the adjective "most" was the one most commonly employed as a hedging device. The results of this study are consistent with those of Adrian and Fajri (2023), Hyland (1996), Wang and Tatiana (2016), and others, who also found that the adjective "most" is most frequently employed to express hedging.

Table 5.

Frequency of modal adjectives as hedging devices

No	Hedging devices	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage (%)
1	Most	44	2.12	86.27
2	Possible	4	0.19	7.84
3	Likely	2	0.09	3.92
4	Rare	1	0.05	1.96
	TOTAL	51	2.45	100%

Furthermore, as Excerpts 5 and 6 illustrate, the study showed that epistemic adjectives were primarily employed as accuracy-based hedges.

(5) Moreover, most universities and colleges in Vietnam require IELTS certificates as a graduation condition.

(6) Students who are better prepared and supported are more likely to produce high-quality research outcomes.

Adverbs as hedging devices

Table 6 presents the distribution of various adverbs used as hedging devices in the corpus. As shown in Table 6, the total number of adverbs found in the corpus was 50, or 2.50 per 1,000 words. The adverb “often” was the most frequently used form of hedging, occurring 18 times and accounting for 36% of all adverbs found in the corpus. This finding aligns with Adrian and Fajri (2023), who found that the adverb “most” was the most commonly used hedging device, corresponding to 3.07 per 10,000 words. Following “most” was “widely,” which ranked second with 10 instances, accounting for 20% of the adverb hedge. The studies conducted by Wang and Tatiana (2016) also indicated “most” as the most widely used hedging adverb. This consistency in the results could indicate how crucial adverbs are for expressing hedging in academic writing.

Table 6.

Frequency of adverbs as hedging devices

No	Hedging devices	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage (%)
1	Often	18	0.87	36
2	Widely	10	0.48	20
3	Highly	4	0.19	8
4	Mainly	4	0.19	8
5	Usually	4	0.19	8
6	Generally	3	0.14	6
7	Likely	2	0.09	4
8	Perhaps	2	0.09	4
9	Rather	2	0.09	4
10	Almost	1	0.05	2
11	Largely	1	0.05	2
12	Quite	1	0.05	2
	TOTAL	50	2.50	100%

In terms of epistemic adverbs' hedging roles, they were mostly employed as accuracy-based hedges, especially as downtoners. Excerpts 7 and 8 provide examples of adverbs employed as accuracy-based hedges.

(7) However, Vietnamese learners often consider reading boring and uninteresting.

(8) It can be deeply clarified that Video is most widely used...

Nouns as hedging devices

Table 7 provides an overview of the frequency of nouns employed in the corpus as hedging devices. It can be noticed that the use of nouns to express hedging was relatively rare, occurring only three times in the corpus, or 0.15 per 1,000 words. The results show that, as Hyland (1996) noted, these hedging nouns were typically generated from lexical verbs and adjectives.

Table 7.

Frequency of adverbs as hedging devices

No	Hedging devices	Raw Frequency	Relative frequency (per 1,000 words)	Percentage (%)
1	Possibility	2	0.10	66.67
2	Tendency	1	0.05	33.33
	TOTAL	3	0.15	100%

The noun “possibility” was the most commonly used hedging noun in the corpus, appearing twice in the total of 20,794 words analyzed. While the noun “tendency” ranked second with a single time of occurrence. This finding contrasts with Adrian and Fajri (2023), who found “tendency” as the most frequently used hedging noun. The finding also suggests that postgraduate EFL students seem to prefer using the verb form or lexical verb in academic writing to express hedging to using nouns. Excerpts 9 and 10 illustrate the use of nouns as a form of mitigation.

(9) By identifying and minimizing these challenges, students may be aided in completing their theses more effectively, thereby contributing to the overall enhancement of research quality.

(10) As a matter of fact, there is a *tendency* to emphasize communicative skills, especially listening and speaking skills.

Conclusion

The current study aims to determine the types and frequency of Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students' hedging strategies in academic writing, particularly in research proposals. The findings indicate that Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students in the field of Principles and Methodologies of English Language Teaching employed hedges at a rate of 17.84 words per 1,000 words. This rate quite aligns with the common rate of the usage of hedges in articles published in internationally recognized journals written by both native and non-native English-speaking authors, as indicated by previous studies (e.g., Hyland & Jiang, 2016; Wang, 2022). However, there are several differences in the pattern of hedging devices used by postgraduate EFL students, which may suggest a less flexible use of hedges.

Moreover, the present study found that modal auxiliary verbs were the most frequently used hedging devices, which is in line with previous studies of the use of hedging by native and non-native English-speaking academic authors (e.g., Abdollahzadeh, 2019; Tran & Trang, 2022). This finding might indicate that modal verbs are frequently preferred as a hedging device in a variety of linguistic contexts. However, the higher frequency of “can” by Vietnamese postgraduate students compared with their counterparts may suggest that Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students should revise the way they use modal verbs to hedge in academic writing.

Limitations of the studies and recommendations

While the researcher hopes that this study may provide valuable insights into the usage of hedging devices in research proposals in the field of Principles and Methodologies of English Language Teaching by Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students, several limitations should be acknowledged. Firstly, the study focuses only on research proposals written by postgraduate EFL students in the field of English language teaching. Yet, it is vital to acknowledge that hedges may be used variously across disciplines, genres, and contexts. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalizable to other fields or contexts. Second, although it is indicated that there are several differences in the pattern of usage of hedging devices between Vietnamese postgraduate EFL students and native English-speaking authors, the findings do not show insights into these differences. Finally, the corpus of the current study was quite small, particularly 30 research proposals, which may mitigate the reliability of the research results.

Future research should examine the use of hedging strategies by Vietnamese postgraduate students in a wider range of academic disciplines. Furthermore, it is recommended that both qualitative and quantitative research designs be implemented to provide a more comprehensive understanding of hedging strategies in academic discourse. Besides, an expansion of sample sizes and more diverse populations will hopefully enhance the generalizability of future studies.

The findings of the study also suggest a focus on developing targeted instructional materials and interventions to help students understand and effectively use hedging strategies in their academic writing. Thus, teaching should focus on the appropriate use of a wider range of hedging devices, providing examples and practice opportunities, and classroom activities such as teacher correction (Vo, 2022) and peer feedback (Dang, 2024) to help students develop a more nuanced approach to academic writing. In this context, Vietnamese students are inclined to derive greater advantages from explicit guidance regarding the utilization of hedging strategies.

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Biodata

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Utilizing Technology to Assess English Learning Outcomes of Students Based on a Competency-based Approach

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Competency-Based Assessment, Adaptive Learning, English Language Proficiency

This study addresses the research gap in the integration of technology in evaluating English language learning outcomes, aiming to improve efficiency, accuracy, and flexibility in competency-based assessments. The research employs a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative data from online assessments. Participants included educators and learners engaged in English language programs across various educational institutions. The findings indicate that adaptive learning technologies significantly enhance accessibility, scalability, and student engagement in English language assessments. However, challenges such as technological limitations, data privacy issues, and the need for comprehensive teacher training are highlighted. This research underscores the potential of technology to transform competency-based English language proficiency examinations while offering practical insights for educational institutions, policymakers, and ed-tech companies to optimize these advancements effectively.

Introduction

The advent of technology has fundamentally transformed the landscape of education, altering the dynamics of teacher instruction and student learning. Technology in education refers to the use of digital tools and resources to facilitate teaching and learning processes, enhancing educational experiences and outcomes (Pham et al., 2023). Technology has enabled more engaging and interactive learning opportunities and increased access to authentic language texts and resources, particularly in language instruction. Furthermore, according to Vo, T., Truong, D., & Nguyen, P. (2023), educational technology encompasses various applications, including software, hardware, and digital content, designed to support learning and improve educational efficiency. Specifically, in competency-based methods, technology has been instrumental in shaping language evaluation (. These strategies emphasize the practical application of language

skills and knowledge, and technology has facilitated the development of innovative evaluation techniques capable of accurately assessing a student's language competency in real-world contexts. These advancements necessitate an analysis of the impact of technology on assessment and language instruction.

Two important research concerns deserving of investigation are:

1. In what ways may using technology in language instruction improve students' language competency?
2. How well do the most successful competency-based assessment tools made possible by technology measure language competency compared to conventional assessments?

Examining these study issues can help one get important insights into the junction of technology and language education, thereby clarifying the effectiveness of technological integration and its effects on language teaching and evaluation. Eventually, this extensive research and study will help teachers and academics better understand the benefits and difficulties related to technology in language instruction. It will affect the direction of language instruction and evaluation as well as guide best practices.

Theoretical Framework

Key Concepts in Competency-Based Assessment

Since the 1990s, in Western countries, the competency-based approach has been taken into account in the methodologies of higher education. It has been proposed that constructive alignment principles be implemented in the development of study programs, where the greatest emphasis and role are preconditioned on desired learning outcomes of programs and study courses. The proposed principles of alignment of study elements have important grounds, coming from the same background as that of a competency-based approach in higher education. They solve problems related to the purposes of study programs and the need to improve the quality of teaching and learning activities. (Vitchenko et al., 2022; Gallardo, 2020)

Under a competency-based approach, one idea for assessing students' language skills and attitudes is to focus on assessing their knowledge of the language and their abilities and attitudes toward it. Teachers must change their focus from being the only source of knowledge to becoming mentors, helping students in their personal and professional lives acquire and use current language knowledge and skills. Teachers using this approach must turn their attention from learning to instructing. Furthermore, the need to measure students' practical language competency is emphasized here instead of only their academic knowledge. This shift in evaluation techniques fits the greater trend toward a competency-based approach in education overall (1923 Mirza et al.; 2020 Gallardo).

The framework offered in this paper offers a thorough manual for comprehending and using the mentioned solutions. Considering the issue's several facets will help readers clearly grasp how to handle the possibilities and difficulties. Moreover, this framework can serve as a guide in the

upcoming research. It can be used to make future plans for educational purposes. In short, it can perform as a navigation tool to address challenges in the field.

Integration of Technology in Language Assessment

Technological advances in language assessment have changed how diverse learners may access and engage with assessment resources. Technology makes assessments more accessible and flexible for pupils from all backgrounds and throughout the world (Godwin-Jones, 2021).

According to Villegas-Ch et al. (2021), thanks to the great support of technological language learning and testing platforms, language tests and many other forms of assessment can be adaptive, customizing for each student in a large pool of items and tasks that can bring about benefits for learning and achieving academic goals. Also, tests and assessments can be more engaging with gamification (Boudadi & Gutierrez-Colón, 2020). Most importantly, technology allows administrators and teachers to collect and build student’s academic development documents. These can help instructors locate students’ standing points and determine how far and how much support they need to reach their language goals in the most efficient ways (Shadieff & Yang, 2020).

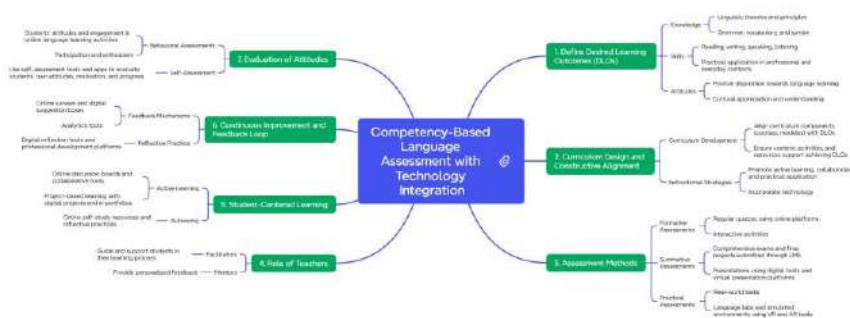
Suggested theoretical framework

The following framework for competency-based language assessment is a synthesis of many teaching and learning theories and principles to address challenges in current educational contexts. It is widely recognized that higher education now puts a sharp focus on competency-based approaches, according to Vitchenko et al. (2022). Hence, this suggested framework emphasizes that expected learning outcomes should be set in advance, and the beautiful orchestration among curriculums, syllabi, and assessments should be highly respected. If teaching is blended in assessments, learners can find it achievable to reach their language goals.

Mirza et al. (2023) underline in behavioral and self-assessments for framework evaluation that the need for knowledge, abilities, and attitudes in technology lets one provide a thorough language education catered to every student. Modern technologies and academic standards are followed in this competency-based language training strategy.

Figure 1

Competency-Based Language Assessment with Technology Integration Framework



Technological Tools for Assessment

Online Assessment Platforms

Online assessment in Vietnam is hampered by internet access and students' requirement to bring their own equipment to test. Exam answers shared by students in private conversations create security issues and emphasize the need for tight management. To prevent problems, you have to understand the system and its operation before evaluating students. While selecting Vietnamese online evaluation platforms, consider cost, supporting services, and internet security. By perfectly integrating online assessment tools into Vietnamese education, their efficiency and effectiveness increase (Le et al., 2022; Van & Thi, 2021).

In education, online assessment tools are often used to measure pupils' knowledge and skills. Teachers may simply prepare and deliver examinations on the platform, allowing students to take them on cellphones, tablets, and PCs. These platforms offer a wide range of pre-built exam questions and allow teachers to generate their own questions that the system can grade (Liu et al., 2020).

Numerous online assessment tools serve instructors' and students' various requirements. APEZ, Blackboard, Canvas, Examview, Formative, Google Classroom, Moodle, Panopto, Proctorio, Respondus, Schoolbox, Top Hat, Unicheck, and Turnitin are popular platforms. These systems make evaluation efficient and accurate with complete tools and functions (Chirikov et al., 2020). Apart from the well-known sites, there are other practical ones used abroad. Schoology; Semantik; Surpass; Thinkific; EasyPron; Portal Pendidikan Maritim Malaysia; UjiOnline; Hadi; eTestZone. Although less well-known, certain platforms have a lot of users because of their simple interfaces and special qualities.

Local teaching resources have improved Vietnam's online assessment mechanism. Cho Thanh Online, Test-maker, and Test Yourself are notable platforms that have gained popularity in Vietnam for their effectiveness in online assessment. These platforms offer Vietnamese educators and students a valuable tool to facilitate the assessment process, providing a comprehensive and reliable solution (Mattsson & Pastorek, 2023).

Overall, online assessment platforms play a vital role in modern education, revolutionizing the way assessments are conducted. With their flexibility, accessibility, and robust features, these platforms empower educators to design meaningful assessments and enable students to demonstrate their knowledge and skills conveniently. As the field continues to evolve, we can anticipate further advancements and the emergence of new and innovative assessment platforms to meet the ever-changing needs of the educational landscape.

Language Learning Apps

Although language learning apps have several advantages over conventional resources for learning a language, previous adoption is highly advised by instructors and students to fully evaluate the simplicity of use and accessibility of these tools. Students should definitely

consider a wide spectrum of elements and factors, including but not limited to compatibility with their present devices, the availability of administrative support, the possibility for scalability, the simplicity of downloading and usage, and the affordability of submitting tests. These factors, taken together, seek to simplify and streamline the procedures teachers and students use. Concurrently, teachers are strongly advised to ensure the language learning applications they select completely fit the Learning Management Systems (LMS) used at their colleges. This is a crucial point, as it helps pupils track their personal development in learning. Teachers provide a coherent and effective learning environment by deftly including the language learning applications into the LMS (Alturki & Aldraiweesh, 2021; Chang et al., 2022).

Language learning apps have exploded and become especially easily available for people trying to widen their linguistic horizons by acquiring vocabulary and grasping the foundations of building fundamental sentences in a new language, given the fast and exponential increase in the usage of modern smartphones and innovative tablets. Although depending just on these amazing apps for the thorough acquisition and mastery of a language can present its own set of difficulties, reputable and visionary technology behemoths like Duolingo, Babbel, Rosetta Stone, and other esteemed entities have emerged as prominent players in the field, empowering countless individuals who aspire to communicate seamlessly with people from diverse cultural backgrounds with a newfound sense of confidence and proficiency. The well-known Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach forms the basis of these creative and modern applications. Carefully crafted to describe the particular skills and talents language learners should be able to acquire on their path to becoming more fluent, they were Alamer and Al-Khateeb, 2023; Loewen et al., 2020. At the same time, these amazing apps provide unmatched adaptability since they can be easily used across a variety of different operating systems, meeting the different needs and preferences of a remarkably varied student base, and they also enable accurate and careful tracking of each individual development. Moreover, the on-board revision and testing tools of these innovative language learning applications are quite helpful since they let eager students strengthen their command over the language, consolidate their knowledge, and clearly show their newly acquired language ability. Furthermore, these advanced tools are indispensable tools for conscientious teachers who want to closely monitor and assess the language acquisition process, carefully modify their pedagogical strategies, and offer individualized direction to help every student grow and develop personally (Hirumi et al., 2022; Shi & Fan, 2021).

Challenges and solutions

This section addresses the challenges and solutions associated with integrating technology in competency-based language assessments, aligning with the theoretical framework presented earlier. The framework emphasizes accessibility, scalability, and flexibility, which are crucial for effective language assessment. However, implementing these technological solutions also presents significant challenges. By examining these issues, we can better understand how to overcome barriers and maximize the benefits of technology-enhanced assessments.

Accessibility and Equity Issues

A similar contrast is also seen in technology-based assessment instruments. The well-publicized skills of children raised in high-resource homes or districts suggest that richer districts are achieving higher learning standards than poorer ones merely because they can afford computers and other access to ICT. Consequently, these students will be more familiar with the test materials and delivery, thus performing better because they have had years of practice with similar texts. Tests like SETT and SICO codes will not only require heavy background technical knowledge about computing but also require a heavy financial cost in time directly related to the acquisition of computers and software. If the desired characteristics are not possessed or available, students may become victims of the new technological distinctions. (Greene, 2021; Reich, 2020)

However, technology's effects are circumvented if a dual educational system exists. Most often, technology benefits middle- and upper-class students. The other half of the population, the poverty-stricken, does not have the same opportunities. Financial constraints prevent schools from providing their students with the latest instructional resources. As a result, students who can afford computers and the necessary resources end up with a learning advantage. Further, computer-based learning programs also lag in guidance and components that normally nurture self-worth, such as positive critical feedback and acceptance from caring teachers. Thus, computer instruction can alienate a number of students, destroying initiative and motivation. Once students, particularly those from lower socioeconomic levels and attending poorly funded rural districts, fall behind, they then begin to see the technology as antagonistic and intrusive (Bathmaker, 2021; Kotkin, 2023).

In the digital age, technology can significantly impact societal access to literacy development, learning, and the means to educational attainment. Through technology, students are offered open access to a host of resources they may not have easily had available. With the aid of digital resources, learning can now occur at any time or place. Common accessibility barriers such as poverty, inaccessible transportation, and physical disabilities are now overcome through the use of computers, CD-ROMs, the web, online resources, simulated virtual communities, and e-mail communications. These technologies, on the one hand, allow students to exhibit their mastery of tough, standardized content; on the other hand, they enable the learners to participate, negotiate, and transform learning materials to accommodate their learning style, environment, and individual pace (Shadieff & Yang, 2020; Wei et al., 2021).

Data Security Concerns

Data security concerns are of utmost importance in these projects. One key issue arising from these projects is the meticulous collection, sharing, and storage of the raw audio details and the analyzed speech features. Consequently, the activities necessitate being recorded in private and

serene conditions to obtain the finest quality listening and speaking samples. (Alavi et al., 2022)

To uphold data security and privacy, students are well-informed that their audio data is collected solely to enable them to express any concerns they may have regarding the use and confidentiality of their personal information. It is paramount for students to understand that they have the freedom to provide spoken answers in any language spoken within their family while also comprehending that the assessment primarily focuses on evaluating the quality of their English language expressions. (Sinaga and Oktaviani, 2020)

However, it is crucial to emphasize that even though the primary intention behind sharing the spoken data is educational, it is essential to meticulously plan transcript preparations and storage to ensure all students' privacy rights. Presently, the main sources used to guarantee the security of student speech data are the general data protection regulations and the relevant Taiwan personal data watch guidelines. These regulations and guidelines act as solid safeguards, reinforcing the importance of protecting the privacy of the students and their personal information. (Hasal et al., 2021).

Best Practices in Technology-Enhanced Assessment

This section explores best practices for implementing technology-enhanced assessments, closely aligning with the theoretical framework presented earlier. The framework emphasizes the critical aspects of accessibility, scalability, flexibility, and integration with educational objectives. To maximize the benefits of technology in competency-based language assessments, it is essential to adopt strategies that ensure these tools are effectively integrated into the educational system. This includes aligning technological tools with the curriculum, providing adequate teacher training, ensuring the technology is user-friendly, and understanding its impact on pedagogical practices.

Alignment with Curriculum

Language assessment technology should be closely related to the curriculum to ensure students are assessed on curriculum-specific abilities and knowledge. Technology that is aligned with the curriculum enhances language assessment accuracy and focus. This ensures that the evaluation assesses students' academic knowledge rather than just their usage of technology (Farrell and Jacobs, 2020).

By aligning language assessment methods with course requirements, we may build a more unified language acquisition and evaluation framework. By employing technology to augment language courses, students can showcase and improve their language skills in a manner that aligns with the curriculum's learning objectives and goals. Technology can help increase the relevance and attractiveness of language evaluation for teachers and students (Lawrence et al., 2020).

By matching language assessment tools with the curriculum, kids may acquire digital literacy skills—a growingly vital ability. In curriculum-aligned language assessment activities, students may develop and demonstrate their ability to use technology to improve language learning and assessment. This enables students to develop language and computer literacy in preparation for success in a technologically advanced society (Polizzi, 2020).

Adequate Teacher Training

It is high time every teacher got professional training in employing technology-based assessments. They need to be technology-literate in order to help students gain academic progress. Teachers need to get a lot of training on how to help students learn English. This training aims to give them the skills, information, and abilities they need to use these review methods. Education professionals can guarantee the highest degree of precision and dependability when evaluating students' English language proficiency and accomplishments (Jannah et al., 2020).

Investing in substantial teacher training programs that focus on technology-integrated assessment can improve English language instruction. These programs equip teachers to help students succeed and learn. Thus, educational institutions can foster improved assessment methodologies (Lee et al., 2022).

Teacher training is essential for effectively using new technology-based evaluation methods. Through extensive and specialized training, teachers learn how to integrate technology into their lessons. This integration correctly and completely measures students' language learning (Sailer et al., 2021).

Comprehensive teacher training helps educators adapt to changing technologies. Language acquisition assessment approaches develop with technology. Teachers must keep up with technology to give pupils relevant and comprehensive exams. Thus, instructors need ongoing training in the latest technology and evaluation methods (Burns, 2020).

Teacher training also boosts trust in technology-integrated assessment. When teachers feel competent and prepared, they are more likely to use sophisticated evaluation methods in English language education. Confidence boosts student motivation, engagement, and learning. Students gain substantially when teachers are trained to use technology-integrated assessment approaches (Anderson and Putman, 2020).

User-friendly and appropriate technology

In this learning environment, a key component of teacher training is the comprehensive and intensive development of knowledge. This ability goes beyond a simple grasp of theoretical ideas to encompass real applications and knowledge using a broad spectrum of advanced platforms and tools. By providing instructors with the requisite information and competence, they may proficiently assess and evaluate the English language proficiency of their pupils. Incorporating these cutting-edge and dynamic technologies into the educational process

improves the overall efficacy of English language training and creates new prospects and advantages for educators and learners alike. By incorporating current technology into the evaluation process, teachers might gain a lot of knowledge about the development of their pupils and areas of need for aid. So, students can be assured of being exposed to the high-quality teaching environment and reaching their desired level of English proficiency if the teaching methodology is focused on an individualized teaching approach (Voithofer & Nelson, 2021; Saubern et al., 2020).

It is evident that a comprehensive development of competence is of the utmost importance in this specific learning environment, as evidenced by this fundamental component of teacher preparation. This comprehensive and extensive knowledge extends beyond the realm of theoretical principles to encompass the practical execution and the cultivation of the necessary skills to effectively navigate a diverse array of technological tools and sophisticated platforms. The educational process will be revolutionized by providing teachers with a comprehensive range of knowledge and competency, which will enable them to fairly evaluate and assess the English learning results of their students (Durrant et al., 2021; Schmitt et al., 2020).

Modern technology in the classroom lets instructors and students flourish while also raising English language instruction. Teachers can evaluate student development and pinpoint areas needing work by use of technology and accepted pedagogy. Technology guarantees students obtain an outstanding education and acquire their desired English language competence level, therefore enabling a customized and specialized approach to teaching. The AI algorithms' detailed feedback ensures that students receive precise ideas to improve their weaknesses, which boosts the possibility of continuous progress. This evaluation method helps students enhance their language abilities thoroughly and precisely using advanced linguistic models and machine learning techniques. This might lead to individualized, inclusive education. Assessment technology's fast growth and investigation offer endless potential for language acquisition and personal development (Kwak, 2023; Musa, 2024). This groundbreaking artificial intelligence investigation previews the future of education when language barriers are abolished, and students may talk confidently in global society. The expansion and enhancement of these artificial intelligence systems will facilitate the success of students in a global context and improve their learning experience. Artificial intelligence's exceptional capabilities empower students to modify their language acquisition trajectory with each assessment. This creativity has a significant impact that extends beyond the classroom. In a various and linked world, it might mold personal life and open fresh opportunities. Using sophisticated AI algorithms, teachers can produce a cohort of confident, fluent, and culturally flexible people ready to welcome the complexity and opportunities of an always shifting global world (Alam, 2021).

Impact on Pedagogical Practices

Several changes in the field have impacted teaching techniques. Everything has changed because of technology, including education. With the use of technology, teachers may adapt their lessons to the needs and abilities of individual students. Therefore, according to Rafiola et al. (2020), the process of acquiring knowledge and skills becomes more tailor-made for each student based on their personal interests and learning styles.

What is more, teachers can now provide learners with instant feedback due to the support of technology. They can see students' academic progress through any online learning system, so assisting or navigating students' learning tracks becomes doable thanks to continuous online assessments. Students can also be informed about their strengths and weaknesses, as well as strategic plans to upgrade their study results in the shortest time frame (Deeva et al., 2021; Hooda et al., 2022).

Due to social development, the teaching practice has been vastly modified. Teachers and schools strive to create inclusive classrooms with diverse backgrounds, talents, and learning needs. This requires implementing programs and providing instruments to ensure that all students have equal access to high-quality education and personal development (Landsman & Lewis, 2023; Sanger, 2020).

Conclusion

In conclusion, there has been constant and outstanding success in evaluating and testing English language competency via the use of creative and cutting-edge technologies. Innovative technology outperforms traditional approaches by zeroing in on critical competencies; as a result, comprehensive assessments of pupils' language skills are guaranteed to be incredibly accurate and dependable. This innovative device will be very helpful to teachers and other involved parties as it provides a bird's-eye view of the language competency of their students. Consequently, it considerably enhances education and provides pupils with a boost in their future endeavors by means of the English language.

Further studies could explore the long-term impacts of these technologies on language learning outcomes, investigate the effectiveness of different technological tools across diverse educational settings, and examine ways to address the challenges associated with technology integration, such as data privacy and equitable access. Additionally, research could focus on developing and testing new adaptive learning technologies to further personalize and improve language assessment and instruction.

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Biodata

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Challenges Encountered by the First-Year Students in English Writing Paragraphs

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: writing skills, EFL, challenging

By and large, writing plays a vital part in acquiring English proficiency. Especially in tertiary education, students usually experience various challenges and difficulties in writing English. Therefore, this study aimed to identify the significant writing challenges reported by first-year English major students at Van Lang University. The researcher can explore the writing challenges from the students' perspectives by employing the semi-structured interview using the qualitative method. Thirty Faculty of Foreign Languages students participated in the semi-structured interviews to collect data for the study. The findings reflected that the use of vocabulary was the most challenging factor for students from good to poor English writing competencies. Spelling and grammar were also significant challenges encountered by most students with low-level writing competencies. Meanwhile, punctuation was the students' least challenge when writing a paragraph. This study will make some important contributions to the deep understanding of the writing challenges struggled by EFL students. Identifying the major writing challenges enables the teachers to explore effective teaching methods and classroom activities to facilitate the students' writing processes.

Introduction

English has become a universal language and a crucial means of communication all over the world. The increasing importance of English cannot be ignored, especially in Vietnam, where learning English has a great contribution to the country's development. According to Brown (2000), in order to master the English language, language learners must be proficient in four English skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Of all four English skills, the importance of writing skills is addressed by Apsari (2017), who affirms that writing enables students to perform many activities, including listening and speaking. Likewise, Dantes (2013) holds the same view by explaining that developing writing skills will enable students to expand

other language skills, namely, listening, speaking, and reading skills. This view was supported by Phan (2023), who asserted that writing is a crucial skill that students should hone. Similarly, Alisha et al. (2019) state that writing skills are pivotal in learning English since they are necessary in the students' career paths.

Despite its important role, writing is considered the most complicated skill for English language learners to master. Therefore, acquiring this skill takes language learners time and effort (Ly et al., 2021). Likewise, learners require significant time to progress, especially in mastering all four language skills simultaneously (Vo, 2022). Although writing skills are difficult, especially for the majority of EFL students who face various problems in writing, it is the most important skill in acquiring the English language (Ilmu, 2016; Chicho, 2020). It cannot be denied that having good writing skills will benefit an individual's career and personal life Apsari (2017). There have been several attempts to investigate the challenges that EFL students have encountered when completing a writing task, including writing an English paragraph. Ramatunisa (2014) found that EFL students faced three main writing challenges: linguistics, cognitive, and psychological.

English-majored first-year students usually struggle with writing a complete paragraph in English. They face several major problems when constructing sentences and developing a paragraph. Their writing problems arise when they are asked to produce an English paragraph, even a simple one because they do not know how to express their ideas correctly in English. It is noticed that students who have low motivation for learning how to write and have low English proficiency always struggle with writing (Tukan, 2024). Their grammatical competencies, vocabulary retention, ideas development, and organization are poor. Thus, it leads to the difficulties that they usually face when writing English paragraphs of some specific kinds. The challenges that hinder students from mastering English writing skills are able to make them frustrated and lose motivation for learning (Al-Sawalha & Chow, 2012).

Therefore, this draws the researchers' attention to explore and find out the significant challenges that English-majored students at the tertiary level usually face when writing a short paragraph in English. By identifying the students' specific challenges in writing English paragraphs, teachers can better understand the root of the student's difficulties to enhance the effectiveness of teaching writing skills and assist students in improving their English writing competencies. This study makes some important contributions to understanding the major problems and challenges that English-majored freshmen usually face when writing. By understanding the problems, the instructors and teachers can modify and improve their lesson planning and curriculum to help the students overcome the challenges. The findings of this study will help provide insights into the common errors that first-year students commit when writing English paragraphs.

Literature review

Challenges Faced by the Students When Learning Writing Skills

Although English writing is the most crucial language skill that language learners have to master, students find it hard to write English effectively. The most common challenges when

writing include the students' poor competence in syntax, insufficient use of vocabulary, coherence, content selection, organization, and inappropriate use of vocabulary (Aburass, 2015). According to Mehrabi (2014), when compared with receptive skills like listening and reading, writing requires a thorough knowledge of grammatical structures. Furthermore, Ur (2021) asserts that during writing, it is essential to pay great attention to several aspects, including accurate spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, and standard grammar. In a qualitative study conducted by Klimova (2010) on examining university students' writing abilities, the author reported that the most common mistakes that the students mostly committed involved sentences and the incorrect use of words and phrases. Additionally, Ahmadi and Reza (2018) found that for EFL learners, the influence of their first language (L1) and their limited language knowledge hinder them from writing English effectively. Sharing the same view, Williams' (2012) study revealed that the student's first language impacts the writing process, and this caused the students to encounter several challenges when writing. Furthermore, another study conducted by Riadil et al. (2023) raises the concern that although students face many challenges when writing English, they still do not know how to improve their writing competencies effectively. Hence, by conducting the descriptive method in qualitative research, these researchers found that English grammar was the area in which the students faced many problems. Meanwhile, the English-majored students encountered the least problems with writing organization and vocabulary. In contrast, Tanasy and Nashruddin's (2020) study found that most students believed vocabulary, including word choice, is a major writing difficulty. From the semi-structured interviews, they also admitted that they had committed many errors related to English grammar when writing. The use of punctuation was considered to be a minor factor contributing to the students' writing problems. Obviously, the studies on exploring the students' writing challenges are qualitative research with different methods, including semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and documentation observations. The findings from these studies provide insight into the writing difficulties that EFL students usually face by exploring their opinions and experiences regarding the writing process. The researchers investigate not only the students' writing challenges but also the factors that significantly impact their difficulties in writing.

Research Questions

The theories and studies have encouraged the researcher to thoroughly investigate the writing challenges that English-majored freshmen at the tertiary level usually encounter. This study is expected to be a solution to overcome the major writing difficulties and identify the main factors causing writing problems for the first-year students majoring in English at Van Lang University and students at the tertiary level in Vietnam.

Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following question:

1. What are the common writing challenges that the English-majored freshmen at Van Lang University encountered when writing an English paragraph?
2. What are the main factors that have a great contribution to the students' writing problems?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. All of the research subjects are freshmen from different classes majoring in English. Thirty participants for this study were recruited using a purposive sampling method (N=30). This method allows the researchers to locate participants with the same characteristics or who meet the criteria to join the research (Christensen & Johnson, 2020). The participants were selected based on the following criteria: (1) They are all English-majored freshmen. (2) They had finished a ten-week course in the Writing 1 Module. (3) Their levels of English proficiency aligned with CEFR level, ranging from B1 to C1 level. These groups were categorized based on the scores of their writing task, which was a short paragraph related to their hometown. In other words, the researcher also relied on their writing scores to invite thirty participants to participate in the research study. The three groups of students are:

Group 1 consisted of ten students with poor writing skills (from Student A1 to Student A10). Their scores ranged from 2.0 to 4.9.

Group 2 consisted of ten students with average writing skills (from Student B1 to Student B10). Their scores ranged from 5.0 to 7.9.

Group 3 consisted of ten students with good writing skills (from Student C1 to Student C10). Their scores ranged from 8.0 to 10.

The students have finished the Writing 1 Module in the first semester. They were taught to develop a paragraph in English, and they knew how to write a short paragraph (about 100 – 120 words) of familiar topics, including hometown, introducing yourself, and describing a place. At the end of the course, they were asked to take a writing task which was designed based on the final exam format. The writing task aimed to test whether the students could meet the learning outcome of the Writing 1 course or not. The researchers categorized the students by their mid-term writing test results, in which they were asked to write a short paragraph on the aforementioned topics.

Before participating in the research, the researchers obtained consent from all participants. All of the participants agreed to take part in the study on a voluntary basis. They had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they felt that the interviews had a negative impact on their emotions and feelings. The researchers explained the purpose of the research, how the researcher collected the data, and the techniques applied to the study. They were informed about the anonymity and confidentiality of the data collected from their responses. To ensure the anonymity of the participants, when coding and reporting the findings, the researchers referred to them by using pseudonyms such as Student A1, Student B1, or Student C1, etc, based on the groups that the researchers categorized.

Design of the Study

By employing the semi-structured interview using the qualitative method, the researchers can identify the significant writing challenges reported by the students. Conducting interviews allows the interviewees to express their concerns and explain the issue in detail. Furthermore,

Deterding and Waters (2018) indicate that the semi-structured interview enables free responses from the participants.

Data collection & analysis

This study utilized focus group interviews as a means to collect data for this study (See Appendix A for the interview questions). Barrett and Twycross (2018) consider interviews the most common method for conducting qualitative research. Additionally, Queiros, Faria, and Almeda (2017) affirm that a focus group interview is useful for investigating the participants' complex behavior, and these researchers also address that this technique allows the researcher to obtain the information more quickly than conducting individual interviews. The interview was semi-structured; therefore, the researcher was able to add extra questions during the interview to clarify the issue and collect more data from the participants (Roopa & Rani, 2012). Thus, it is practical and suitable for the interviewer to converse with the participants in-depth.

The researcher analyzed the results from the three semi-structured interviews with three groups of participants. The interviews revealed the perceptions and experiences of the students at different English levels towards the writing problems that they usually faced when writing a short paragraph. The researchers attempted to explore the students' views towards the writing problems related to five categorized factors: the use of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and expression of ideas, which had a great impact on the writing performance.

Results/Findings and discussion

The data collected from three focus group interviews related to the writing challenges they encountered were synthesized and analyzed. The researchers classified the students' writing challenges into the categories of students' writing problems related to the use of vocabulary, spelling, grammar, punctuation, and expressing ideas.

The Use of Vocabulary

Group 01

Most participants who had poor writing performances believed that using vocabulary when writing was a major challenge that usually hindered them from effectively expressing their ideas. Due to their limited vocabulary retention, the students reported using many basic and simple words in their writing. Specifically, Student A1 revealed, "I usually struggle to find the right words to express my ideas accurately." In other words, they were incapable of finding appropriate words to convey their ideas during the writing process. Furthermore, the students reported the frequent use of repeated words in their writing. Student A4 strongly agreed with this during the interview. "Expanding vocabulary is a major challenge, and I often rely on the same words." Most students claimed that they failed to avoid using the same word repeatedly, and they couldn't diversify their vocabulary.

Group 02

While group 1 reported many problems with the use of vocabulary, the group of students with average writing levels did not highlight the difficulties in finding words to express their precise

ideas. They were able to select the right words to convey their ideas during writing, but they also struggled with finding synonyms to enrich their writing. Specifically, Student B5 admitted that "I often struggle to find synonyms to vary my word choice and make my writing more engaging." Sharing the same view with Student B5, Student B8 agreed, "I have difficulty diversifying my vocabulary and finding more expressive words for my writing." Most participants found no problems using common English words to express their ideas, but finding synonyms to enrich their vocabulary was considered a writing obstacle.

Group 03

For all the participants in Group 03 with good writing performances, lacking vocabulary when writing was not a major problem since they could diversify their vocabulary. However, the majority of them believed that although it was not a great challenge, they still emphasized the importance of expanding the vocabulary. Student C7 strongly agreed, "Expanding my vocabulary to add depth and precision to my writing is a constant goal." Only Student 6 admitted that sometimes he used some simple words to express similar meanings.

Spelling

The interview from Group 1 revealed that the participants' poor spelling negatively impacted their writing performances. Most of them reported that they often forgot the spelling of many English words, even the basic ones. Consequently, this seriously affected their grades. Student A7 stated, "Spelling errors can be embarrassing, especially with common words that I should know." Another interviewee echoed this view: "It took me much time to recall the spelling of these common words, which partly led to the poor grade of my writing." The majority of participants agreed that they usually committed spelling errors while writing. When compared with Group 1, interviewees from both Group 02 and Group 03 rarely expressed their concerns about the problems of spelling errors that hindered their writing processes, especially Group 03 of students with good writing performance. Only a small number of the interviewees indicated that they had difficulties writing several new words' spellings. Student C2 from Group 03 said, "I am usually confused with the new or complicated words." Student B4 from Group 02 also stated, "The longer the words are, the more difficult for me to recall." Obviously, Group 02 and Group 03 participants found it difficult to write only complicated and long words.

Grammar

Several interviewees from Group 01 reported that subject-verb agreement is their frequent grammatical. Specifically, Student A9 remarked, "I usually struggle with subject-verb agreement, particularly in longer and more complex sentences." They stated they were uncertain about choosing verbs that agree with some subjects like "everyone, every student, etc." Meanwhile, the Group 02 and Group 03 participants reported that they sometimes committed mistakes related to subject-verb agreement. These students with average and high levels of writing competencies explained that they were aware of how to conjugate the verb by the subject, but their mistakes were mainly because of their carelessness. Only a small number of the students indicated that they hardly made any mistakes in verb conjugations, but they emphasized consistent verb tenses in their writing. Student B2 admitted, "The inconsistent verb tenses make my writing ambiguous to the readers." This opinion was advocated by Student

C10, who stated, "This leads to confusion in my writing."

Punctuation

For all of the participants, using punctuation is not a major challenge that causes poor grades when writing. However, a number of students from Group 1 revealed that they were confused about the functions of each punctuation and how to use them correctly in a sentence. Student A6 stated, "I am uncertain when using precise punctuations, so I usually use commas to break the sentences." They said they occasionally misused commas, leading to sentence structure issues. The other students from the same group reported the same problems. Further, they elaborated that they tend to use commas to separate sentences due to their Vietnamese (L1) interference. Consequently, Student B4 admitted, "The incorrect use of commas makes my sentences become ambiguous and unclear." Students with better writing performances (Group 02 and Group 03) could distinguish the use of punctuation like commas and periods.

Expressing Ideas

Regarding the difficulties in expressing ideas, most of the students from Group 01 stated that they failed to express the ideas clearly and concisely in writing. They tried to use long sentences to fully convey their ideas but could not organize them logically. As a result, their writing was hard to understand, as Student A1 admitted, "My sentences are not well-organized, so I am unable to communicate effectively." Furthermore, most interviewees from Group 02 indicated that they face problems connecting sentences within a paragraph logically and consistently. Specifically, Student B7 revealed that "Conveying complex ideas in a clear, concise, and coherent manner is a common challenge for me." They also expressed that maintaining coherence when writing was a great challenge since they were confused about using transition words to link their ideas. For Group 03, the participants conveying complex ideas clearly, concisely, and logically is not a frequent challenge.

Nevertheless, most also expressed concerns about maintaining coherence when writing. Sometimes, they found connecting the ideas smoothly by using transition words and phrases quite challenging. Student C3 said, "To maintain the coherence, I did use some transition words, but the words were still simple and repeated." Most of them considered that the repeated use of some transition words and phrases also made the connection between sentences and the ideas' expression unnatural.

From the three focus-group interviews, it can be withdrawn that using vocabulary is the most significant challenge for all participants, even for students with good writing abilities. The limitation of vocabulary is a barrier that hinders the students from enhancing their writing competencies. Besides vocabulary, spelling is considered a major writing difficulty, especially for students with poor writing performances. It is obvious that students with better writing abilities experience fewer challenges in recalling how to spell out many common English words. They only encountered challenges when they had to write the spellings of some complex words. Moreover, grammar is one of the major difficulties that most students expressed concern about. While most of the students with low and average writing competencies admitted that the problems hindered them from writing a well-developed paragraph, all of the students with good writing performances did not consider it a problem when writing. The problems related to

punctuation are the least challenging for the students while writing. Several students are confused about the correct use of commas and periods, but no one considers it a significant writing challenge. In terms of the difficulty in expressing ideas, the majority of the students believed that conveying ideas in a logical and organized manner is a constant challenge. Specifically, students with good writing performances sometimes struggle with connecting ideas smoothly and naturally in a paragraph. Meanwhile, students with lower levels of writing skills usually face the problems of conveying complex ideas in a clear, concise, and coherent manner.

In accordance with the present results, previous studies have demonstrated that while writing English, students are confronted with several challenges related to poor syntax, limited vocabulary, grammar, punctuation, and expressing ideas (Aburass, 2015; Ahmadi & Reza, 2018; Klimova, 2010; Riadil et al., 2023). This study's findings align with Aburass' (2015) study, which found that writing challenges often stem from limited use of vocabulary for students. Furthermore, the finding is consistent with that of Klimova (2010), who asserted that university students frequently made sentence structure and word usage mistakes when writing. This is also in accordance with Tanasy and Nashruddin's (2020) study, which reported that students considered vocabulary and word choice to be significant difficulties, while punctuation was a lesser concern. However, this outcome is contrary to that of Riadil et al. (2023) who observed that despite these challenges, students had fewer issues with vocabulary.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study provides insight into some major challenges that English-majored freshmen usually encounter when writing paragraphs. The findings revealed that using vocabulary was considered the factor that makes students most confused when writing. Additionally, the student's English proficiency, the more challenges they encounter in using vocabulary. Meanwhile, the majority of students expressed little concern about using punctuation in writing processes. The findings also demonstrate that grammar-related factors also hindered the students' writing skill development.

However, this study focused only on first-year students who are majoring in English at a private university in Vietnam. Therefore, this study's results were impossible to generalize to other cases and students from different majors and universities. Despite its major strengths, the qualitative method also has some weaknesses. The data collected from interviews using the qualitative method is considered subjective and interpretive by Choy (2014). In other words, the researcher gathers, analyzes, and interprets the data. Therefore, this depends on the researcher's ability to interpret what the participants feel, see, or believe. Furthermore, in some cases, the same participant will provide different and contrastive interpretations of the same question. Another disadvantage of qualitative research lies in its generalization. Due to the small sample sizes, the study's findings cannot reflect the views or beliefs of the whole population (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

In spite of its limitations, this study will make some important contributions to the deep understanding of the writing challenges struggled by EFL students. Thus, identifying the major

writing challenges enables the teachers to explore effective teaching methods and classroom activities to facilitate the students' writing processes in the future.

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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

Dear Students,

The interviews are used as a constructive way to provide your opinions towards the challenges that you encounter when writing an English paragraph. Please take a moment and think through your responses to be as specific as possible so that the researcher can fully explore the students' problems and challenges in developing a good English paragraph.

Thank you for your participation and support!

Please note that the collected data was solely served the purpose of conducting this study.

The researcher ensures the participants' anonymity and the data confidentiality.

Interview questions

1. According to you, what are your challenges that usually encounter when writing an English paragraph?
2. Does the problems that you mentioned affect your writing performance (grades, skill)?
3. Among the writing challenges that you reported (Vocabulary, Grammar, Expressing ideas, Punctuations), what are your significant writing challenges? Could you please specify more?

Biodata

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Overdetermination of businesswomen in the British press: a corpus-based approach in critical discourse analysis

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, social actor framework, metaphor identification procedure (MIP)

Within the strand of critical discourse analysis (CDA), research on media portrayal of individuals is prevalent, with the scope having been expanded beyond such subjects as refugees or asylum seekers, but also the breadth of research having been enhanced with larger datasets under the corpus-based approach. This study, utilizing both corpus-based quantitative analysis as well as qualitative analysis, focuses on the depiction of businesswomen in the British press. The corpus comprises business-related articles from *The Guardian* published in 2017 and 2018, gathered through website crawling. As for qualitative analysis, those articles are examined under the category of overdetermination Kress van Leeuwen's social actor framework (2008) combined with the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) by Pragglejaz Group (2007). The results show that businesswomen are represented in different social practices, such as maritime, fighting, racing, and climbing. Based on these results, the portrayal of businesswomen in the media is sketched and suggested with further implications.

Introduction

Media discourse is becoming more prevalent in discourse studies because the media has been one of the influential factors in forming social practices. To understand how the media impacts public view, it is essential to analyze the discourse of the press (Lirola, 2016). What people have read or heard from media products informs modifications of their behavior, ideas, and beliefs, from which they navigate themselves into a particular social group (Bednarek & Caple, 2012).

Within media discourse, a key focus is on gender representation, possibly because gender equality is one of the sustainable development goals proposed by the United Nations for many countries. Investigation into media coverage of women and how they participate in various fields has been conducted in a multitude of studies, from which not only is women's portrayal

in the press better understood, but also some suggestions for better representation could be offered. This has motivated my research into how women are depicted in the media, particularly in business contexts, under the approach of critical discourse analysis.

Literature review

Van Leeuwen's social actor framework

In critical discourse analysis (CDA), language is treated as a social practice that conveys ideologies. Its critical aspect works as the basis to reveal and potentially transform social inequalities, providing a “better understanding of them and of the right thing to do” (Fairclough, 2015, p. 48) through examination of language. There are several frameworks within CDA, one of which is one is the socio-cognitive approach, which emphasizes “the mental representation of language users as individuals and as social members” (Van Dijk, 2015, p. 64), mediating the discourse and the society. Fairclough's (2015) three-dimensional approach involves analyzing texts at three levels of text, the interaction between text production and interpretation process, and the broader social context of these interactions. Van Leeuwen views discourse as a “recontextualization of social practice” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 3), being cognition or knowledge socially constructed and specific to particular social contexts. During this recontextualization process, elements of social practice, such as participants or actions, are transformed. Therefore, his analysis framework extends beyond linguistic categories but leans towards sociology, for example, “nomination” instead of “nominalization.” The nature of the framework, however, is still based on linguistic resources (lexis, deictic, system of reference, morphological structure, metaphor, metonym) to help understand how elements of social practice are recontextualized and represented in the discourse.

Van Leeuwen's perspective of discourse underpins different frameworks for analyzing a social practice's participants, actions, time, and space. This study will focus on the participants, or actors, and employ the social actor framework (Figure 1) based on Halliday's Systematic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The reason for choosing this foundation, according to Van Leeuwen, is that CDA confined to linguistic categories may overlook discourse from a sociological perspective because the language “lacks bi-uniqueness” (Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 23), whereas SFL treated language as a social semiotic system carrying functions. This actor framework is accompanied by a social action one (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Van Leeuwen's social actor framework

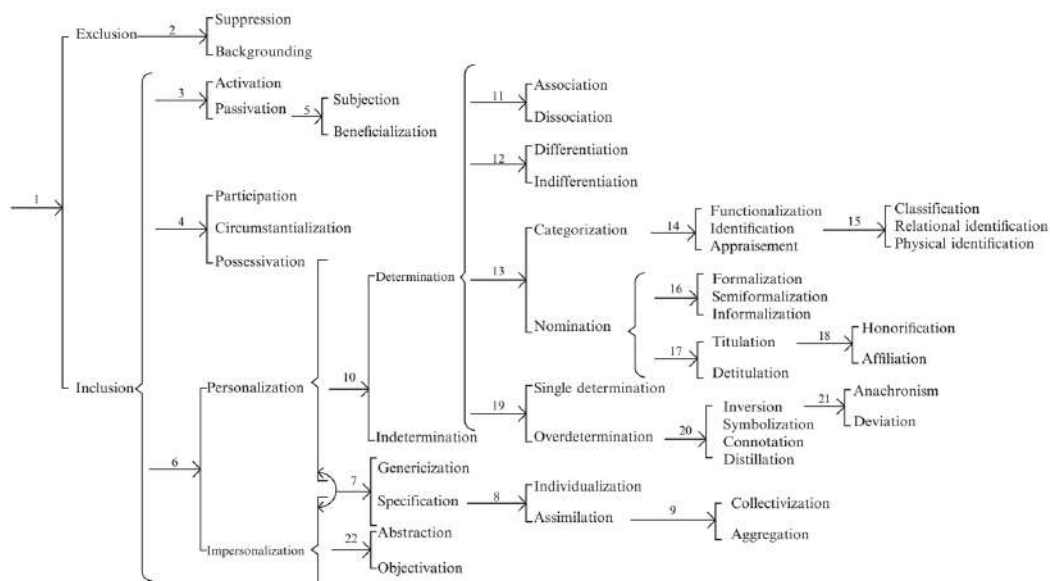


TABLE 2.4. Social Actor Network

Figure 2

Van Leeuwen's social action framework

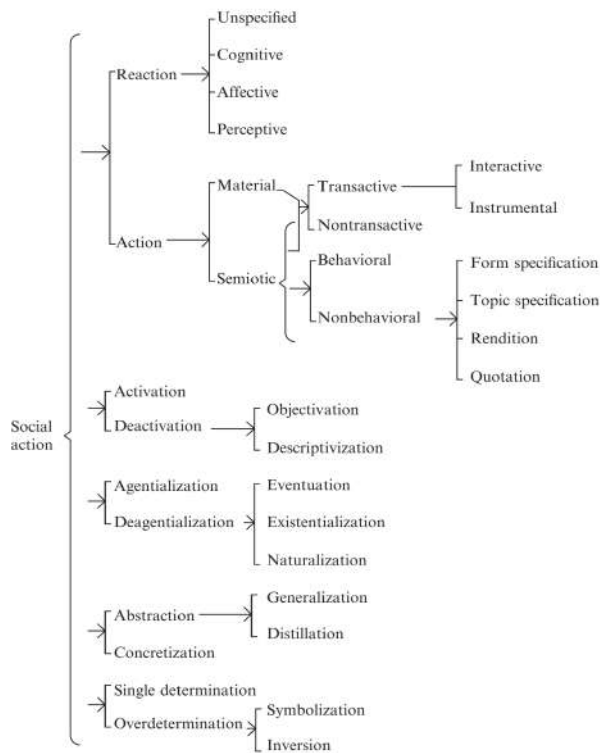


TABLE 3.2. Social Action Network

Overdetermination is chosen as the focus of this study among the categories in Van Leeuwen's framework. This "occurs when social actors are represented as participating, at the same time, in more than one social practice"(Van Leeuwen, 2008, p. 47) or can be referred to as the symbolic representation of social actors. For example, schoolteachers are compared to "professionals who offer therapy" because they may have some features comparable to a therapist. In terms of linguistics, realizing overdetermination involves analyzing the metaphor of the social actors, by which the quality of the actors or their actions are highlighted through concrete images. This category is present in both the social actor and social action framework by Van Leeuwen, although their sub-categories are different. The social actor framework consists of four sub-categories: *inversion*, *symbolization*, *connotation*, and *distillation*, while social action consists of *symbolization* and *inversion*. As my research focuses on how social actors are represented, I will not focus on classifying types of overdetermination; instead, I will analyze the participants and their actions to realize the different social practices they are connected to. This analysis involves looking at metaphor, which is discussed below.

Metaphorical identification procedure (MIP)

Metaphorical identification procedure, or MIP, is within the conceptual metaphor theory, first proposed in *Metaphors We Live by* Lakoff and Johnson. This book is considered a classic in changing many linguists' viewings about language, prompting a novel strand in linguistic research (Pham, 2023). In this theory, metaphor is not simply a linguistic device in rhetoric, but it is grounded in a conceptual system that governs people's thoughts, everyday actions, and also language. What people say, do, think and act is viewed to be a matter of metaphor, and it is "pervasive in everyday life" (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003, p. 3) such as in media products whose producers aim at attracting their targeted customers (Nguyen, 2023). Analyzing everyday expressions to discover metaphors and the underlying ideologies, however, is affected by researchers' intuition. This necessitates an instructional framework that guides the analysis to identify metaphorical expressions based on their discourse context and mitigates the impact of intuition. A reliable one is the MIP by Praggeljaz Group (2007), which is simple to use and flexible for adaptation. The whole procedure consists of four main stages, which are as follows (Praggeljaz Group, 2007, p. 3):

1. Read the entire text—discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text—discourse
3. (a) For each lexical unit in the text, establish its meaning in context, that is, how it applies to an entity, relation, or attribute in the situation evoked by the text (contextual meaning). Take into account what comes before and after the lexical unit.

(b) For each lexical unit, determine if it has a more basic contemporary meaning in other contexts than the one in the given context. For our purposes, basic meanings tend to be
 - More concrete; what they evoke is easier to imagine, see, hear, feel, smell, and taste.
 - Related to bodily action.
 - More precise (as opposed to vague)

—Historically older.

Basic meanings are not necessarily the most frequent meanings of the lexical unit.

(c) If the lexical unit has a more basic current–contemporary meaning in other contexts than the given context, decide whether the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it.

4. If yes, mark the lexical unit as metaphorical

Media representation of businesswomen

Women breaking the “glass ceiling” in business have been explored in a number of studies, among which their minorities, their achievements and talents, and work-life balance are recurring topics.

One study compares how women in top business roles across the UK and the U.S. press (Sonbol, 2014). Major themes from these articles positively represent businesswomen with highlights for their character and success, and they also report positive views and appreciation for women on boards. A high proportion of articles focus on Sheryl Sandberg, a well-known businesswoman who is the COO of Facebook. Other stereotyped themes include work-life balance and mother roles. Lexical analysis, noticeably, yields some negative representations, sketching businesswomen's vulnerability as victims in their executive roles and mentioning their mother roles. Another content analysis of four business magazines, *Fortune*, *Forbes*, *Bloomberg Businessweek*, and *Entrepreneur*, discovered three main frames associated with businesswomen: their minor number at the senior level, their benefit to the organization, and the effects of work-life balance (Cooper, 2019). Media's gender-biased content highlighting the absence of male characteristics and mentioning being a widow is also found in another comparative study featuring Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook, and Mary Barra, CEO of General Motors, which investigates articles from *The Economist* (Risbourg, 2018). In the same vein, an investigation into 308 articles over 15 years highlights the dilemma of choosing women in charge of family business (Bjursell & Bäckvall, 2011). Their depiction is positive in the mother role but arguable in the business executive role, suggesting a balance that ensures the business role does not overshadow the mother role. With regards to studies employing the social actor framework (Van Leeuwen, 2008), another work probes into the *Women Entrepreneur* section in the magazine *Entrepreneur* (Kropsu, 2019). The study concludes that the articles cast businesswomen as “passive, emotional, and insecure” (Kropsu, 2019, p. ii), and also include content related to gender disparities and questioning the feasibility of career-family balance. On a larger scale, the social actor framework was adopted to investigate women in *Forbes*, *Fortune*, and *Bloomberg BusinessWeek* between 2015 and 2017 (Power et al., 2019). The results indicate a favorable portrayal that foregrounds the businesswomen's jobs and professional achievements over their personal lives. While no work-life balance is found as opposed to the other research, this study nevertheless shows some under-representation in media coverage because women are less mentioned than male colleagues in business contexts.

Research Questions

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

1. What are metaphorical expressions used to represent businesswomen in British news articles?
2. What different social practices are associated with the businesswomen reflected through those metaphorical expressions?

Methods

Design of the Study

This study mainly employed qualitative methods, although corpus analysis methods were applied to the dataset. The goal was to extract concordances from keyword queries with the aid of the corpus analysis software *Antconc*. Qualitative discourse analysis was employed by adapting the metaphor identification procedure (MIP) (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) combined with category *overdetermination* in the social actor framework (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

Data collection & analysis

Articles from *The Guardian* were selected because it is a famous press in the United Kingdom with high circulation. The collection of these articles was initially completed through website crawling, which enables the retrieval of the article text as well as their associated meta-data, such as URL, author, text, and title. To perform this, data engineers or coders use algorithms to crawl articles from their websites and then create a dataset that may be shared for research purposes and other purposes. In my study, I used the dataset named RealNews, which comprises articles collected from the Common Crawl web archive (Zellers et al., 2019). I also asked for help from a data engineer to extract and categorize the newspapers into sub-folders.

In the next step, 130 articles under the category "Business" in *The Guardian* in 2017 and 2018 were selected and processed by the software *Antconc*. This software was used to yield concordances of keywords that show the different roles of businesswomen at executive levels. The span of the queried keywords was 50 words to the left and 50 words to the right. After the first query, each concordance was manually checked to remove duplications or irrelevant content, subsequently resulting in 57 relevant articles.

From these articles, concordances of keywords related to businesswomen's roles were read thoroughly. They are first analyzed by adapting MIP, in which I focused more on words that show some constraints in meaning. Also, some lexical units comprising two words were paid attention to because the metaphorical meaning would be more complete if the whole phrase were investigated. Then, metaphorical expressions were grouped by topics. Then, these topics are further scrutinized to yield social practices in which businesswomen were represented, following the *overdetermination* category in van Leeuwen's social actor framework. Merriam-Webster and Oxford Learner's dictionaries are used to consult the word's different meanings and determine whether the lexical unit is metaphorical.

Results/Findings and discussion

Research question 1: What are metaphorical expressions used to represent businesswomen on the British news articles?

The table below shows some calculations of metaphorical expressions obtained from the dataset. It is striking that there were only 36 expressions among 129 concordances of different keywords, accounting for approximately 27.9%. Some concordances that do not yield any metaphorical expressions are those of the keywords *manager*, *founder*, and *entrepreneur*. While the highest number of expressions are found in concordances of *executive*, at 22 (equivalent to roughly 61% for N=36), those of the others are marginally from 1 to 5 expressions. The number of concordances for *the executive* was the highest, which appears to be positively proportionate with the figure of its metaphorical expressions, but the same is not applied to the other keywords. A snapshot of these results is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1.

Number of metaphorical expressions

Queried keywords	First query	Second query (duplications & irrelevance filtered)	Number of metaphorical expressions
boss	27	6	2
CEO	23	10	4
entrepreneur	7	1	0
leader	17	5	2
director	68	26	5
founder	23	3	0
manager	22	5	0
the head	14	5	1
executive	209	68	22
TOTAL (N=)	410 (130 articles)	129 (57 articles)	36

Metaphorical expressions taken from the dataset are grouped under particular categories corresponding to their topic, in which expressions related to the nature of executive position are dominant. Table 1 below presents the frequency calculations of the categories, with the most frequent metaphor being about the executive position, at 61.1%. This is followed by metaphor about business management and gender-related issues, at 16.7% and 13.9%, respectively. The proportion of metaphors about career/career progression is 8.3%, which is also the lowest in the table.

Table 2.

Topics of metaphorical expressions

Topics	Frequency	%
Executive position	22	61.1
Business management	6	16.7
Gender-related issues	5	13.9
Career/Career progression	3	8.3
TOTAL (N=)	36	100

Topic 1: EXECUTIVE POSITION (Table 3)

In this topic, EXECUTIVE POSITION IS A HIGHER LOCATION is noticeably represented by more metaphorical expressions than any others. This is realized through different phases of the prepositions “up” when mentioning promotion and “down” for resignation. The higher location is mapped onto, the greater responsibility and authority that a person in an executive position takes. This is further realized through some concepts denoting physical, measurable distance of height such as "scale," "rank," "scale," or through "mountain" and "ascent."

Besides, the metaphor EXECUTIVE POSITION IS A CLOSED SPACE is represented through prepositions “into” and “out of” normally associated with movement into a closed space. This is also realized through the use of “door” which was used twice in the dataset, and “open” referring to the status of a space. A space is often empty and available until it is filled with people or objects, but it can be confined to a particular size when it is surrounded by walls, at which point people or objects can only enter the space when there is an entrance open and the space is still enough. This is mapping to executive positions for women, likening their lack of promotion to higher roles in their organization to being discouraged from entering a closed space. When more opportunities are given to them, it is similar to the space’s door being opened, and the wider it is, the more opportunities women can take to fill in executive positions.

It is also notable that the metaphor CAREER PROGRESSION IS A CONSTRUCTION is represented by the word “pipeline” appearing three times from the investigated dataset. The physical “pipeline” allows the flow of water or liquid for an area to be mapped onto people in executive positions. The physical pipeline is an underground construction to ensure water provision, which is likened to the system of talents holding significant executive roles to ensure the operation of a business.

Finally, the metaphor EXECUTIVE POSITION IS NOBLE is realized through the use of “patrician” when referring to people of high social ranks, such as aristocrats. These people are considered the highest class in society, possessing some superior qualities and authority. These characteristics are mapped onto people holding executive positions who also possess working skills far better than the other employees and are given some power to manage and assign tasks to their lower levels.

Table 3.

Metaphor about EXECUTIVE POSITION

Mapping	Metaphorical lexical unit	N	Example
EXECUTIVE POSITION IS A HIGHER LOCATION	Step down	4	Inga Beale, the first female chief executive of Lloyds of London, is to step down as the head of the insurance market next year.
	Going up ladder	1 1	It gets harder for everyone going up the ladder – men and women.
	Come up ranks	1 1	...too few women were coming up through the ranks into senior...
	Move up scale	1 1	What I've been hearing over and over again from women is the difficulty there seems to be in being able to move up the scale , in an area that suits you.
	Mountain ascent	1 1	It's a very difficult ascent of the patrician mountain , and corporations should be grooming their next tier of executives to include women.
EXECUTIVE POSITION IS A CLOSED SPACE	Step into	1	If they want to step into the business executive side or arenas that are not perceived as traditional roles for women, ...
	Move into	1	...so that at least one woman has a chance to move into that senior executive role.
	Door Wide open	2 1	Rebecca Allen, the managing director of Decca records, said: "I honestly believe that the door is wide open to women. Morrison followed a number of other high-profile women out of the door
EXECUTIVE POSITION IS A CONSTRUCTION	pipeline	3	Putting token women on their boards or photographs on their careers website won't make a difference to the executive pipeline .
EXECUTIVE POSITION IS NOBLE	patrician	1	It's a very difficult ascent of the patrician mountain,...

Topic 2: BUSINESS/BUSINESSWOMEN (Table 4)

BUSINESS refers to the buying and selling activity of an enterprise, and the metaphor BUSINESS IS A BUILDING is depicted through the use of "barriers," "rising," and "pinnacles." Barriers are often physical obstacles that hinder people's movement or passage, rising refers to upward movement, while pinnacle denotes a pointed tower on top of a building. These meanings are likened to challenges in business and how the businesswoman overcomes those challenges to improve the business activity and maintain its growth until it reaches the highest level of achievement.

As for BUSINESSWOMAN, the first metaphor, BUSINESSWOMEN IS A VEHICLE

CONTROLLER, is depicted through the use of "steer" and "helm". "Steer" refers to the action of controlling a vehicle such as a ship or an automobile, while "helm" represents the wheel to control a ship's rudder. These two literal meanings are mapped onto the way a businesswoman runs the business. Besides, the metaphor BUSINESSWOMAN IS A FIGHTER is depicted by the word "grapple". The literal meaning of this word is to hold someone while fighting with them to win the fight, which is mapped onto the way the businesswoman struggles to solve the issue of attracting more women to work in the field.

Table 4.

Metaphor about BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Mapping	Metaphorical lexical unit	N	Example
BUSINESS IS A BUILDING	pinnacle rising barriers	1 1 1	Still, her plan to turn around a difficult year for Facebook by hiring, er, the former deputy prime minister Sir Nick Clegg did at least show there are no insurmountable barriers to rising to the pinnacle of business.
MANAGING BUSINESS IS CONTROLLING A VEHICLE.	steer	1	Nooyi helped steer PepsiCo away from a dependence from sugary soft drinks and snacks such as Doritos and toward healthier but less profitable baked chips and water brands like Lifewtr and Bubly.
	helm	1	Moya Greene, one of the FTSE 100s few female bosses, is to step down from the helm of Royal Mail.
MANAGING BUSINESS IS FIGHTING.	grapple	1	The head of the UK's largest power station is grappling with the question of how to attract more women into the energy sector.

Topic 3: GENDER-RELATED ISSUES (Table 5)

Metaphors about GENDER-RELATED ISSUES concern GENDER EQUALITY and GENDER DISCRIMINATION. The verb "boost", whose basic meaning is used to describe the action of increasing physical objects in quantity, is mapped onto efforts to improve gender equality in business executive positions. As for gender discrimination, the word "pervasive" predicates the argument "sexism" – or gender discrimination. This adjective is associated with entities that can exist and spread, which in this dataset depicts how common gender discrimination is in the financial sector. The most interesting comparison likens gender discrimination to "glass ceiling". This concept accentuates the invisible but confining nature of gender discrimination, which prevents women from being promoted to higher levels, hardly offering them opportunities to advance their positions, which is similar to being separated from the higher levels as a "ceiling." Still, this concept implies this sexism can be stopped as the glass material can be broken, or be "cracked".

Table 5.

Metaphor about GENDER-RELATED ISSUES

Mapping	Metaphorical lexical unit	N	Example
GENDER EQUALITY IS AN OBJECT	boost	1	Gadhia, who designed the 10-point charter to boost gender equality in the financial sector, did not name the two banks but told MPs on the Treasury select committee...
GENDER DISCRIMINATION IS A SPREADING ENTITY	pervasive	1	sexism in financial sector is ' pervasive '
GENDER DISCRIMINATION IS A SURFACE	Glass ceiling crack	2 1	Stacey Cunninghams appointment as NYSE president raises hopes that the glass ceiling has finally cracked on Wall Street

Topic 4: CAREER/CAREER PROGRESSION (Table 6)

CAREER PROGRESSION is represented by RACE, JOURNEY, and CONSTRUCTION. As for CAREER PROGRESSION IS A RACE, the competition between different competitors denoted by the words "rival" and "race" is mapped onto rivalry between female and male candidates in the world of work. The one winning the race is the one who possesses outstanding working skills to be selected for taking executive roles. CAREER PROGRESSION IS A JOURNEY, on the other hand, is represented through the use of "pathway". "Pathway," in its literal sense, describes the track for moving toward a physical destination. This is mapped onto people's career advancement, which also requires route planning to reach the destination of a particular higher position in their workplace or field. Finally, CAREER IS A VEHICLE is depicted by the use of "navigate," whose literal meaning denotes tracking the position to identify the direction of vehicle movements, such as ships or boats. This is mapped onto the way a famous businesswoman – Dynan – helps young people identify the direction for their careers.

Table 6.

Metaphor about CAREER/CAREER PROGRESSION

Mapping	Metaphorical lexical unit	N	Example
CAREER PROGRESSION IS A RACE	Rival race	1 1	ITV is closing in on naming Carolyn McCall as its new chief executive after it emerged that the man many considered her main rival is out of the race .
CAREER PROGRESSION IS A JOURNEY	pathway	1	If they want to step into the business executive side or arenas that are not perceived as traditional roles for women, that's where the difficulty comes about, that pathway is not open to them
CAREER IS A SHIP	navigate	1	Dynan, too, has found herself on the other end of the equation – being a role model for younger female colleagues, helping them figure out their career goals and navigate their field.

Research question 2: What different social practices are associated with the businesswomen reflected through those metaphorical expressions?

The metaphorical expressions as obtained and presented in the outcomes for research question 1 also reflected the businesswomen participating in different social practices besides their usual business ones. These social practices portray businesswomen with different attributes that are demonstrated in their business practices and metaphorical practices.

The first social practice is CLIMBING, which is realized through the metaphor EXECUTIVE POSITION IS HIGHER LOCATION with the highest number of eight metaphorical lexical units. To get to a higher location, a person may adopt different way besides climbing such as jumping or flying, but the sense of climbing seems to be clearer with the use of some words such as “ladder”, “ranks”, “scale”, “mountain” and “ascent”. The businesswoman aiming for advancement to executive position is portrayed as a climber getting to a higher place on a ladder or the mountain, from which qualities of a climber such as endurance, patience, and strength are represented.

The second social practice is MARITIME. This is realized through metaphors CAREER IS A SHIP and BUSINESSWOMAN IS A VEHICLE CONTROLLER. Three lexical units which are “navigate”, “steer”, and “helm” help represent the roles of businesswomen as those working in maritime. Specifically, praised as the person helping other young females identify the direction for their career, the businesswoman Danya is depicted as the navigator helping these females “navigate their field”, in which sense the career is also perceived as the sea with indefinite horizon and high difficulty in deciding the right direction. Also, when the businesswomen in the article are described in terms of how they run the business, “steer” and “helm” are used to portray them as the captain steering and controlling the ship's rudder for moving in a particular

direction. This also entails perceiving the business as the ship and the market with jitters and unexpected changes as the sea. This social practice seems to accentuate the businesswomen's qualities as those of sea captains who are often viewed to be stable, confident, brave, and adept at controlling skills.

The third social practice is RACING, which is represented by the metaphor CAREER PROGRESSION IS A RACE using two metaphorical lexical units "rival" and "race". In a race, the winner tries to move faster than the others to finish the track within the shortest time and stand on the highest podium to receive the trophy. The businesswomen's rivalry with their male colleagues also requires them to express working skills superior to the male rivals to take the executive position, which is higher than that of other non-executive employees in their workplace. In this portrayal, businesswoman's speed, excellent working skills and competitiveness are highlighted.

The fourth social practice is FIGHTING. This is realized through the metaphor BUSINESSWOMAN IS A FIGHTER, represented through the word "grapple with". The action of grappling denotes a boxer or wrestler trying to seize and knock out their opponents in a fight, which depicts the businesswoman as a fighter dealing with an issue in their executive role. Following this understanding, an issue in business is perceived as the opponent, while taking the executive role is perceived as stepping into the ring. In this social practice, the highlighted qualities of the businesswoman could be toughness, strength and problem-solving skills.

Discussion

The findings reinforce one major theme of previous studies related to businesswomen which is their achievements and talents. This theme is supported by the representation of businesswomen's favorable qualities in holding executive positions, which can be interpreted from different social practices that they are involved in. Some noticeable and recurring qualities are working skills (in RACING, MARITIME, and FIGHTING), or endurance (in CLIMBING). This positive portrayal aligns with businesswomen's character and success, which were highlighted in the media in the previous work (Power et al., 2019; Sonbol, 2014). Considering the business context in the UK, this appreciation supports the claim that the UK is highly appreciated for their female entrepreneurship (Burt, 2015). This entrepreneurship is illustrated by an increase in female representation in FTSE 100 Boards during five years 2014-2018 thanks to UK government's attempts to support women with their business (Women's Business Council (WBC): Five Years on Report, 2018). Besides, semantic mapping of EXECUTIVE POSITION, GENDER-RELATED ISSUES, and CAREER PROGRESSION highlight the difficulties of businesswomen taking or aiming for executive roles, which are also identical to their minority of senior level portrayed by the media as mentioned in Cooper's (2019). This reflects that fact that, despite the UK government's efforts, the lack of gender diversity is existent in UK boardrooms possibly because women "typically have higher risk-awareness" compared to men and "less likely to believe they possess entrepreneurial skills" (Rose, 2018, p. 10).

The findings, however, challenge the results of some previous research. First, there is no

portrayal of businesswomen in terms of work-life balance although this topic is relatively common in findings of some previous research (Bjursell & Bäckvall, 2011; Cooper, 2019; Kropsu, 2019; Risbourg, 2018). Second, different social practices that are found from the dataset also suggest different qualities of women in executive roles, one of which lean towards male-stereotyped attribute which is strength (in CLIMBING and FIGHTING). This differs from Risbourg (2018), who found that media depicted businesswomen as lacking male characteristics. This highlight of male-stereotyped strength may be an attempt to prove that businesswomen possess entrepreneurial skills as good as their male colleagues to work at executive levels, but it may also be an indicator for the UK business context in reality where businesswomen need to make substantial efforts. This portrayal is possibly a call for more government support for the businesswomen, which has also been present in an official report by Burt MP, Government Ambassador for Women in Enterprise in the UK (Burt, 2015).

Conclusion

This study yields some results of an investigation into how metaphorical lexical units in the dataset portraying conceptual metaphor related to businesswomen and sketch them as participants in different social practices. While the most frequent mapping is related to EXECUTIVE POSITION, other mappings of GENDER-RELATED ISSUES, BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, CAREER/CAREER PROGRESSION are also remarkable. The outcomes also demonstrate five social practices in which possible qualities of businesswomen are portrayed, including MARITIME, FIGHTING, RACING, and CLIMBING. The representation in general shows article writers' appreciation for businesswomen's qualities.

This study is limited in terms of the number of articles investigated and the short time span. Therefore, further research may increase the number of articles, select them over a longer period, and adopt more categories of van Leeuwen's social actor framework for analysis to hopefully sketch a more comprehensive media of businesswomen and other subjects significant to the research in the field of CDA.

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Students' Perspective on Applying AI in English Learning and Teaching – A Study at UEH


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ABSTRACT

Keywords: AI application, students' perspective, teachers' roles

With the rapid advancement of technology, the integration of high-tech tools, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), into language learning and teaching has become increasingly popular. This surge is accompanied by numerous studies exploring the evolving roles of teachers and the effective application of AI in English instruction. This research explored students' perspectives on AI in English learning and its use by teachers at the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH). Using a mixed-method approach, data was gathered through a questionnaire survey and in-depth interviews with 50 first-year students majoring in Accounting, Finance, and International Business. The findings indicate that students hold realistic and well-balanced views on teachers' use of AI in English teaching, showing appropriate attitudes toward its classroom application. The results suggest that English teachers should adopt AI sensibly and creatively to maximize its potential benefits while avoiding over-reliance on this powerful tool.

Introduction

Using artificial intelligence (AI) in language teaching and learning is becoming increasingly popular, not to say, a must nowadays. There have been numerous studies on the redefined roles of teachers in the AI era, wherein educators are expected to act as facilitators, assisting students in understanding the advantages and disadvantages of AI as well as its practical applications (Malcolm, 2023) and guiding them in using AI tools for learning (Campell, 2024). According to Abdulrahman's study (2024), college instructors can take on the roles of learning coaches and designers of learning experiences, helping students navigate AI-driven learning environments and create learning experiences that AI enhances. At the TESOL 24 International Convention & Expo organized in America in March 2024, the participants were impressed by a band roll that read: "AI will not Replace us but Those who do not Use AI Will Be Replaced By Those who do" (with some capitalized letters to highlight the point). It is obvious that

irrespective of which group they are in - early adopters, early majority, late majority, or laggards, English teachers working in the era of the rapid advancement of technology are expected to employ this powerful tool to improve their work efficiency and effectiveness. At the University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City (UEH), English teachers have also been encouraged to explore and include AI in their teaching, with seminars/workshops on AI organized to keep them up to date on this new trend. To guarantee effective classes and prevent squandering time and energy, it is imperative, to begin with the needs of the students by carefully examining their perspectives and expectations regarding the AI application. The data collected then can be used by UEH's English teachers to decide how best to incorporate AI into their daily tasks.

To meet the study's objectives, the following research questions were addressed in the survey:

1. What are the students' perspectives on using AI in English learning?
2. What are the students' perspectives on the teachers' AI use in English teaching?

Literature review

Huang et al. (2023) meant that AI applications are mostly learning systems designed for particular groups of learners. These applications could be either language learning applications suggested for practicing or interactive platforms for interaction (Zou et al., 2023). Therefore, those mentioned trends should only be for AI applications supporting language learning in general. It is understandable that there was no clear classification of AI systems and technologies used for language acquisition in or outside of the classroom in the 512 contemporaneous journals Huang et al. (2023) examined among Web of Science, Scopus, and Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) till 2019.

According to Huang et al. (2023), the application of AI in language learning has caught the interest of many researchers in this century. These authors' systematic review of three popular scientific sources of educational journals shows that the number of publications for "AI-enhanced language learning" skyrocketed from 2000 to 2019 (Huang et al., 2023, p. 116). From a moderate amount of 31 papers in 2004, this topic was mentioned in 249 journals from the Web of Science, Scopus, and Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) in 2019. This recorded a significant rise in the frequency of AI in the scope of language learning.

More importantly, AI applications have been investigated in many aspects of this profession. Lee et al. (2015) mentioned an AI system providing real-time mistake corrections, which took after the prompt type of corrective feedback in second language teaching (Nava & Pedrazzini, 2018). This benefits learners in recognizing grammar usage for writing in the studied language. Furthermore, Johnson et al. (2017) found that interactive narratives from AI systems support practicing reading comprehension amazed learners. Interestingly, Wijekumar et al. (2017) indicated that learners adopting the AI system to support reading comprehension outperformed students who did not use it in exams. These findings could demonstrate AI systems' significant impacts on language learning over the last decade.

From the categories of AI applications for language learning mentioned above, it can be stated that applications for practicing should be for self-learning, while interactive platforms have been examined to create a significant difference for in-class learning (Zou et al., 2023). These authors pointed out that interactive-based AI channels would create a "hybrid" approach in class

to boost the motivation of learners to commit to producing oral outputs in language learning (Zou et al., 2023, p. 11). This argument has been reaffirmed by Pham (2022), who said that AI tools did help language teachers engage the class efficiently. More importantly, AI tools did adequately impact participants' learning efficiency compared to the group without AI usage (Zou et al., 2023). Nguyen and Nguyen (2024) found similar results when they learned that AI applications could boost performance in language learning. This could be the case when examining the effectiveness and efficacy of AI tools in in-class language learning.

Despite the stated growth of AI applications in language learning, there are obstacles to implementing AI in the classrooms. Huang et al. (2023) recognized three positive points for using AI in language learning, most of which are from applications and systems for self-learning. Meanwhile, regarding the disadvantages of this trend, many publications pointed out the issues of reliability and acceptance of both teachers and students for in-class usage. Grimes & Warschauer (2010) and Johnson (2007) criticized accuracy in feedback and evaluation of AI systems assisting language acquisition for faults in assessing learners' performance, causing uncertainty in use. According to Lin et al. (2017), this drawback triggered reluctance to use AI from learners who had limited experience with e-learning platforms. Meanwhile, Pokrivcakova (2019) mentioned the teachers' resistance to AI systems due to challenges from knowledge and experience in using this type of technology. Therefore, there are still constraints to applying AI systems for language learning in a classroom context.

These aforementioned studies illustrate that AI applications for language in-class learning could be explored further. Henceforth, this study will investigate how students perceive this trend, which goes beyond learning to recommend preferred ways to use AI tools in the classroom to maximize benefits and minimize the drawbacks stated by Huang et al. (2023).

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

To explore how the students at UEH perceived and expected AI to be used in their English classes, the first-year students majoring in Accounting, Finance, and International Business in three classes were fully informed about the purpose of the study, and 50 of them voluntarily agreed to become the participants to answer the questions on a paper questionnaire. Those students have a high level of language proficiency because they come from classes where all instruction is conducted in English, and the program requires IELTS certificates with a minimum score of 6.5. Of these fifty, eighteen willing participants consented to participate in follow-up, structured interviews to elaborate on their responses to specific topics. The data was gathered on the final day of their English course, giving the students sufficient time to reflect and thoughtfully respond to the questions.

Design of the Study

The paper-based questionnaire comprised different questions, including closed, open-ended, and rating. The first eight questions focused on the students' employing AI in studying English. The other three were to find out how they expected AI to be used by teachers in language classes, to which 50 participants just responded quickly with short answers. Meanwhile, the focus of the informal interviews was to delve deeper into the participants' expectations relating to AI in language learning and teaching. Therefore, the eighteen willing participants would

work more closely with the researcher on these last three questions, especially question 11, elaborating on their opinions regarding how teachers should exploit AI in teaching English. All questions were asked in Vietnamese to ensure they were fully understood and appropriately addressed. Additionally, a pretest was conducted with ten students, and improvements were made to the questionnaire before the final one was delivered to the participants. This action is to create a prolonged observation for the efficacy of the questionnaire that assures credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 2003).

Data Collection & Analysis

In each class, before the participants were delivered the paper questionnaire, they were again clearly informed about the study's aim. Then, some questions were elaborated to ensure there would be no misunderstanding. The students were also encouraged to ask for clarification if they felt confused by any words/phrases or ideas in the questionnaire. After the questionnaire was collected, each volunteer student had an informal interview with the writer in ten or fifteen minutes.

Epistemologically, this paper adopts interpretivism based on the described research context. According to Bryman (2016), interpretivism is the concept that brings out knowledge by explaining the actions of humans in a specific discipline. He defined interpretivism by contrasting it with positivism, the epistemology standpoint to advocate knowledge in natural science by finding “the truth” from testing theories, which contributes to establishing universal laws of nature (Bryman, 2016, p. 24). In the context of this research, the participants will give detailed answers to the questions about specific topics related to the usage of AI in higher education. With these inputs, analyzing the meanings of the students’ words should be a suitable and preferred method. This would also be synchronized with Bryman’s interpretivism concept mentioned above.

This research collects data via a quantitative questionnaire and qualitative interview to discover participants’ viewpoints. Hence, the research method identified should be a mixed one. On the one hand, qualitative research is suggested to be a sound approach for studying "naturally occurring cases" using subjective verbal data rather than objective statistics by Cohen et al. (2018, p. 245). The qualitative research approach would be effective for this study as the research questions mentioned above are open-ended and are intended to learn about the students’ perception of AI applications in language learning and their expectations for AI usage in English classes at UEH. On the other hand, as this research studies students of a university, the qualitative approach should be more efficient as it needs a certain number of samples from a large population (Cohen et al., 2018; Bryman, 2016). Therefore, a mixed-method study should be the most suitable description for this paper’s approach. This research strategy would provide insights extracted from an in-depth understanding of the behaviors and attitudes’ meanings toward specific cases while assuring certainty when researching innumerable populations (Bryman, 2016, Cohen et al., 2018).

Results/Findings and Discussion

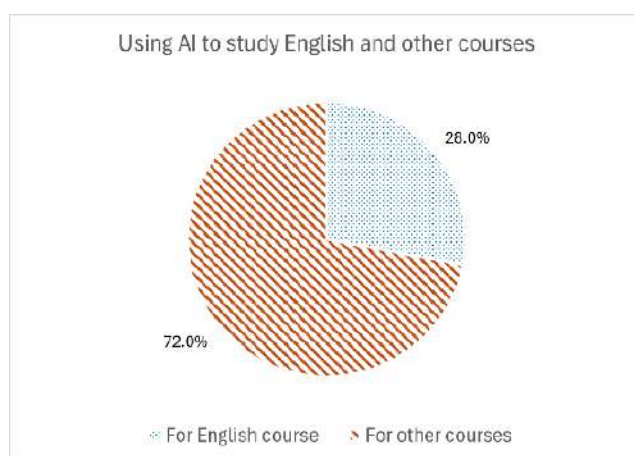
The data collected from the first eight questions were to answer Research question 1: *What are the students' perspectives on using AI in English learning?*

Questions 1 & 2. AI and English learning

The first question was about employing AI for courses at school. It was a little surprising to find that only 14 students (28%) replied they used AI more for English learning. The other 36 ones (72%) stated that they primarily utilized AI for other courses since it was very helpful to them in gathering and organizing ideas for the assignments and projects assigned by the lecturers. For question 2, most students (92%) responded they had heard a lot about using AI in language teaching and learning.

Figure 1

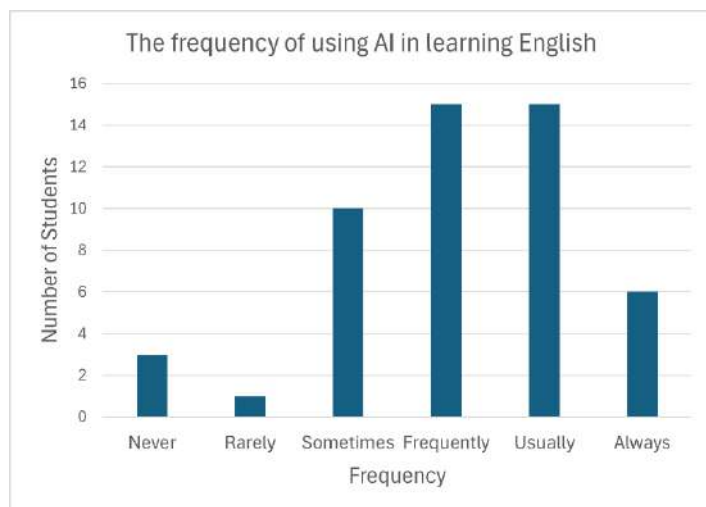
Using AI to study English and other courses



Question 3. The frequency of using AI in learning English

When asked about the frequency of using AI for language learning, three students (6%) stated that they did not use AI when studying English. The explanations were that they did not think it was necessary to do so and preferred to listen to the teacher's voice or would rather learn/work directly with their English teachers.

Among the other 47 students, the same number (15) replied that they used it frequently and usually. Six students responded that they always used AI for English learning, 10 ticked the 'sometimes' box, and only one chose the option of rarely using AI.

*Figure 2**The frequency of using AI in learning English*

Question 4. AI apps/tools used

From the list of popular AI tools for language learning, 84% of the students circled Chat-GPT, 66% chose Grammarly, and 28% went for Notion. For the apps, Duolingo was the most popular one with 30 votes, and Elsa came next with 8 ticks. Besides the tools and apps listed on the questionnaire, the students added some others such as Gemini, Quizlet, Quillbot, and eJoy.

Questions 5 & 6 Benefits and Drawbacks of AI for English learning

As far as advantages are concerned, the participants responded that AI, with its very high processing speed, strongly supported them in finding and learning business terms for their disciplines, and it was extremely useful in the brainstorming phase when they had trouble coming up with ideas or ran out of them. Moreover, since there were no restrictions on time and place when using these apps and tools for language learning, the students could study English anytime and anywhere with AI. Therefore, they could efficiently allocate and save significant time when completing assignments or homework. Besides, they were assisted in consolidating their knowledge of grammar and, to some extent, in improving their pronunciation. In particular, since there were so many students in one class and their teacher was unable to correct every writing paper in-depth, the students found it very helpful that AI could edit their projects or write papers. Another significant benefit of using AI in language learning was that this tool helped to customize their learning pathways and provide appropriate guidance for their study. In addition, there was a marked increase in interaction with English, which is a crucial contributing factor for successful language learners.

With regards to the disadvantages, most of the responses were mainly about the incorrect information or data provided by AI's large database, which resulted in the students spending a lot of time checking and even double-checking the answers given. Moreover, AI provided either stereotypical information/data or wrong answers due to the fact that it was "lazy" and/or could not comprehend the instructions entered. Another concern was that the students did not have the required and profound knowledge of using technology. Therefore, they could not take advantage of the apps or tools for language learning and failed to prompt AI well, leading to confusing and unexpected answers. A few students also mentioned the drawback of high fees

for certain apps/tools, deterring some students from exploiting AI. The last disadvantage mentioned was working alone with AI, the students gradually became bored, lost their persistence, and finally ceased their independent learning.

Question 7a. The main reasons for the widespread use of AI in English learning

When asked about two main reasons for the extensive use of AI in learning English, the participants replied that they could develop their autonomy due to its convenience, user-friendliness, time-saving, and cost-saving features. Moreover, they could choose from many free apps/tools to work with. From those facilities, the students could enlarge their vocabulary, improve their ideas for presentations, and complete writing papers, which required sound knowledge and composed from various sources of information in a short time without the teacher's support. In particular, to some students, AI could be viewed as a friend with whom they could interact, chat, and even debate or argue when bored. Additionally, privacy was guaranteed, and users were greatly satisfied with having their shy-to-ask questions promptly answered.

Question 7b. The main reasons for the low use of AI in English learning

On the other hand, a variety of responses about why AI is not utilized extensively in language learning were also provided. The first reason was that many other effective ways to learn English existed. For example, they could learn from or interact with other teachers/learners by using video calls. The second reason cited was that they did not want to rely too heavily on AI, preferring to challenge themselves in completing the tasks given. Overusing AI made them become passive and dependent, losing the ability to think independently and even inhibiting their creativity. Specifically, they were unable to create a distinctive writing style for their work because AI produced ideas and outputs that were identical or duplicated. They might eventually lose interest in studying as they begin to adopt passive learning habits over time.

Furthermore, the results produced by AI, particularly the conversation scripts and speeches, may seem robotic or "unnaturally" sounding in both written and spoken languages. Frequently, the content was inappropriate, or the vocabulary used was too complicated for the context. Besides, there was a worry regarding the protection of personal data.

Question 8. Self-studying with AI

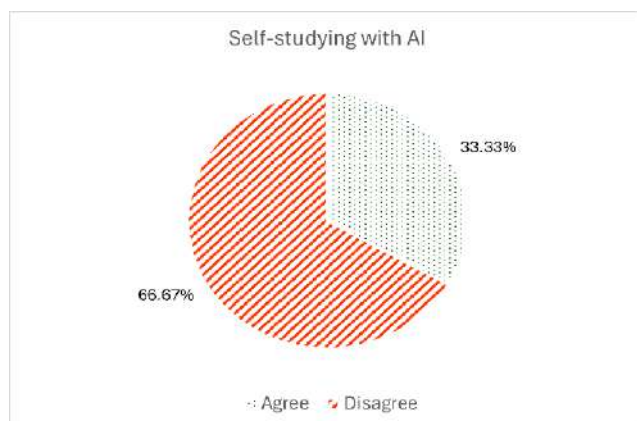
Regarding the opinion that AI was just suitable for self-studying outside class, two-thirds of the students showed their disagreement. They explained that though in most cases, the main drivers for utilizing AI were searching for information and finding answers/solutions to questions/tasks, both teachers and students could make use of AI in their own ways, provided that it was appropriately exploited, either for individuals or group work. The other explanation for this option was that there should be a combination of using AI inside and outside classes. To make the most of its benefits, information or data provided by AI should be used as references, or in other words, AI was just a device to support in the learning process.

A third, however, concurred that AI was only useful for independent study at home or outside of the classroom. They clarified that class time should be used for teacher-student interaction as well as the development of creativity and logical/critical thinking. Moreover, the primary purpose of AI was to support autonomous learning, which would optimally work when studying without teachers' help and guidance. Again, using AI in classes would make the students depend more on AI and concentrate less on teachers' instructions and lessons, wasting their time in

searching for information and finding answers/solutions to questions/tasks.

Figure 3

Self-studying with AI



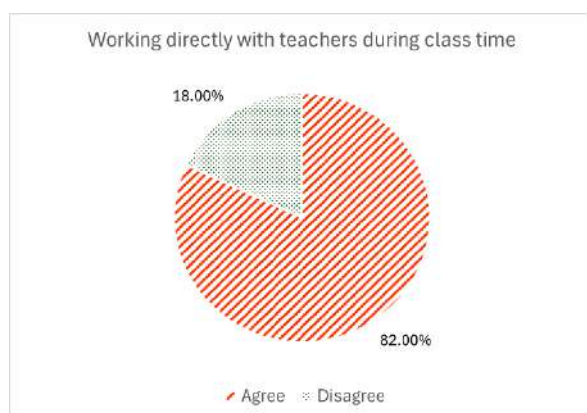
The responses from questions nine to eleven helped answer Research question 2: What are the students' perspectives on teachers' AI use in English teaching?

Question 9. Working directly with teachers during class time

According to statistics derived from the questionnaire, nine respondents showed their disagreement that class time should be for directly working with teachers. In contrast, 82% of the participants agreed that class time was for direct working with the teacher. In the interview, the students provided more details to clarify their answers, explaining that during class, students were expected to collaborate on discussions in pairs or small groups with their classmates as well as engage with the teacher. They highlighted the teacher's role in bringing effective learning time with clear instructions and detailed explanations for their questions, which AI definitely could not perform. They also expressed their preferences for working with humans over with AI. Teachers' sharing of their experiences was especially helpful, something that AI was unable to offer them. One student mentioned it was about money value – they paid the school fee to work with teachers, not with AI at school.

Figure 4

Working directly with teachers during class time

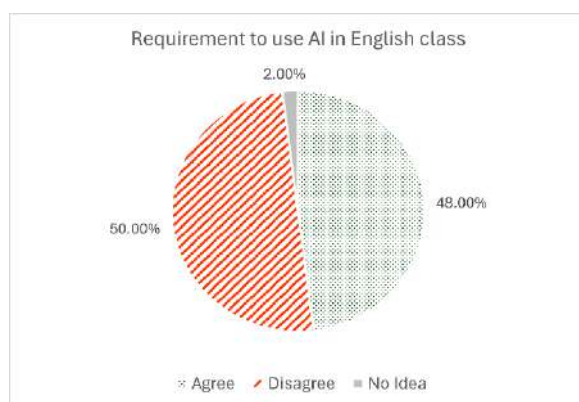


Question 10. Teachers' requirement to use AI in English class

Regarding whether the teacher should ask the students to employ AI in class time, half of the interviewees gave a negative response, 24 of them had the opposite opinion, and one replied that he/she had no idea. The explanations they had for selecting the No option were identical to the ones they gave for not utilizing AI substantially for English learning, which included diminishing their ability to think critically and work independently and becoming increasingly reliant on AI. One student explained that he/she felt it was as if the teacher was promoting dependence on AI if there was such a requirement, and another stressed that this requirement would not help learners develop their autonomy.

Figure 5

Requirement to use AI in English class



Question 11. Using AI in English classes at UEH

Most of the interviewees responded that AI should be used moderately or appropriately, accounting for only around 30% of a class session to avoid being heavily dependent on AI. With a large English class of nearly 50 students, the teacher should leave certain tasks for AI to perform. Specifically, AI should be employed to assist the teacher in teaching speaking and writing skills by setting up virtual speaking and writing rooms where the learners' pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and ideas can be improved and/or corrected. In their opinion, AI could greatly support creating quizzes and games to make the lessons more interesting. The teacher could also have various topics for discussions and conversations for listening and speaking activities from AI. One interviewee suggested that the students could be asked to talk or write about a topic, and then they would compare their works with the ones produced by AI, which helped them develop their autonomous learning. Once students have worked with AI beforehand, the teacher might cut down on their workload by only providing assistance with issues they cannot handle independently. Again, it is strongly recommended that AI should not be overused, especially when practicing writing emails or business letters because it would reduce the learner's critical thinking and creativity.

In particular, the students expected that the teacher would guide them in writing appropriate prompts or crafting suitable questions for AI, enabling them to receive accurate or suitable results from the system. Even more demanding, one student expected that an AI would be created especially for UEH students to utilize in their studies.

Discussion

The responses to the first two questions reflected that although participants perceived the importance of using AI in English learning, they prioritized using it for other courses. Their high level of English proficiency may explain that emphasis.

From the students' responses to questions 3 and 4, it is obvious that they are quite proactive in choosing and deciding how to use AI in language learning. They can be regarded as tech-savvy learners who can take advantage of new learning tools and apps without teachers' guidance or support. They are learners who were described as getting used to e-learning platforms, leading to adopting AI systems for language learning at ease, from Lin et al.'s (2017) arguments.

The answers to questions 5 to 7 revealed that, generally, the study subjects are fully aware of the benefits and drawbacks that AI brings to language learners. However, there are some conflicts in their responses relating to learner autonomy (questions 6 and 7a). While some students highlighted how AI helped them become autonomous learners, others expressed worry that their reliance on AI would grow overly strong, reducing their capacity for independent work.

One interesting finding from the comments on the benefits of AI is that because it may be regarded as a friend to the student, AI's support was not only for activities and task completion in the classroom but also in terms of emotion or spirit. This is a noteworthy point because, in reality, some students have struggled to form friendships with their peers. Despite participating in English class activities in pairs or groups, they have stated that they feel lonely and experience communication difficulties. This is affirmed by Zou et al.'s (2023) findings, which stated that AI interactive-based platforms could connect learners and boost their motivation to deliver oral language output. Johnson et al. (2017) also stressed that AI systems could amaze students when learning a language.

For questions 8, 9, and 10, statistically, there seems to be a little inconsistency in the participants' answers. Most of them advocated that class time should be spent working directly with the teacher, but only half disagreed with using AI in class. Nevertheless, their explanations for their choices showed that they have had a proper perception/awareness of the teacher's roles and AI's advantages and disadvantages. This inconsistency may come from the fact that there was a difference in the way they interpreted the questions and what the teacher aimed at. In addition, though encouraged to ask for clarification if there were any confusing ideas or words/phrases, they raised no inquiries to these questions.

The students' recommendations relating to question 11 are extremely useful to teachers. They reconfirm the teacher's roles with the low percentage of using AI in class. Their concrete examples offer clues or suggestions for teachers to creatively incorporate AI into their lessons. However, the teacher is expected to employ AI sensibly and effectively so that he/she can reduce the workload, enhance the learner's critical thinking and creativity, and support the development of their autonomy. This viewpoint, once again, is concurrent with Zou et al.'s (2023) findings that learners would prefer a "hybrid" approach in which AI systems should be applied in the classroom along with teachers' instructions, and may result in effective learning and improved exam performance.

Conclusion

The results indicate that students have appropriate attitudes toward the use of AI in English classrooms. They support the use of AI applications while fully understanding the advantages and disadvantages of AI, particularly the risk of becoming dependent on it. Their views on the teachers' use of AI in English instruction are realistic and well-balanced; factors such as the effectiveness, role of the teacher, and extent of application are all taken into account.

It is inevitable that AI has to be used in language teaching and learning. However, it should be used only as a virtual teaching assistant. With their background strengths and ever-significant roles, English teachers should creatively and wisely employ AI in their own ways. Then, both learners and teachers can avoid being heavily dependent on AI and, even more, take advantage of and benefit greatly from this new trend in the era of rapid advancement of technology.

In this study, the fact that the participants come from classes where all instructions are given in English slightly influences the accuracy of their responses because they occasionally commented on studying English and other subjects. Besides, with the population of 50 students and their background of high language proficiency, it is impossible to generalize that all the students at UEH have had the same perceptions and expectations about using AI in their English classes, and it is unwise to apply the mentioned-above recommendations to all of the students there. Therefore, it is proposed that further research should be done on different student groupings.

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The Effectiveness of ChatGPT in Students' Practicing Writing Skills: A Study at HCM UPES

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: ChatGPT, Writing Skill, Language Learning

The research was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education and Sports (HCM UPES) to bridge the gap about the application of AI tool - ChatGPT in students' practice of writing skills in the physical education university context. The study tried to apply ChatGPT in a seven-week writing practicum. The researcher, who is also the lecturer in charge of English module two, introduced and guided students to use ChatGPT when they conducted their writing task in four units. Students then answered the questions in the survey and took part in face-to-face interviews about using ChatGPT when they practiced writing skills. Data for the research was collected from students' test results (before and after ChatGPT was put into use), students' feedback through surveys and face-to-face interviews. The results showed that using ChatGPT positively affected UPES students' practice of writing skills. This result created more motivation for lecturers to conduct further research and introduce and apply AI technologies to students in their teaching practice.

Introduction

In the era of Industry 4.0, "numerous technology tools are introduced to support the learning and teaching process" (Tran, 2024, p. 1), and the incorporation of AI into contemporary digital learning systems has brought about an innovative approach to education, transforming conventional methods. De la Vall and Araya (2023) provided examples of typical AI tools that can support English language learning, categorized into three groups based on their own purposes and features: Google Translate (machine translation tools), Duolingo (language tutoring systems), and OpenAI's GPT-3 (language generation systems). Among these tools, ChatGPT, an AI-powered language model, is "a powerful tool that helps students improve their

writing skills” (Abdullayeva & Musayeva, 2023, p. 62).

Research has examined the application of ChatGPT and similar AI technologies in higher education, highlighting the growing interest in their use (Rawas, 2024; Firat, 2023; Iskender, 2023). The advantages of utilizing ChatGPT for practicing English writing include “helping students generate ideas” (Mubaroq, Kamalia, & Zenico, 2024, p. 180); “boosting motivation and engagement among self-directed learners” (Firat, 2023, p. 1); serving as a resource that supports the processes of planning, translating, and evaluating” (Levine et al., 2024, p. 10); and fostering “motivation, self-efficacy, engagement, and a tendency for collaborative writing” (Teng, 2024, p. 8).

In addition to the benefits, studies have also identified drawbacks in using ChatGPT for writing practice. Kovačević (2024, p. 1) highlighted challenges, including “the risk of plagiarism, limited interactivity, algorithmic bias, and the potential suppression of creativity.” AlAfnan et al. (2023, p. 1) alerted that unethical use of ChatGPT by students could “result in diminished human intelligence and a loss of learning.” Chukwuere (2024, pp. 41-42) pointed out ChatGPT can generate false information, and students may neglect critical thinking and independent research skills due to “the risk of over-reliance on content generated by ChatGPT.”

Literature review

The effectiveness of AI tools in improving writing skills

Artificial intelligence (AI) is defined as “computing systems that are able to engage in human-like processes such as learning, adapting, synthesizing, self-correction and use of data for complex processing tasks” (Popenici et al., 2017, p. 2). Akgun and Greenhow (2021, p. 433) made some comparisons and analyzed other researchers’ definitions about AI gave out hers as “the technology that builds systems to think and act like humans with the ability of achieving goals.”

A considerable number of studies suggest that AI tools can potentially enhance the writing proficiency of EFL learners. The study of Marzuki et al. (2023) investigated the impact of AI writing tools on the quality of student writing. The study results concluded that the use of these tools, such as Quill Bot, Word Tune, Jenni, ChatGPT, Paper pal, Copy.ai, and Essay Writer, had a positive impact on the students’ overall writing quality. Grammarly - one of the most accurate online grammar checkers in the world, according to Huang, Li, and Taylor (2020), is an effective tool for EFL students to improve their writing skills and for teachers to reduce their teaching workload. Rahman, Zulkornain, and Hamzah (2022) conducted a study that utilized Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE) to identify grammatical errors and enhance writing skills among students at Malaysian public universities. They also explored the students’ perceptions of using AI software for improving writing skills. The study’s findings revealed that students had a positive view of implementing AWE. Dong (2023) in her research assessed the effectiveness of AI-powered writing tools on students’ writing skills. The results indicated that the tool had a positive impact, demonstrated by significant improvements in students’ writing scores from the pre-test to the post-test. Additionally, the tool was found to enhance the teaching process by offering timely, individualized feedback, promoting student engagement, and

improving grading efficiency.

The drawbacks of AI tools in improving writing skills

Besides the benefits that AI tools can provide in practicing writing skills, these tools also have drawbacks. Darwin et al. (2024, pp. 1-2) expressed concerns about AI's limitations, highlighting issues such as “the lack of personalization, the potential to create echo chambers, and challenges in achieving nuanced understanding” when people excessively use this tool. In Lee, Davis, and Lee (2024) research, Korean university students are concerned about becoming overly reliant on AI-based tools and seeks assistance in developing their English writing skills. According to Alotaibi (2023, p. 3724), the key concern of using Grammarly- a software for “checking grammar and written context in English” (Hakiki, 2021, p. 100) is the risk of overreliance, which could weaken a writer's ability to learn independently and apply grammar rules. Relying solely on Grammarly's suggestions might lead to errors if the tool provides contextually incorrect or overly aggressive corrections, potentially altering the intended meaning. Additionally, Grammarly's support for specialized writing styles, such as technical or academic writing, is limited, and it may overlook important stylistic or structural issues. Privacy concerns also arise, as the text checked by Grammarly could be stored or accessed by the platform.

The effectiveness of ChatGPT in students' practice of English writing skill

ChatGPT is “a recently developed conversational chatbot created by OpenAI” (Lo, 2023, p. 1). There is research that has proved ChatGPT is an effective tool to help their students in their practice of writing skills. Wahyuddin, Hasman, and Ramadhani Idris (2023) conducted a study on the application of ChatGPT in teaching writing skills for university students. By comparing the results of the pre-test (when ChatGPT was not applied) and the post-test (when ChatGPT was applied), the authors presumed that using ChatGPT in class helped students “be creative in enhancing and developing their English language skills, especially in writing.” Arbi's research (2023, p. 77) confirmed the key benefits of using ChatGPT in an EFL setting include improving overall language proficiency and specific skills like grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and the core areas of writing, listening, speaking, and reading . Baskara (2023, pp. 46-49), listed out benefits of using ChatGPT in English writing class such as “provide personalized feedback and support for student; engage and motivate learners through natural language capabilities; support the development of language skills.” According to Su, Lin, and Lai (2023, pp. 6-9), outline preparation, content revision, post writing proofreading and reflection are tasks that ChatGPT can effectively help the learners to do. ChatGPT can help to support the prewriting, during-writing and post-writing phases. In the context of Vietnam education, Ho (2024) conducted research with 120 I.T. students in Vietnam who were learning English as a nonspecialized subject. The researcher concluded that the students had positive attitudes towards the use of ChatGPT in their English learning and practicing writing skill.

The drawbacks of ChatGPT in students' practice of English writing skill

Even though ChatGPT offers benefits for enhancing students' writing skills, this tool has certain limitations. Zebua and Katemba (2024, p. 114) argued that ChatGPT could potentially obstruct the growth of important writing abilities, including critical thinking, creativity, and originality.

They explained that when students extensively use AI-powered tools like ChatGPT to generate ideas and write texts, they may become less dependent on their own thinking, which could weaken their ability to think independently and be innovative. Barrot (2023, p. 4) raised concern that teachers might find it difficult to distinguish between a student's original work and content generated by ChatGPT, as this tool can create unique material that “may not be detected by online plagiarism checkers.”

The setting of teaching and learning English at UPES

While previous studies have explored the role of ChatGPT in language learning, there is a remarkable gap in research examining their effectiveness in physical education and sports contexts, where writing skill is not typically emphasized. The researcher of this research, a lecturer of English at Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education, conducted this research to contribute to the research literature on the topic of the effectiveness of ChatGPT in students' practicing writing skills. This research was conducted at Ho Chi Minh City University of Physical Education and Sports, a public institution dedicated to training qualified physical education teachers for all educational levels, from preschool to high school, as well as for sports training centers. However, the unique environment of this university presents certain challenges in English instruction. Specifically, students' English proficiency remains low, and the teaching facilities have not kept pace with societal advancements. This situation significantly impacts teaching and learning at the university, where lecturers rely on traditional methods that emphasize grammar and reading comprehension. Despite these challenges, students must meet an English proficiency standard of level 3/6 (B1) according to the European Reference Framework upon graduation (UPES, 2024; MOET, 2014). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), published in 2001 by the Council of Europe is the document that “provides a common basis for the elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks across Europe” (Council of Europe, 2001). People who meet the B1 standard according to this framework will be recognized as "Independent User", and are considered to have the ability to “understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure; deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken; produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest; describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans” (Council of Europe, 2001). Recognizing the students' needs in achieving this aim, the researcher, who is also an English course lecturer, made a literature review and identified ChatGPT as a potential tool to support the university's objectives and enhance students' writing skills. Tran and Ngo (2024, p. 65) stated that while English writing is the most essential skill for language learners to master, students often struggle to write English proficiently. Consequently, the lecturer introduced ChatGPT to students in the English language module. Initially, most students were unfamiliar with ChatGPT and found it confusing, especially for learning English and practicing writing skills. However, after a period of use, students gradually became accustomed to the tool. Through this study, the effectiveness of ChatGPT in the practice of writing skills of UPES students was evaluated.

Methods

Target

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of using ChatGPT in the practice of English writing skills HCMC UPES. Besides, it also revealed the students' opinions about the use of ChatGPT in their English learning and English writing skill.

The study was conducted in the second semester of the school year 2023-2024 from February to April 2024 to find answers to these two questions.

1. Is ChatGPT an effective tool for students at UPES to practice writing skills?
2. What are the first- year students' perceptions at HCMC UPES about the use of ChatGPT in their practice of English writing skills?

Sampling and sample size

The participants of this study were 150 first-year students in three K17 classes at HCMC UPES. They were taking part in module English 2 at HCMC UPES. There are two compulsory English modules, English 1 and English 2. The main curriculum used in teaching is "the English for Sports Course Book" compiled by the permanent lecturers of HCMC UPES. According to the program outline, during the module, students aimed to develop the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, along with additional grammar lessons that can be applied to practice these four skills. Students take the final exams by finishing a multiple-choice test that focuses on evaluating the students' knowledge in grammar and reading and writing skill. The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching, Assessment (CEFR), published in 2001 by the Council of Europe is the document that "provides a common basis for elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks across Europe" (Council of Europe, 2001). People who meet the B1 standard according to this framework will be recognized as "Independent User", and are considered to have the ability to "understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure; deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken; produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest; describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans" (Council of Europe, 2001).

Study design

In English Module 2, the primary writing task involves composing a paragraph on specific topics such as hobbies and favorite sports. To evaluate the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a tool for practicing writing skills, we introduced it to the first- year students for the final four writing units of the module. After completing each unit, the lecturer required the students to write a paragraph on a topic specified in the program outline, interacting with ChatGPT at both the beginning and end of the writing process. Specifically, the students initially used ChatGPT to build up their outline and brainstorm ideas. At this stage, they got feedback from ChatGPT about their first draft in terms of focusing on the content, organization, and structure. They then revised their work based on both their self-evaluation and ChatGPT's feedback. After this stage, students finished their writing on their own. As they reached the final stage of writing, the

students used ChatGPT to edit their writing, namely, to enhance the language style, vocabulary, and grammar of their final draft. Subsequently, students took a writing test, and their scores were compared to those from a similar test taken at the beginning of the semester, where Google Translate was used as the support tool. Both pre-test and post-test are designed to ask students to finish writing paragraphs with topics related to the Sports section. They were both graded according to the writing rubric scale built up by all lecturers of English at this university. It included the following domains: ideas, organization, introduction, word choice, and sensory details. Additionally, all students completed a survey, and the researcher also conducted face-to-face interviews with twenty selected students to gather more in-depth opinions and views on using ChatGPT for writing practice. These students were the ones who all lived in the university dormitory and volunteered to take part in the interview. They are “convenience sampling” as “they are affordable, easy and readily available” (Etikan, 2026, p. 2).

Instrument to collect the data

Two types of data were collected in this study, namely qualitative and quantitative. The students’ answers in the face-to-face interview were qualitative data. The mean score of the test and the students’ feedback in the survey are quantitative data in this study.

Results

Quantitative data

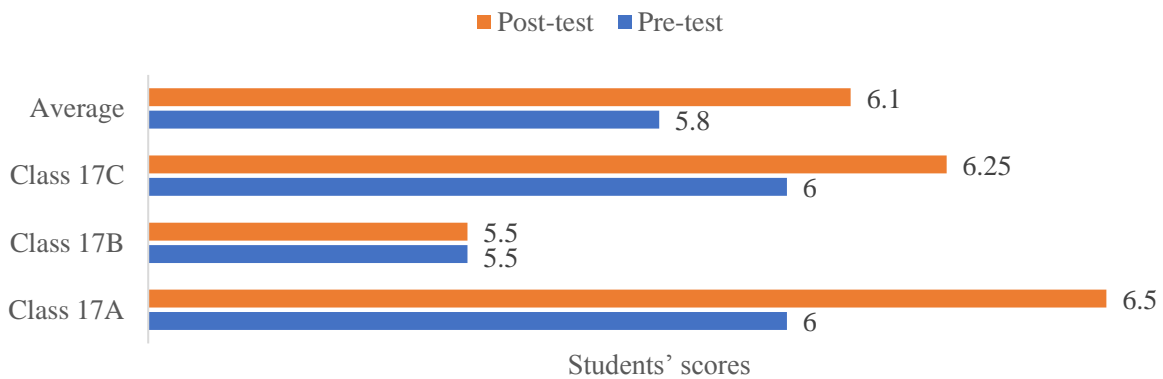
Test results

The mean score of the students at pre-test and post-test on the scale of ten in the three classes were illustrated in the table below. The lecturer chose the last test that the students did before they used ChatGPT as the pre-test. The post-test was the one that the students took after 4 lectures in which ChatGPT was used. The results of these two tests in all three classes were illustrated in Chart 1.

There is an upward trend in the average scores in the post-test (with the use of ChatGPT) in the three classes (except for the one the score of class 17B as it remained unchanged). It is a fact that the average scores of the three classes were not extremely high in both the pre-test and post-test; there was also a slight increase from 5.8 to 6.1 in the former and the latter, respectively. This evidence proves the positive impact that ChatGPT had on the students’ English learning process, especially in the practice of writing skills as reflected in their test results.

Chart 1.

The students’ scores in pre-test and post-test



The survey

After collecting the survey with the 10 numerically rated statements from the participants the researcher used the simple Excel software (ver. 2019) to analyze the data. The results of the statements were analyzed in groups to reflect the students’ beliefs, perceptions, and their motivations when they use ChatGPT as a support tool in their writing practice. As the student’s English is in the elementary level, the survey was in Vietnamese. The students evaluated the survey statements using a 5-point Likert scale (Joshi, Kale, Chandel, & Pal, 2015), where 1 corresponds to “strongly disagree” and 5 corresponds to “strongly agree.”

Chart 2.

Statement 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 on students’ belief about the effectiveness of using ChatGPT in practicing English writing skills.

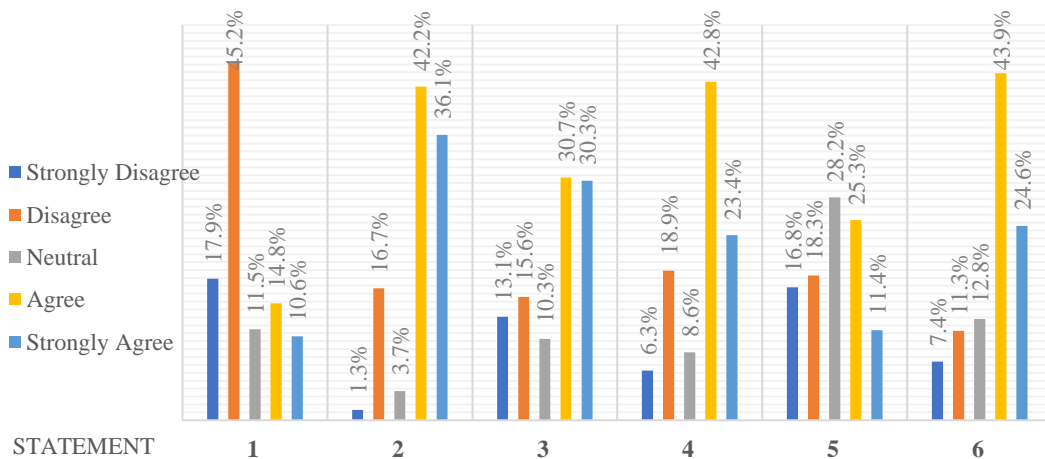


Chart 2 presents students’ feedback on statements 1 through 6 from the survey. These statements reflect students’ beliefs about the effectiveness of using ChatGPT in their English writing practice. According to the data, although only 25.4% of students found it easy to use ChatGPT as a supportive tool for practicing English writing (statement 1), the next four statements

indicate that ChatGPT significantly aided their English learning and writing improvement. Specifically, 78.3% of students agreed that “ChatGPT is an effective tool for understanding and correcting grammar and syntax errors” (statement 2). A notable 61% believed that “ChatGPT is helpful in expanding their vocabulary” (statement 3). Additionally, 66.2% of students felt that “ChatGPT offers useful suggestions for finishing writing” (statement 4). However, fewer students (36.7%) thought that “ChatGPT provides good feedback by correcting all the errors in their writing” (statement 5). Lastly, a substantial 68.5% of students believed that “ChatGPT helps identify areas for improvement in their writing process” (statement 6).

Chart 3.

Statement 7, 8, 9, 10 on students’ attitudes, perceptions, and motivations about the uses of ChatGPT in practicing writing skill

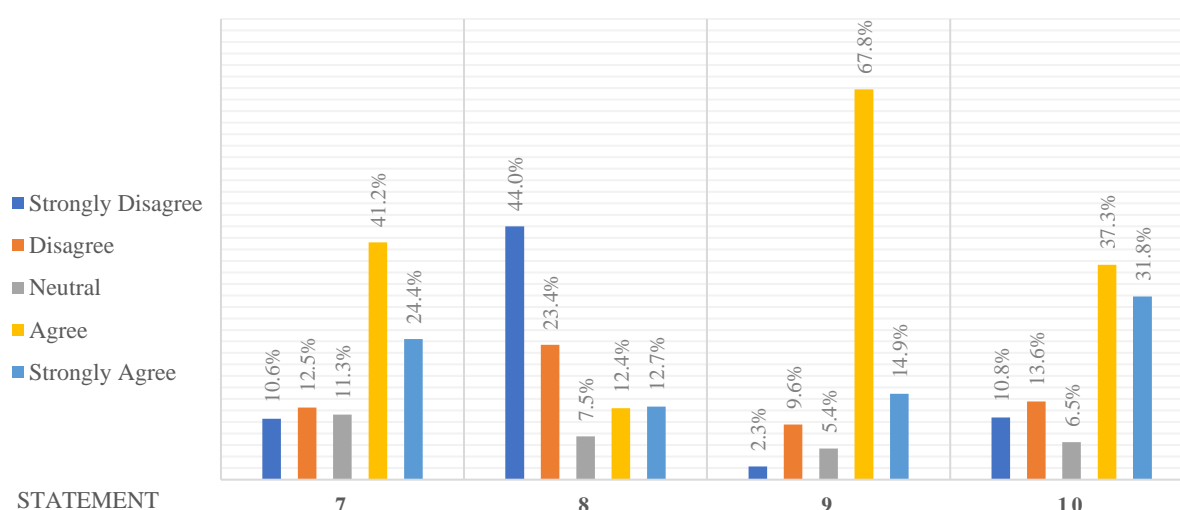


Chart 3 presents students’ feedback on statements 7, 8, 9, and 10. These statements investigate students’ attitudes, perceptions, and motivations when using ChatGPT as a supportive tool for practicing their writing skills. Feedback on statement 7 reveals that 65.6% students “feel more motivated to practice their writing with the use of ChatGPT.” However, statement 8 highlights a different aspect regarding students’ confidence in using this AI tool, with more than half of the students (67.4%) not feeling confident enough. Statement 9 illustrates student satisfaction with using ChatGPT for writing practice, with 82.7% expressing their satisfaction. Additionally, 69.1% of students believe that “ChatGPT greatly helped them improve their English writing skills,” as indicated by statement 10.

Qualitative data

The face-to-face interviews provided the author-researcher with deeper and more specific insights into students’ perspectives on using ChatGPT to practice writing skills. While ChatGPT offers dedicated support for learning English and practicing writing, students at UPES do not find it easy to use. Over half of the interviewed students explained that this is because ChatGPT is a new tool, and they have only recently gained access to it following introductions and guidance from the lecturers. The students mentioned that they were already familiar with and

frequently used Google, particularly Google Translate, as a support tool. Consequently, transitioning to ChatGPT has caused confusion. They often struggle with typing keywords and formulating questions effectively to achieve their desired outcomes in writing. Despite these challenges, students acknowledged ChatGPT's effectiveness in helping them review grammar points and apply them in writing practice. Student numbered 5 shared, "Previously, in high school, I only memorized grammar rules for tests, semester exams, and graduation exams. With the way we learn English in college, I did not know how to apply grammar to writing. However, by interacting with and utilizing ChatGPT's support, I found that I could complete my writing faster and more effectively." Regarding feedback and error correction, students explained why they disagreed with the idea that "ChatGPT can provide good enough feedback and support corrections for all the errors in my writing." Specifically, they noted that ChatGPT was not effective for assignments requiring the recounting of individual experiences. The students found it challenging to use ChatGPT in these scenarios because it cannot generate unique personal stories for everyone. Elaborating on their motivation and confidence when using ChatGPT to practice English writing, the students provided the lecturer-researcher with more details on this issue. Student numbered 18 explained, "In the past, I was very afraid of writing in English because I didn't know where to start when I had no ideas. However, with the support of ChatGPT, I feel like I can find the solution to this problem. I now have a desire to practice more so that I can improve my English writing skills by attempting several types of writing." Student numbered 9 shared similar sentiments, expressing that once they had completed the initial pieces with ChatGPT's help, they felt more confident and no longer viewed writing as a difficult skill. Instead, ChatGPT has instilled motivation and confidence in them to complete their writing assignments.

Discussion

In line with previous studies conducted by Barrot (2023), Baskara (2023), and Ho (2024), the findings of this research highlighted the effectiveness of ChatGPT in students' practice writing skills. First, the students' average scores in the post-tests slightly increased from 0.25 to 0.5 compared to the pre-test. Although this result showed that the increase in score between pretest and posttest was not as high as the similar result in Harunasari's study (2023), in which the difference between pretest and posttest was 3, and this helped to reaffirm the effectiveness of ChatGPT in the students' practice writing skills. In the lecturer's teaching experience at this university, although the increase in students' test scores reflects the effectiveness of the tool in training writing skills, this increase is not large because the students' English level is not high as well as they have not yet adapted to using the tool. Besides, the students' feedback from the survey showed that the students had positive attitudes on use of ChatGPT in their practice of English writing skills. This result is consistent with the results of previous studies by Ho (2024) who had the similar teaching context with the author of this research (teaching English to non majored students). The researchers themselves also acknowledged this in their observation notes. One of the characteristics of UPES students is that their strengths are physical subjects, so they have certain difficulties and barriers when studying English, especially when asked to perform exercises to develop listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in English.

Difficulty with low language proficiency and not appreciating the importance of learning English, students only advocate studying to pass the exam, thereby greatly affecting their motivation to study. Applying the ChatGPT tool to practice writing skills has brought certain positive effects. Thanks to the support of ChatGPT, students can orient and organize the ideas for their writing more easily. This is quite a crucial factor as students at UPES do not regularly access special academic materials, especially documents in English. With the support of ChatGPT, they can solve this difficulty. In addition, ChatGPT provides students with a variety of necessary sentence patterns and vocabulary to use in their writing. Besides, students can also receive feedback to correct errors in their writing by this AI tool. All the above factors have supported students with better writing products, creating more motivation to study English. Similar conclusions that ChatGPT can help increase students' motivation to learn English come from studies by Zebua and Katemba (2024) and Baskara (2023).

Conclusion

In the current 4.0 technology era, the application of AI in foreign languages learning and teaching is an inevitable trend of modern education. Thanks to the development of AI technology, students have opportunities to improve their language skills. The above study conducted at HCMC UPES has shown the positive effects of ChatGPT in the students' practice of writing skill. Given the evidence from this study that ChatGPT is a useful tool for training and practicing writing skills among UPES students, the researcher-lecturer plans to continue incorporating this application into their teaching. The findings of this study indicate promising new research avenues for educators and researchers interested in the effectiveness of using ChatGPT in language teaching and learning, as well as in the development of other skills such as listening, speaking, reading in English.

The researchers just conducted this study in a brief period with limited number and convenience participants in the context of HCMC UPES, thus they need more time to apply the AI technology in the future with a larger sample size. Specifically, further investigation is needed to determine how to maximize the effectiveness of ChatGPT as a support tool for enhancing writing skills. This initiative aims to support students' learning processes more effectively soon. Other research on this topic should also be done to provide further information about the effectiveness of ChatGPT in English learning and teaching as well as in the students' practice of other skills in English language. In addition, the researcher also proposed that the UPES management board pay more attention to upgrade facilities, equipment, and internet systems within the campus so that students and lecturers can apply information technology, typically AI technology in learning and teaching in the most effective way.

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Biodata

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Appendice

QUESTIONNAIRE CONTENT

1. You find it easy to use ChatGPT as a supportive tool for practicing English writing.
2. ChatGPT is an effective tool for understanding and correcting grammar and syntax errors.
3. ChatGPT is helpful in expanding the vocabulary.
4. ChatGPT offers useful suggestions for finishing writing.
5. ChatGPT provides valuable feedback by correcting all the errors in your writing.
6. ChatGPT helps identify areas for improvement in your writing.
7. You feel motivated to practice your writing with the use of ChatGPT.
8. You feel confident to practice your writing with the use of ChatGPT.
9. You feel satisfied to practice your writing with the use of ChatGPT.
10. ChatGPT helps you improve your English writing skill.

WRITING TEST RUBRIC SCORING

<u>Level</u>	<u>Description</u>
<i>Outstanding</i> Value: 9-10	Well written and very organized. Excellent grammar mechanics. Clear and concise statements. Excellent effort and presentation with detail. Demonstrates a thorough understanding of the topic.
<i>Good</i> Value: 5-8.5	Writes fairly clear. Good grammar mechanics. Good presentation and organization. Sufficient effort and detail.
<i>Fair</i> Value: 2-4.5	Minimal effort. Good grammar mechanics. Fair presentation. Few supporting details.
<i>Very Poor</i> Value: 0-1.5	Lacking effort. Very poor grammar mechanics. Very unclear. Does not address topic. Limited attempt.

The Analysis of Implicatures in Vietnamese Local Brand Slogans

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

implicature, implied meaning, Vietnamese slogans.

These days, it is evident that advertisements have become increasingly creative and accompanied by slogans that are meaningful as well as attractive. Therefore, the paper focuses on analyzing implicatures in the Vietnamese local brands' slogans, particularly those incorporating the terms "Việt" or "Việt Nam," with the purpose of finding out what type of implicature of each slogan as well as implied meanings and shared points between them. Based on the framework of the pragmatic identity approach of Erisha (2016), there were three main stages, starting with collecting slogans, analyzing them, and presenting the results. After researching, the author found five slogans that include the words "Việt" or Việt Nam." The study reveals that the slogans all express several of the same ideas, including top-notch products, care for customers, and deep-rooted respect for Vietnamese values and traditions.

Introduction

In such a competitive market nowadays, advertising serves a dual purpose. It not only introduces products to the public but also acts as a means for companies to reach their targeted customers (Bhasin, 2023). Advertisements play an integral role in many sectors like economy, food and beverage, marketing, electronics and more. They are ubiquitous across various forms of communication channels, such as newspapers, the Internet, and social media. It can be seen that advertising is ubiquitous in our daily lives. However, given the short duration of most ads, it is necessary for enterprises to create a unique slogan incorporating phrases or words capable of leaving a deep impression on buyers as well as delivering targets of enterprises, which can be revealed pragmatically. One of the six majors of language study is pragmatics which refers to the study of language in practical usage and how the meaning of words is understood in various contexts. The core focus of pragmatics lies in exploring how language is used to reach communicative goals by speakers and how meaning is interpreted by listeners and readers (Levinson, 1983; Yule, 1996; Huang, 2014; Tran, 2021). As stated by Yule (1996, p3), the four

primary areas of pragmatics include “the study of speaker meaning, the study of contextual meaning, the study of how more gets communicated than is said, and the study of the expression of relative distance.” On the other hand, Thomas (2013, p2) perceives pragmatics as the study of a speaker’s attention. Furthermore, from a pragmatic perspective, communication can be conceptualized as a procedure of encoding and decoding information, and implicature is a necessary element in comprehending language within specific contexts, specifically capturing the intended message that speakers aim to convey through their utterances.

The purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to analyze the slogans of Vietnamese local brands with the aim of uncovering the hidden messages they convey. By systematically examining these slogans, the research seeks to identify the underlying meanings that are not explicitly stated but are implied through strategic language use. This analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how local brands in Vietnam communicate with their target audience, revealing the linguistic and cultural nuances that influence consumer perceptions and brand positioning in the market.

The significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to the understanding of how language is strategically employed by Vietnamese local brands to convey nuanced messages to consumers. By analyzing the implicatures within these slogans, the study reveals not only the linguistic techniques used to influence consumer perception but also the cultural and social values embedded within these messages. This research is valuable for both linguists and marketers, as it offers insights into the intersection of language, society, and consumer behavior, highlighting how subtle language choices can shape brand identity and consumer engagement.

Literature review

Definitions of implicatures

In terms of definition, David and David (2016) explores that implicature refers to the act of conveying a certain meaning by expressing something different through speech, while Grundy (2019) defines the term as any hidden meaning which can be interpreted through hints and understood indirectly without ever being directly expressed. According to Grice’s theory, implicature is about “how a hearer gets from what is said to what is meant, from the level of expressed meaning to the level of implied meaning.” Moreover, an implicature refers to any information that is inferred or implied from an utterance or the meaning that a speaker intends to convey through an utterance, which may go beyond the literal or surface meaning of the words used (Yule, 1996). In general, the speaker is likely to deliver communicated meaning via implicatures, and the listener or reader can recognize it through inferences. However, to understand the implicatures thoroughly, it requires knowledge in cultural and pragmatic areas, as the lack of it can lead to misunderstandings (Pham, 2021). Overall, the term “implicature” refers to the hidden meaning or information that speakers express implicitly in their utterances, going beyond the literal interpretation of their words.

The cooperative principles encompass four sub-maxims that contribute to effective communication in conversations, four of which are the maxim of quality, the maxim of quantity, the maxim of relevance, and the maxim of manners (Afrougheh & Lieaghat, 2017; Xiao, 2020)

With the maxim of quality, the speakers need to provide information that is reliable, precise, and proved by evidence, and obviously avoid any untruthful information or unsupported claims. Next, the maxim of quantity, indicates that the speakers should convey the right amount of information necessary for the conversation, which means that people need to speak or answer what others need to know and avoid excessive or insufficient details. Thirdly, in accordance with the maxim of relevance, the speakers should contribute information that is relevant to the ongoing conversation. Lastly, the maxim of manner necessitates speakers to communicate clearly and coherently, preventing ambiguity and unclear language (Grice, 1975).

In terms of **particularized conversational implicature**, it heavily depends on the context and on the speaker's intent, resulting in its manifestation solely within certain contextual situations (David & David, 2016). Overall, particularized implicatures are context-dependent. For instance,

(3) A: *Did you enjoy **the** movie?*

B: ***The popcorn** was great.*

In the above conversation, A is able to derive the implicature “the film was so boring and B did not really enjoy it” from B's statement. From this example, we can see that B's response correlates with the principle of relevance within the particular context of A's question. Another example is that,

(4) Anne: *Where are you going with the dog?*

Tim: *To the **V-E-T**.*

With this example, we can presuppose that Tim's dog is sick and that he is going to take it to the vet for check-ups, but instead of saying the word directly, he spelled it so that his dog would not understand.

On the other hand, **generalized conversational implicature** is less straightforward than conversational one, as the implied meaning can be reflected through the use of certain words rather than depending on the context (David & David, 2016). An example is that.

(5) John ate ***some*** of the cookies.

The quantifier “some” implies that John did not eat all of the cookies. Another example is that:

(6) *I was sitting in **a** car, and **a little** boy knocked on the door.*

In phrases like “a car” or “a little boy, the speaker uses the article “a” to indicate that both the car and the little boy do not belong to him or her.

The next implicature is scalar implicature (or quantity implicature). According to Hansen and Strudsholm (2008), scalar implicature is a linguistic phenomenon that ascribes a hidden significance that goes beyond the overt or direct meaning of a statement. It implies that the speaker intentionally chose not to employ a more detailed or forceful expression along the same

spectrum of meaning. Besides that, scalar implicature is a type of conversational implicature that arises from the use of scalar expressions, such as “*all, most, many, some, and few*” or “*always, often, and sometimes*”. These expressions represent different levels on a scale of quantity and quality. When a speaker uses a scalar expression in a specific context, it often leads the listener to infer something beyond the literal meaning of the words (Yule, 1996). An example of scalar implicature is that:

(7) *Some of the students failed the test.*

In this example, the word “some” implies that not “all” students in class failed the test. Another example is that:

(8) *They are sometimes late for class.*

In this example, the word “sometimes” indicates that they are not “always” or “never” late for school.

In a word, different types of implicatures are beneficial for both speakers and listeners or readers. For speakers, they can express their implicit ideas without saying them directly. On the other hand, they help readers or listeners figure out the true meaning of an utterance.

Definitions and characteristics of slogans

According to Niwa et al. (2021), slogans are concise and memorable phrases designed to convey a specific message or idea, often used in advertising and political campaigns. They serve as powerful communicational tools that encapsulate the essence of a product, candidate, or cause, aiming to influence and persuade the target audience. In addition, Macaryus et al. (2020) determined that slogans are characterized by their ability to evoke emotions and create a lasting impression, often relying on rhetorical devices to enhance their effectiveness. In the same vein, Gilliland (2018) believed that a slogan is a concise phrase or collection of words that convey the core message of a brand, crafted with the intention of being memorable to consumers. Furthermore, Suyitno (2005) claimed that slogans often contain implicit propositions that require an understanding of the broader discourse to fully grasp their intended message. In the field of marketing, slogans reflect a brand’s essence, identity, and competitive positioning. To be more specific, they are crucial for creating brand recognition and emotional resonance among consumers, influencing purchasing behavior through repeated exposure in media (Stumpf, 2009).

Regarding the characteristics of slogans, Gilliland (2018) stated that an effective slogan needs to have three factors. First of all, like a song chorus, a slogan should be short yet captivating, aiming to make a lasting initial impression on customers. Additionally, it should convey positive aspects that provide advantages to consumers. The uniqueness is the final feature for a well-crafted slogan. Typically, people link a slogan with its respective company; hence, a distinctive slogan can result in consumers remembering the company for a longer time.

Previous studies

In the book of Klima (2008), the author states that an advertisement is always associated with several factors, including cultural values, traditions, experiences, and even history. Therefore, it is essential to identify the context of an advertisement when interpreting it.

According to Erisha (2016) whose paper's primary focus lies in the examination of implicatures or implied meanings within advertisements related to life insurance found that slogans from insurance companies all reflect factors about providing financial solutions, ensuring a secure and happy life, safeguarding health, and providing comprehensive life solutions that are accessible by becoming a part of the insurance company. Those slogans also implicitly highlight the companies' quality. Similarly, according to Verboven (2012), slogans that draw from pragmatic inspiration have played a role in enhancing public approval of the chemical industry. Concerning slogans used in television commercials, they are seen as suggesting the exceptional quality of the products being advertised. They also include phrases and words that implicitly aim to boost sales, create a positive image of the product, and promote the manufacturer itself (Ashari, 2009; Ekoyono, 2019; Herman et al., 2022). Another similar study on shop signs has showed that this type of advertisement often implies key factors like superiority (a strong impression of product or service quality), identity (business identity), relationship (the emphasis on connections with customers, fostering trust and familiarity), and scale (the size of the business, indicating whether it is small, medium, or large) (Pham, 2024).

Besides that, Wijayatiningsih (2018), through the analysis of advertisement slogans on TIME magazine advertisement, figures out that particularized implicatures outweigh generalized ones.

Research gaps

After reviewing the previous studies, several research gaps emerge. First of all, this area has not been extensively studied in Vietnam. While previous research has focused on the role of pragmatic inspiration and the implicit promotion of product quality in advertisements, there is limited exploration of how the cultural values are reflected through slogans, particularly within the context of Vietnamese local brands. Hence, this study aims to address these gaps by analyzing the implicatures and hidden messages within the slogans of Vietnamese local brands.

Research questions

What are the implied meanings of the slogans used by Vietnamese local brands?

Methods

This descriptive study adopts methodologies outlined by Erisha (2016). Data collection was conducted using an observational method, specifically employing a Non-Participant Observation Technique. In detail, the non-participant observation technique is a research method where the observer does not engage with the subjects being studied (Esiri et al., 2017).

The slogans were gathered from the official websites of various local brands in Vietnam and recorded in a Word document. The authors chose to visit the homepages of these brands because these sites provide a trustworthy source of information, ensuring the slogans are accurately represented. Nevertheless, owing to the aim of the paper, after considering a whole host of slogans, only those containing the terms "Việt Nam" or "Việt" would be analyzed. At the end, there were 5 chosen slogans.

In the analysis process, the writer might look for some information about the brands such as the process of formation, the goals, the achievements, or the values, to form background

information about the companies. The author also collected illustrations or pictures of those slogans to analyze those slogans more comprehensively. In the data analysis, the researcher first provided a general overview of the local brands. Subsequently, the researcher linked this overview with an analysis of the slogans to uncover the implied meanings and identify the relationship between the slogans and the corresponding goals or values. This approach enables the researcher to find the underlying messages and intentions of the advertisers, effectively capturing the ideas, thoughts, and messages conveyed through the slogans.

Following the slogans analysis, the researcher would present the results through the informal method, which means that the researcher only provided an explanation about the findings.

Results/Findings and discussion

In this section, the writer intends to examine a range of slogans from domestic Vietnamese brands with the aim of finding out the hidden messages of them.

Nâng niu bàn chân Việt



This slogan can be basically translated as “Cherishing Vietnamese Feet”. This slogan belongs to Biti’s, a prominent Vietnamese footwear brand with a widespread retail presence across the nation (<https://bitis.com.vn/pages/ve-biti-s>).

The first implied meaning can refer to the commitment of the brand to produce pairs of shoes that are not only soft but also durable, providing a sense of nurturing and care to its customers. As a consequence, customers themselves will be motivated and confident that they are choosing the right product. Moreover, it can be a way to build brand loyalty and a deeper connection with the customers. Secondly, the slogan may imply Biti’s footwear will serve as steadfast companions on the Vietnamese individual’s journeys to success and achievement.

Vì một Việt Nam khỏe mạnh hơn

The aforementioned slogan can be interpreted as “For a healthier Vietnam”. This slogan is of the company Lifebuoy, one of the top international hygiene companies in the world. Lifebuoy has played a crucial role in forming the regular washing habit among Vietnamese people for over 25 years and during the Covid-19 pandemic, the brand had joined hands to prevent the infection of the virus (<https://www.lifebuoy.vn/>).

Overall, the slogan is like a commitment of Lifebuoy towards enhancing the public’s health as well as living standards for the Vietnamese community. In its primary implication, the sanitation conditions in Vietnam were previously not good; however, innovative products from Lifebuoy have considerably improved the situation, as indicated by the term “hơn.” The second unrevealed meaning is that the company wants to emphasize that its products are of high quality, possessing the capability to effectively eliminate viruses and bacteria; hence, enhancing the general health of the community. It suggests that the company’s products are not just for

individual use but are part of a broader mission to promote hygiene and prevent illness on a national scale. Finally, the use of “Việt Nam” in the slogan reinforces a sense of unity and community. It implies that Lifebuoy’s mission is inclusive, targeting the health of all Vietnamese people, regardless of their background. This can foster a sense of collective responsibility and encourage customers to see themselves as part of a larger effort to achieve better health outcomes for everyone in the country.

Vươn cao Việt Nam



The slogan “Vươn cao Việt Nam,” originated from the Vinamilk company, can be translated to “Elevate Vietnam.” The company is known for the superior quality of its dairy products, especially milk, and is ranked among the top 40 largest companies globally according to Forbes (<https://www.vinamilk.com.vn/>).

Concerning the implied meanings, the first meaning may originate from the story about the average height of Vietnamese people. According to Dr. Cuong Nguyen in the blog named “Khám phá chiều cao người Việt cổ”, the average height of Vietnamese has increased rapidly compared to the past due to the development of lifestyle, healthcare and nutrition fields. Therefore, the slogan can be interpreted as a declaration by the company about the nutritional value of its milk products, suggesting that consumption of their products can contribute to the physical growth of Vietnamese individuals. Second, the slogan also highlights the goal of the company which is to promote superior quality dairy products from Vietnam on a global scale, thereby showcasing the excellence of Vietnamese goods to the international market.

Niềm tự hào của Việt Nam



“Niềm tự hào của Việt Nam” - “The pride of Vietnam” is the slogan of Bia Saigon, a well-known beer brand coming from Vietnam. With more than 145 years of experience, the brand is trying its best to satisfy domestic and global customers (<https://www.sabeco.com.vn/>).

In Vietnam, the agricultural industry is one of the leading economic sectors and rice is the top product exporting to other parts of the world. Moreover, Vietnam is even claimed as the 6th country in producing and exporting rice. Through the slogan, the company wants to highlight that the beer is crafted from premium fermented rice from Vietnamese land, making it like a quintessence that fills us with pride. Furthermore, by stating that it is “the pride of Vietnam,” the brand emphasizes its deep roots in Vietnamese culture and history, suggesting that it is a product that embodies the spirit and tradition of the nation. The slogan also implies a high standard of quality. It suggests that Bia Sài Gòn is a product that meets and exceeds expectations, both domestically and internationally. The brand is positioning itself as a top-tier beer that represents

the best of what Vietnam has to offer.

Mỹ phẩm thuần chay cho vẻ đẹp thuần Việt



This slogan is from an organic beauty brand named Cocoon. Despite being relatively new in the market, Cocoon's skincare products, which are derived from fresh vegetables and flowers such as coffee beans, roses, turmeric, pomelos, and others, have captured the attention of Vietnamese women. Furthermore, the brand is committed to being cruelty-free by refraining

from animal testing, which has added to its popularity (<https://cocoovietnam.com/>).

Primarily, the implied message suggests that the use of vegetable-based products for skincare and hair care has been a long-standing tradition among Vietnamese women, which is also the context of the slogan. Taking advantage of this habit, the brand has been developing organic products which are good for not only the skin and hair but also the environment. The second meaning is that the brand wishes to contribute to Vietnamese beauty by taking care of the appearance of Vietnamese women, making them more gorgeous and shining naturally without too much effort.

Discussion

Overall, there are several commonalities between these slogans. The first similarity which is also the most noticeable one is that there are several slogans (Bia Sai Gon and Cocoon) associated with the cultural values of Vietnam, which makes the brands distinct and outstanding from others, which is aligned with the finding of Klima (2008) who found that slogans have a strong connection with the cultural values of a nation. Secondly, they all highlight the exceptional quality of their products and the goal to be prominent all over the world, which corresponds with the finding of Erisha (2016). In Erisha's (2016) study, the author investigated the majority of the slogans of insurance companies that claim that their products are the best solutions for people's lives. Next, all of them are short but attractive enough to make a good first impression and stay in people's minds for a long time. Last but not least, the convenience and comfort of customers are consistently prioritized by these brands, which is clearly shown in the slogans and reminds of the quote "The Customer is God".

Conclusion

All in all, thanks to different types of implicature, the speakers can express their implicit ideas without saying it directly. However, as the true meaning is often context-dependent and influenced by speakers' intentions and shared knowledge, it is crucial for people to acknowledge implicatures. Understanding implicatures helps us navigate the intricacies of language use and enables more effective and accurate interpretation of messages in various social and cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the analysis of slogans can be useful for students in fields such as linguistics, marketing, and cultural studies in many aspects. First of all, linguistics students can study these analyses to explore how language and cultural context, especially implicatures, reflect the brand's identity, values, or goals, which paves the way for further research about implicatures and its application in real-life contexts. Next, marketing students can take advantage of the study to create slogans that are more purposeful and applicable, effectively conveying a brand's intentions or values.

Limitation

On the other hand, due to the limit and random selection of research samples, other types of slogans have not been examined; hence, future studies can consider applying the same analytical strategy for other slogans to figure out similarities and differences between them in terms of pragmatics and meanings.

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Themes and Language Style in Advertising Slogans of Vietnamese Banks and American Banks

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: slogan themes, slogan discourse, Collectivism, individualism, high context culture

Advertising slogans are important in branding companies and attracting customers. Businesses emphasize global thinking but tailor actions to local preferences, initiating advertisers to consider local culture when crafting advertising slogans. However, studies on advertising slogans are not abundant. This study used a qualitative approach to analyze and compare 50 Vietnamese and 69 American banks' advertising slogans in three aspects: themes, vocabulary, and syntax. Unlike previous multimodal studies on advertisements, this research highlighted the impact of culture on advertising, namely the influence of collectivism/individualism and high/low-context culture on advertising themes, vocabulary, and syntaxes. The study identified one similarity and three differences in the themes and pinpointed distinct words and syntax in these two groups of advertising slogans. Hopefully, the research will provide a deeper understanding of cultural influence on advertising so that advertising professionals can avoid potential cultural crashes in multi-national working environments.

Introduction

Slogans are crucial tools for banks to create and develop their images. They serve as one of the main channels of official communication through which companies introduce themselves to customers and partners. Through subtly embedded information in easy-to-remember and understand, advertising slogans have a long-lasting impact, enabling companies to approach customers and persuade them to buy or use services (Heath et al., 2023). Therefore, it is pivotal for companies to constantly seek effective ways to create advertising slogans.

A variety of studies have been done on the influence of culture on advertising themes and language. Muller (1991) identified and compared the distinguished features in advertisements in American and Japanese magazines. Cheng & Schwitzer (1996) compared and contrasted American and Chinese TV commercials. Han & Shavit (1994) did research on advertisements

in American and Taiwanese magazines. In Vietnam, Hue (2019) compared the reflection of Collectivism and individualism in American and Vietnamese print advertisements, and Anh (2022) compared the domain choices of American and Vietnamese coffee commercials. Tam (2022) compared the themes and language in magazine advertisements. Therefore, bank slogans in two countries (America and Vietnam) have a gap for researchers along with the author wherein the similarities and disparity in their themes and language styles can be exploited.

Literature review

The culture in which individuals are raised influences the way they conceive of themselves in terms of individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. In his research involving more than 50 countries and territories, Hofstede (2001) pointed out the United States, with a score of 91/100, as a country with a unique individual culture, while East Asian countries, represented by China with a score of 21/100 is a nation with typical Collectivism. According to Goodykunst (1996), while members of individualistic cultures learn the major values of their culture (e.g., independence, achievement) and acquire preferred ways for how members of the culture are expected to view themselves (e.g., as unique persons), members of collectivistic cultures learn different major values (e.g., harmony, solidarity) and acquire different preferred ways to conceive of themselves (e.g., as inter-connected with others). Schwartz (1992) contends that the themes of **power, achievement, self-direction, hedonism, and stimulation** serve individual interests, whereas those of **tradition, conformity, and benevolence** serve collective interests.

Goodykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) argued that Individualism and Collectivism affect the way people communicate. They contended that low-context communication is used predominantly in individualistic cultures, whereas high-context communication is used predominantly in collectivistic cultures. Hall (1976) said that using high-context communication involves using and interpreting messages that are not explicit, minimizing the content of the verbal message, and being sensitive to others. Using low-context communication, in contrast, involves being direct, precise, and open.

Moreover, Goddard (2002) stated that advertisements use sense-provoking words to convey personal messages while employing precise and scientific-sounding language to focus on product information for the general audience. In addition, Singh and Bartikowski (2009) said that in slogans with individualism, fewer figurative words are used, whereas slogans with Collectivism see an opposite trend. Meanwhile, according to Singh and Bartikowski (2006) and Zhang (2004), slogans of individualism use more scientific and objective words, and in slogans with Collectivism, there is a prevalence of words that indicate feelings and emotions and are subjective.

Research Questions

The study aimed to find out the typical themes and prominent language features, including vocabulary and syntax, in these two groups of slogans; from that, comparison and contrast were made to explore their differences and similarities in three aspects of themes, vocabulary, and

syntax under the influence of culture. Thereby, the study was seeking to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the typical themes, prominent words, and syntax used in advertising slogans of Vietnamese and American banks?
2. What are the similarities and differences in themes, words, and syntax in these two groups of advertising slogans under the influence of cultural factors?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

It is interdisciplinary research between language and culture, analyzing themes, lexical, and syntactic features of banks' advertising slogans and justifying the differences and similarities in these aspects from cultural perspectives of individualism/collectivism and high/ low context culture communication.

This research involved 50 Vietnamese advertising slogans of banks in Vietnam and 69 English advertising slogans of banks in America. A qualitative approach was mainly used to analyze slogans in terms of themes, words, and syntax and justify their differences from cultural perspectives. Intervening in these two stages, comparison and contrast were employed to pinpoint the differences and similarities between the two groups of slogans.

Design of the Study

The study was conducted using the following steps.

First, Vietnamese advertising slogans of banks in Vietnam and English advertising slogans of banks in America were collected. Second, a qualitative approach was employed to analyze the collected slogans to find typical themes and prominent lexical and syntax features. Third, comparison and contrast were done to pinpoint the differences as well as the similarities in three aspects of these slogans. Finally, justifications were made from cultural perspectives to explain the gap.

Data collection & analysis

Vietnamese and American banks' slogans were collected through their present websites. The banks selected here are purely domestic, without joint ventured foreigners. Besides, slogans merely advertising short-term products/services or promoting a specific business stage were not the subject of the research. The research only focused on slogans that position the bank's brand and are associated with the bank's history for at least 10 years. Hence, only 50 Vietnamese banks' slogans and 69 American banks' slogans were the subject of this study.

After being collected, the Vietnamese and American slogans were considered in three aspects: themes (according to Schwartz's 7 Themes (1992), vocabulary (finding frequently used words in the two types of slogans), and syntax (including sentences, phrases, and words).

Results/Findings and Discussion

Themes of Vietnamese bank advertising slogans and a comparison with American bank advertising slogans

Advertising slogans of Vietnamese and American banks are grouped into eight themes: power (showing the bank's superiority in the business field), achievement (towards customers' success), self-direction (orientation of the bank), hedonism (customers' pleasant experiences), and stimulation (to encourage customers), tradition (towards tradition), conformity (toward the common benefits/community), and benevolence (support and companionship of the bank and customers).

Vietnamese banks' advertising slogans have been categorized into eight themes.

Table 1

The allocation of themes in Vietnamese banks' advertising slogans

	Themes	Examples	Quantity	Percentage
1.	Power	"Cam kết lợi ích cao nhất" (Committed to the highest benefits- HCM City Development Bank)	1/50	2%
2.	Achievement	- "Điểm tựa thành công" (Fulcrum of Success- Dai A Bank) - "Hoài bão của quý vị, ưu tiên của chúng tôi" (Your ambition – Our Priority - State Bank - SVB)	3/50	6%
3.	Self-direction		0/50	0%
4.	Hedonism	“Nâng giá trị cuộc sống” (Improving Living Standards – Vietinbank) “Kết nối giá trị cuộc sống” (Connecting Living Values – SEABANK)	2/50	4%
5.	Stimulation	"Cùng vươn tầm" (Reach out Together - MSB Bank) Vì một Việt Nam thịnh vượng (For a prosperous Vietnam - TP Bank)	1/50	2%
6.	Tradition		0/55	0%
7.	Conformity	“Niềm tin của mọi nhà” (Trust of all Families – Trust Bank)	4/50	8%
8.	Benevolence	- "ngân hàng không khoảng cách" (Bank with no distance - PV Combank) - "Ở đâu có người nghèo, ở đó có ngân hàng" (Bank for Poor People - Policy Bank)	16/50	32%

The table demonstrates that **benevolence** is the most frequently used theme (32%), followed by **conformity** towards the common benefit of the community, such as "Niềm tin của mọi nhà" (Trust of all Families - Trust Bank), "Vì một Việt Nam thịnh vượng" (For a Prosperous Vietnam - TP Bank). The third popular theme is **achievements** "Điểm tựa thành công" (Fulcrum of Success - Dai A Bank), "Hoài bão của quý vị, ưu tiên của chúng tôi" (Your ambition, Our Priority - State Bank). Themes that are not used are **Tradition**, **Self-direction** (0%) or rarely

used are **Power** and **Stimulation** (2%)

Meanwhile, 69 American banks' advertising slogans have also been categorized into eight themes.

Table 2

The allocation of themes in American banks' advertising slogans

	Themes	Examples	Quantity	Percentage
1.	Power	- "The Difference is Access" (Access National Bank) - "Your First Choice" (1st National Bank of South Florida).	13/69	18.8%
2.	Achievement	" Our Solutions, Your Success" Commercial Bank of California	1/69	0.01%
3.	Self-direction	- "We'll Find a Way" (Continental Illinois National Bank) - "Let us guide you home" (Compass)	2/69	0.02%
4.	Hedonism	"Banking for people with better things to do!" (Abington Bank).	10/69	14.5%
5.	Stimulation	- "Do the right thing" (JP Morgan Chase) "Grow with us" (1st National Bank)	7/69	10.1%
6.	Tradition		0/69	0%
7.	Conformity		0/69	0%
8.	Benevolence	- "The bank that's always with you" (Bank of America) - "Today, tomorrow, together" (Absa Bank).	10/69	14.5%

Table 2 shows that the themes of **tradition** and conformity are not used in this business's advertising slogans, and few slogans of **achievement** and **self-direction** are used. On the other hand, three top choices are involved in Power, showing the top position or unique attributes of banks (18.8%), followed by **Benevolence** and **Hedonism** with an equal percentage of 14.5%.

Table 3

The comparison of themes in American and Vietnamese banks' advertising slogans

No	Themes	Vietnamese slogans		American slogans	
		Quantity	Percentage	Quantity	Percentage
1.	Power	1/50	2%	13/69	18.8%
2.	Achievement	3/50	6%	1/69	0.01%
3.	Self-direction	0/50	0%	2/69	0.02%
4.	Hedonism	2/50	4%	10/69	14.5%
5.	Stimulation	1/50	2%	7/69	10.1%
6.	Tradition	0/55	0%	0/69	0%
7.	Conformity	4/50	8%	0/69	0%
8.	Benevolence	16/50	32%	10/69	14.5%

Table 3 shows the differences and similarities in the frequency of themes in these two groups of slogans. The noticeable difference is the proportion of advertising slogans with the theme of **power**. This is the leading theme in American advertising slogans, demonstrating the bank's position (the best bank, the bank that brings the highest benefits to customers that competitors cannot match), taking up 18.8%, however, this topic only accounts for 2% of English advertising slogans. The second major difference relates to the theme of **hedonism**, concerning pleasant experiences of **fulfillment** and **satisfaction**. The proportion of these topics in English and Vietnamese advertising slogans is 4% and 14.5%, respectively. On the contrary, in these advertising slogans, the theme of **benevolence** leans toward Vietnamese advertising slogans. These differences are consistent with American and Vietnamese people's individualist and collectivist cultures. Americans value unique persons, while Vietnamese people consider themselves inter-connected with others (Gudykunst (1996)). Besides, Americans have a pragmatic lifestyle, focusing on real experiences in the present instead of unrealistic things, so the theme of **hedonism** prevails. On the other hand, Vietnamese people see themselves as part of an encompassing social relationship and realize that one's behavior is determined by what he perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship (Markus and Kitayama (1991)), so the theme of **benevolence** is more.

The vocabulary of Vietnamese banks' advertising slogans and a comparison with American banks

Vietnamese bank advertising slogans often use figurative words that appeal to customers' emotions. This study identified three common groups of words. Firstly, words like "niềm tin (trust)," "đồng hành (companion)," and "cam kết (commitment)" are frequently used. Banks with these words in their advertising slogans account for 23 out of 50. With financial products involving high risks, the banks possess advertising slogans that often play on the psychological desire of customers to share risks and to be shoulder to shoulder through hardships. The second group includes words like "thịnh vượng (prosperity)," "phát triển (development)," and "ước mơ (dreams)." Banks with these slogans take up 16 out of 50. These slogans often instill confidence in customers by painting a bright, open business future for them. The third group involves the word "giá trị (value)." Money is closely linked to value; in business activities, money needs to be generated to create sustainable stability, so 9 out of 50 advertising slogans use the word " giá trị (value)" such as "giá trị vượt thời gian (value beyond time)", "tạo giá trị bền vững (creating sustainable value)", "kết nối giá trị cuộc sống (connecting life values)." These words are very popular in the advertising slogans of Vietnamese banks due to the Collectivism associated with high-context communication (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988)); glossy words, evoking emotions instead of reason are commonly used (Singh and Bartikowski (2009)).

Table 4

The frequency of figurative words in Vietnamese banks' slogans

Words	Number of Vietnamese banks' slogans
niềm tin (trust), đồng hành (companion), cam kết (commitment)	23
thịnh vượng (prosperity), phát triển (development), ước mơ (dream)	16
giá trị (value)	9
miscellanea	2
Total	50

In contrast, Americans with typical individualism engage in low-context communication (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988)). They prioritize practical living, emphasize efficiency in both work and life, and often convey messages directly, so shiny phrases, promises, and future commitments are not used. However, words related to ensuring good service and benefits are mentioned, such as "Committed to World-class Service," and "Better Banking. Everyday," "Simple... Better Banking." In this context, frequently used words include *better, first, best, and prime*. However, these words appear in only 10 out of 69 phrases.

In addition, direct communication with a low-context culture, which is not or less dependent on nonverbal communication, leads American banks' slogans to frequently use the words "bank" and "money," accounting for 20 out of 69.

Furthermore, Americans value individualism and respect personal interests, which is clearly reflected in the slogans of American banks. Instead of "spreading joy everywhere", slogans convey the meaning of building the bank for the customer, such as "We built this bank for you" (1st Mariner Bank), "Banking for you" (American State Bank), or "Our prime interest is YOU" (Bank of the West). The pronoun "YOU" is often the subject that banks serve, as seen in slogans like "We are good for you" (Apple Bank) or "Here for you. Everyday" (Carolina Alliance Bank). Among the 69 slogans collected from American banks, 26 use the word "YOU."

Table 5

The most frequently used words in Vietnamese and American banks' advertising slogans

Words	Vietnamese slogans	American slogans
niềm tin (trust), đồng hành (companion), cam kết (commitment)	23	1
Tốt hơn (better), tốt nhất (best), cao nhất (prime), hàng đầu (top/first)	2	10
thịnh vượng (prosperity), phát triển (development), ước mơ (dream)	16	1
giá trị (value)	9	0
ngân hàng (bank), tiền (money), tài chính (finance)	7	20
Bạn (YOU)	6	26
Khách hàng (customers), quý vị (valued customers), mọi người (people)	6	4

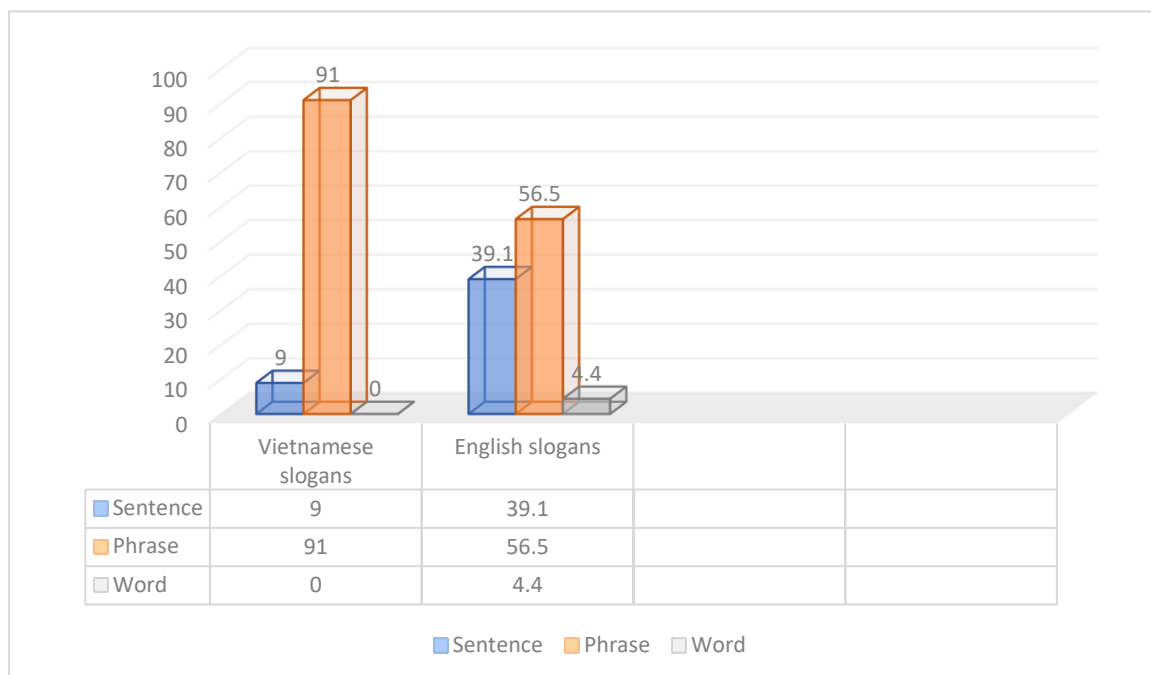
Syntax in Vietnamese bank advertising slogans and comparison with English bank advertising slogans

Vietnamese advertisements utilize simple and concise grammatical structures for various reasons related to cost-saving in advertising. Simplifying the structure helps ad writers eliminate irrelevant information and vocabulary, focusing on key points to make an impression on the readers. Hence, 91% of Vietnamese bank advertising slogans are phrases, while the remaining 9% are sentences. The common number of words in these phrases ranges from 4 to 8, with only 1 slogan having fewer words, consisting of 3 words: "Cùng vươn tầm" (Together reaching) by MSB bank, and 2 slogans having more than 8 words: "Ở đâu có người nghèo, ở đó có ngân hàng chính sách xã hội" (Where there are poor people, there is Social Policy bank) and "Hoài bão của quý vị, ưu tiên của chúng tôi" (Your dreams, our priority). Despite the limited number of words, many Vietnamese bank advertising slogans are structured into two parts, such as "Niềm tin mới, giá trị mới" (New trust, new value); "Trải nghiệm mới, giá trị mới" (New experience, new value); "Chia sẻ cơ hội, hợp tác thành công" (Share opportunities, successful cooperation); "Vững bước tiên phong, đồng hành phát triển" (Leading confidently, accompanying development). Slogans with a two-part structure account for 21.2%.

Similar to Vietnamese banks' advertising slogans, English banks predominantly use phrases, accounting for 56.5% but only half as many as the number of Vietnamese advertising slogans using this form. In contrast, the number of English slogans in sentences quadruples that of Vietnamese. In addition, one-word/or word advertising slogans do not appear in Vietnamese but are present in English advertising slogans like "OPEN" or "Money. Wise."

Figure 6

The frequency of syntactic items in Vietnamese and American banks' slogans.



Conclusion

It is clear that individualism and Collectivism influence the theme expressed in advertising slogans of Vietnamese and American banks. While Vietnamese slogans with individualism prominently convey the theme of benevolence, American banks are themed with power, and hedonism prevails. Additionally, individualism engaging with low-context communication affects the way Americans deliver their message, and they tend to prefer conveying messages directly, clearly, and concisely. In contrast, Vietnamese people with collectivism are associated with high-context communication, like to use more figurative words, and are more emotion-driven than rational. Finally, Vietnamese advertising slogans have less diverse syntax than American ones, which consist of sentences, phrases, and words.

The study, using a limited number of advertising slogans, unavoidably draws superficial conclusions. However, it hopes to bring useful understanding to advertising creators in their multi-national working environments.

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Biodata

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Exploring Self-Determination Theory in ELT: A Content Analysis of Research Trends between 2020 and 2024

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

SDT, motivation, ELT, language learning

This study aims to seek recent research trends in the applicability of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to English language teaching (ELT) by reviewing the literature on this new approach to studying learner motivation, which plays a crucial role in language acquisition. The subject of the study is a series of related articles collected between 2020 and 2024, and the data is gathered from fifty selected articles during this period. The method employed for data analysis is content analysis approach, which helps identify themes and common trends throughout the articles' contents. The findings reveal various trends in applying SDT to foster learner motivation in ELT, including trends in research topics, methods, and noteworthy new themes in the applicability of SDT and its six sub-theories to ELT. These provide insights into the great potential of SDT in ELT research. The paper also has implications for new research ideas of learner motivation with STD.

Introduction

In language learning, *motivation* is a complex phenomenon with many different aspects influencing the process of language acquisition. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a comprehensive framework for understanding this complexity. SDT proposes a broad framework for studies on human motivation in health care, education, work, and sport and focuses on three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness, all critical for enhancing motivation. *Autonomy* in education refers to students' self-directed actions that boost their engagement when supported (Reeve, 2009). While *competence* involves achievement and performance, positively impacting learner outcomes when fostered (Malmberg et al., 2015), *relatedness* emphasizes the significance of social connections, which enhance learner motivation and satisfaction through positive relationships with peers and teachers (Jang et al., 2010).

Developed by Deci and Ryan in 1985, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is considered a comprehensive psychological framework for exploring individuals' motivation in their work, study, life, etc. SDT comprises three core concepts of basic psychological needs (BPNs):

autonomy, *competence*, and *relatedness* (Deci & Ryan, 1985). If these three elements are satisfied, individuals will feel more autonomous, competent, and connected in their community; in a word, they will become more self-determined in what they are doing, leading to their well-being (Deci & Ryan, 2012). This theory has been applied in various fields, such as health care, sports, work, and education, as well (Deci & Ryan, 2012).

In the context of education, which, in the scope of this study, refers to teaching and learning school subjects at different levels, from primary schools to high schools to colleges or universities, the BPNs in SDT play a critical role in fostering learner motivation and enhancing their learning outcomes. First of all, SDT asserts that when learner *autonomy* is supported, it promotes engagement and persistence in students' learning process (Reeve, 2009). *Autonomy* implies that in their studying, students' autonomous actions happen because they are willing but not being forced to do so (Noels et al., 2019). Second, *competence*, defined as achievement and performance, brings students a sense of capability, leading to improved learning outcomes (Malmberg et al., 2015); e.g., if teacher feedback makes students feel that they are competent, they will sustain a high level of learner motivation (Vansteenkiste et al., 2006). Finally, *relatedness* emphasizes the importance of social connections, where positive relationships with classmates and teachers may strengthen students' motivation. In other words, when students feel autonomous, competent, and socially connected in their learning environment, they will be satisfied with their academic life, leading to better learning outcomes (Jang et al., 2010).

Acquiring a new language is not a piece of cake except for gifted learners; accordingly, learning a foreign language, especially an international one, requires a certain degree of motivation (Tran, 2024; Le, 2023), especially intrinsic motivation - the strongest level of motivation continuum. Learning a new language is often challenging as learners tend to face obstacles like complex grammar rules, unfamiliar vocabulary, pronunciation, and so forth. Intrinsic motivation, driven by personal interest and enjoyment, is essential for overcoming these challenges (Gilakjani et al., 2012). Therefore, it is vital for teachers to have a nuanced understanding of *learner motivation* for effectively supporting their students through developed curricula and innovative teaching practices, with the purpose of contributing to more effective and meaningful language learning experiences (Vansteenkiste et al., 2023; Jang et al., 2010; Reeve, 2006).

As aforementioned, SDT is a macro-theory for profoundly understanding learner motivation in education, specifically in ELT. Consequently, when it comes to learner motivation, it is inevitable to discuss the framework of SDT and how it has been applied in different studies. As the title of this paper says, the applicability of SDT was explored to find out its trends in research on ELT.

This study is a part of the author's PhD project, which explores EFL learner motivation under SDT. The aim of this review is to seek current trends in research on language learners' motivation with the application of SDT. Hence, this systematic review synthesizes empirical studies and theoretical discussions in fifty related articles on the application of SDT in ELT, published between 2020 and 2024 to ensure the update of research works here and there in the academic world about the field.

Literature review

Overview of Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

SDT focuses on enhancing individuals' intrinsic motivation by meeting the needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Once these BPNs have been satisfied, individuals will be intrinsically motivated, feel well-being, and gain positive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Conversely, thwarted BPNs can lead to decreased motivation and negative outcomes (Leeming & Harris, 2022b).

According to Ryan & Deci (2017), the authors of SDT, numerous studies in Asia, especially from Japan and China, have applied SDT to a wide range of areas, “from language learning to Internet use” (p.vii). A few many of those studies on motivation in language learning include Tanaka (2017), Noels et al. (2019), Oga-Baldwin & Fryer (2020), Oga-Baldwin & Nakata (2020), Alghazo (2021), Al-Hoorie et al. (2022), Liu & Oga-Baldwin (2022), Oga-Baldwin et al. (2022), Oga-Baldwin (2022), Oga-Baldwin & Hirosawa (2022), Wang & Zhang (2022), Tanaka & Kutsuki (2023), David & Weinstein (2023), Zhang & Crawford (2024), Evans et al. (2024), and so forth.

However, SDT goes beyond a simple dichotomy of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. It proposes a self-determination continuum (Ryan & Deci, 2017) with three orientations: (i) *amotivation* - a complete lack of motivation (Leeming & Harris, 2022b), (ii) *extrinsic motivation* - a spectrum ranging from externally regulated behaviors (driven by external rewards or pressures) to integrated regulation, where extrinsic rewards become aligned with personal values (Noels et al., 2019), and (iii) *intrinsic motivation* - the most autonomous and satisfying form of motivation, driven by enjoyment and interest in the activity itself (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

This continuum, illustrated in Figure 1, highlights the internalization process. As individuals move from introjected regulation (doing something due to pressure but valuing it somewhat) towards identification (finding personal value in the activity) and finally integration (fully aligning the activity with personal goals), their motivation becomes increasingly autonomous and intrinsic (Noels et al., 2019). Understanding this process helps design interventions to foster intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement in goal-oriented activities (Schunk et al., 2014)

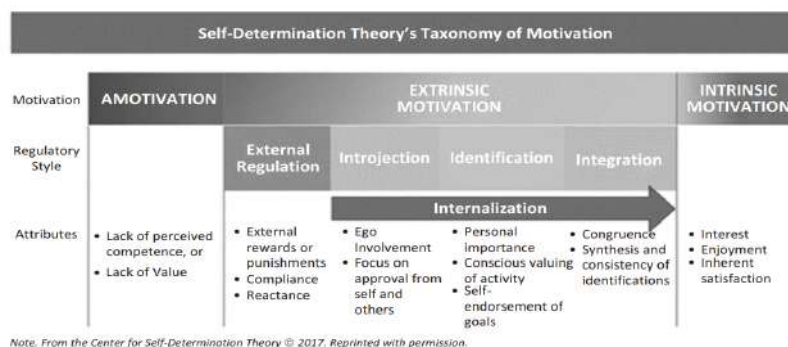


Figure 1. Motivational orientations and the self-determination continuum (Noels et al., 2019, p.98)

The Link between Self-Determination and Intrinsic Motivation

The overarching idea of SDT is that the satisfaction of BPNs contributes to intrinsic motivation, in which autonomy is the key element leading to self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2017); that is to say, the more individuals are autonomous, the more self-determined they are.

People have a sense of autonomy when they have control over their own choices and actions, i.e., they do not feel like being coerced or controlled by others. Autonomy enables people to set and pursue their goals based on their interests (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Moreover, autonomy also has a positive impact on the other two of the BPNs (competence and relatedness), e.g., when people feel autonomous, they tend to engage in activities that are helpful for their developing skills in particular and competence in general. Likewise, being autonomous helps people proactively connect with those around them in the same community or environment. This

fosters better relationships and gives them a sense of belonging or relatedness, not isolation or loneliness (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

In other words, autonomy lies at the heart of SDT or is the central component (Ryan & Deci, 2017), and it is also the core of the self-determination continuum. Accordingly, autonomy or self-determination exists along a spectrum with the motivation behind it, as in Figure 2.

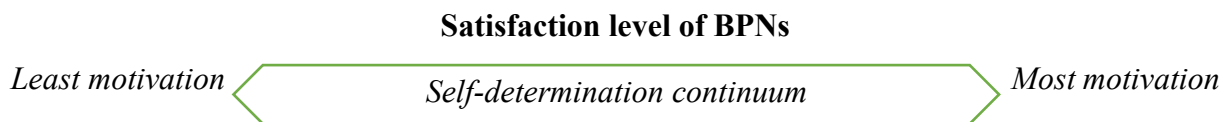


Figure 2. Intrinsic Motivation in SDT

Six Sub-Theories of SDT

According to Ryan & Deci (2017), SDT is like an umbrella with six mini-theories under it. Each of them plays a role in supplementing and completing the grand theory:

- (i) *Cognitive Evaluation Theory* stresses *intrinsic motivation*, which means people learn new things through innate curiosity. In education, students are motivated to learn because of being naturally curious, i.e., they enjoy learning to develop themselves, not for rewards (Noels, 2018).
- (ii) *Organismic Integration Theory* states that motivation exists on a *continuum*, from amotivation to more internalized motivation, including five types: extrinsic, introjected, identified, integrated, and intrinsic motivation. In educational settings, the goal is to make students' motivation more internalized, from the beginning of the motivation spectrum to its end – intrinsic motivation (the highest level of the continuum), leading them from learning for rewards to interest-based learning (Y. Tanaka & Kutsuki, 2023).
- (iii) *Causality Orientations Theory* refers to *individual differences*; i.e., learners orientate to tasks using three orientations: autonomous, control, and impersonal. This theory focuses on how students deal with tasks, whether they are autonomous or controlled (Al-Hoorie et al., 2022).
- (iv) *Basic Psychological Needs Theory* involves autonomy, competence, and relatedness. BPNs in education mean that if students have a sense of freedom (autonomy), feel capable (competence), and have connections with others (relatedness), they remain motivated in learning (Printer, 2021).
- (v) *Goal Contents Theory* refers to two types of goals: *intrinsic and extrinsic goals*. The former includes activities that contribute to individuals' community, develop their potential, or build intimate relations; on the other hand, the latter involves activities that pursue fame and popularity, an attractive image, or a materialistic lifestyle (Vansteenkiste et al., 2023). In education, *intrinsic goals* involve personal growth, and *extrinsic goals* refer to rewards (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).
- (vi) *Relationships Motivation Theory* focuses on *relatedness*. It explains how developing and sustaining relationships and feelings of belonging to groups are necessary conditions for psychological well-being. This theory, in education, stresses the significance of relationships in learning, e.g., positive relationships with peers and instructors are critical in enhancing learner motivation and learner satisfaction (Vandergrift, 2005; Jang et al., 2010).

History and Development of SDT

Developed in the 1980s by Deci and Ryan, with foci on human motivation and personality development, SDT has evolved over the decades. Since its introduction in Deci & Ryan (1985) and its evolution in Deci & Ryan (2000) and Ryan & Deci (2017), the theory has been applied to different domains with numerous studies in terms of quantitative approach, qualitative research, and mixed methods.

Researchers have been exploring SDT and its sub-theories through varied methods. Literature over the past two decades shows that experimental studies or quantitative research accounts for a high proportion, employing different scales or models (Noels et al., 2003; Tanaka, 2017; (Hu & Zhang, 2017); Leeming & Harris, 2022a; Sazegar et al., 2018; Wang & Wind, 2020; Someya & Honda, 2020; Alamer & Khateeb, 2021; Alamer & Alrabai, 2022; Liu & Oga-Baldwin, 2022; Phuong, 2022; Tanaka & Kutsuki, 2023; Alamer, 2023). Meanwhile, there have been few qualitative studies on SDT or its mini-theories (Barrett III, 2016; Raharja & Ashadi, 2019).

Recently, SDT and its sub-theories have gained prominence for its application not only in health care, work, sport, and education in general but also in language learning in particular. In a word, SDT has a rich history, and over time, it has taken root and enormously and sustainably grown, especially in the context of language learning (Oga-Baldwin et al., 2022), as in Figure 3.

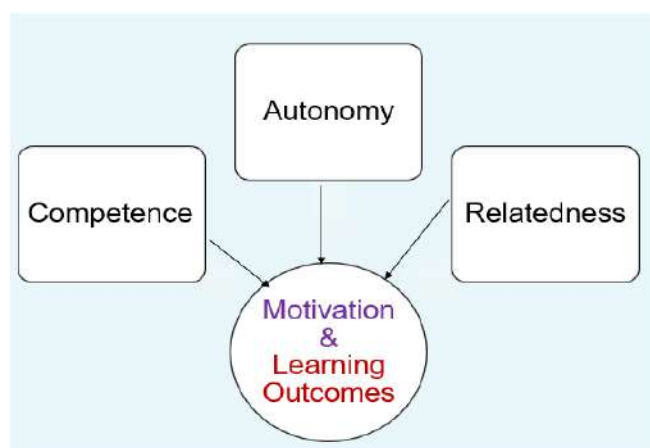


Figure 3. *SDT in education*

As regards SDT in language learning, in his article titled “*Self-Determination Theory and Second Language Research: A Match for Many Reasons*,” Ryan (2022), a co-developer of SDT, emphasizes that SDT is a comprehensive theory of motivation and well-being, its application to language learning is “*particularly promising*” (p.2), and he recommends that despite the dominance of evidence from quantitative research over qualitative one, there should be more qualitative studies to “*add nuance and specificity*” (p.2) to applications and explanations; and that SDT relies on more research in *different age groups*, and *cultures* as it is “*a self-critical approach*” (p.2).

A Framework of SDT

According to Deci & Ryan (1985) and Ryan & Deci (2017), SDT is a macro-theory, hence a comprehensive framework, with *a series of concepts*: BPNs (autonomy, competence, and relatedness), self-determination, self-determination continuum, self-determined, motivation, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation (external regulation, introjection, identification, and integration), motivation continuum, optimal functioning, performance, outcomes, goals,

persistence, well-being, etc., along with *six sub-theories*: Cognitive Evaluation Theory, Organismic Integration Theory, Causality Orientations Theory, Basic Psychological Needs Theory, Goal Contents Theory, and Relationships Motivation Theory (See Appendix 1 for more details).

Recent Studies on SDT in Education

The recent studies on SDT in language learning were selected for analysis in the paper based on three criteria: (i) applying SDT in language learning or education (focusing on learner motivation), (ii) published between January 2020 – June 2024 (this paper was written in June 2024), and (iii) published in prestigious journals. Specifically, most of the selected articles explore the relationship between motivation and language achievement. Many studies delve into the role of BPNs in language education, while several studies examine the impact of technology on language learning motivation. Some focus on motivation in specific cultural contexts, and some investigate the role of positive emotions in sustaining intrinsic motivation, as in Table 1.

Table 1.

The recent studies on SDT in education

Area/Subject	Number of Studies	Studies	(%)
English language learning	40	(Muñoz-Restrepo et al., 2020); (Papi & Hiver, 2020); (Schürmann et al., 2020); (Shelton-Strong & Mynard, 2020); (Shelton-Strong, 2020); (Shelton-Strong, 2022); (Yu, 2020); (Someya & Honda, 2020); (Alamer, 2021); (Alamer & Khateeb, 2021); (Chiu, 2021); (Howard et al., 2021); (Loh et al., 2021); (Printer, 2021); (Alamer et al., 2022); (Alamer, 2022a); (Alamer, 2022b); (Al-Hoorie et al., 2022); (Chiu et al., 2022); (Davis, 2022); (Jeon, 2022); (Lasalle & Hess, 2022); (Lim et al., 2022); (Leeming & Harris, 2022a); (Leeming & Harris, 2022b); (Liu & Oga-Baldwin, 2022); (Parrish & Vernon, 2022); (Mynard & Shelton-Strong, 2022a); (Mynard & Shelton-Strong, 2022b); (Alamer et al., 2023); (Burnell et al., 2023); (Tran, 2023); (Chapman et al., 2023); (David & Weinstein, 2023); (Tanaka & Kutsuki, 2023); (Wijaya, 2023); (Zeng & Fisher, 2023); (Dhiman et al., 2024); (Hendriks et al., 2024); (Nishimura, 2024)	80
French language learning	2	(Meristo, 2022); (Printer, 2023)	4
AI in education	2	(Xia et al., 2022); (Chiu, 2024)	4
Education in general	6	(Alamri et al., 2020); (Robinson, 2022); (Ryan & Deci, 2020); (Wang & Wind, 2020); (Evans et al., 2024); (Urhahne & Wijnia, 2023)	12
Total	50		100

Research Questions

To reach the aim of the study, the systematic review was seeking to find out the answers to the following research questions:

1. *What are the emerging themes in the selected articles on SDT in education?*
2. *What are the overarching trends in research on SDT in ELT?*

Methods

Research design

The purpose of this paper is to identify research trends in applying SDT in ELT by analyzing the contents of selected articles. Specific words for phrases in texts are counted and analyzed to see frequencies and themes, and the meaning behind them. Hence, an appropriate approach to conduct this study is *content analysis* (Mazov et al., 2020).

The aim of content analysis is “to provide knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Downe-Wamboldt, 1992, p.314). This study focuses on analyzing texts from the selected articles to identify and categorize themes through frequency counts and percentages of occurrence and then discussing the meanings behind them.

In this paper, content analysis was employed to uncover “underlying meanings of the words or the content” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1284); i.e., it is usually used to identify themes, hence find out research trends from a cluster of articles (Donthu et al., 2021). When applying a content analysis, a study “starts with *keywords* which are identified before and during the data analysis, and derived from the interest of the researcher or review of the literature” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1286).

Data collection

In this study, the data was collected from searching journal articles based on the search terms ‘*self-determination theory*’ and ‘*learner motivation*’ using these triggers:

- (i) Search terms: “*self-determination theory*” AND “*learner motivation*”; “*self-determination theory*” AND “EFL learner”
- (ii) Years of publication: 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024
- (iii) Prestigious publishers
- (iv) Search engine: Google Scholar

When entering these search terms into the search engine of Google Scholar, all dark keywords (appearing in the search results) associated with these terms were considered, along with years of publication (between 2000 and 2024) and prestigious publishers. The search terms were *observed in four places* of each article: (i) the title of the article, (ii) its abstract, (iii) the authors’ keywords, and (iv) the full text. The search results showed more than fifty appropriate articles, but some were taken off due to their incomplete contents as needed. Finally, the number of observed articles was fifty, as listed in Table 1 above.

The information synthesized from the articles was arranged into a table and categorized into topics, namely articles’ titles, authors’ keywords, methods used in those studies, their findings, implications, and directions or suggestions for future research.

Data analysis

Content analysis is an appropriate approach for both *primary data* (Brown et al., 2020; Champion et al., 2019) and *secondary data* (Edling et al., 2022; Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo, 2019; Lee et al., 2021; Schaaf et al., 2022) from *journal articles* (Edling et al., 2022; Schaaf et al., 2022), *newspaper articles* (Kiptinness & Kiwanuka-Tondo, 2019), to *professional documents* (Lee et al., 2021), etc.

In this paper, the data analysis focuses on identifying research trends on SDT in education, focusing on learner motivation, from a cluster of fifty articles. This process complies with the procedure for a *content analysis* approach, basically encompassing two main steps: (i) counting key terms of interest and (ii) coding to themes. Nonetheless, it can be flexible depending on the aim of a specific study (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Accordingly, based on the aforementioned objectives of the research, the data analysis follows a five-step *procedure*:

Step 1: Summarize the key information from the selected articles and arrange it into a **table** (See Appendix 2 for more detail) by *authors and year of publication, research topics, methods, results, and directions for future research*.

Step 2: Count repetitive keywords (authors' keywords under the abstracts of all the articles) to identify their frequency by using a *word cloud* tool (available and accessible on the Internet)

Step 3: Analyze and synthesize the articles' contents based on key information from steps 1 and 2.

Step 4: Group the commonalities of the selected articles into themes.

Step 5: Code the themes to trends.

One or two of the steps above can be removed based on the specific research aim, but the procedure generally stays the same for this kind of analysis.

Findings and Discussion

The findings from a summative content analysis reveal critical information about the fifty selected articles, categorized into frequencies, themes, and trends.

Frequencies refer to the number of times a specific word, phrase, concept, or category appears within the data being analyzed (Krippendorf, 2013; Neuendorf, 2002; Vaismoradi et al., 2013), and here in this study, they are from counting the number of repeated words in the article authors' keywords (*frequency of authors' keywords*) and methods utilized in their studies (*frequency of the methods employed*).

Themes are recurring ideas in the data related to the research questions, which provide key messages or insights that emerge from the qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Maguire & Dundalk, 2014). In this research, the themes are identified by the core contents of an article, such as authors' keywords, findings, implications, authors' suggestions for further research, and new relevant themes or noteworthy themes (beyond what needs to be explored).

Trends in this study refer to recurrent patterns in the data across the fifty articles published between 2020 and 2024. Specifically, trends focus on research topics based on the article titles and the generalized themes in applying SDT in researching education in general and ELT in particular.

The results based on a *summative content analysis* of the fifty selected articles are arranged according to the order of the contents of a typical article format, as follows:

- (i) Trends in research topics
- (ii) Frequency and themes in authors' keywords
- (iii) Frequency of the methods employed
- (iv) Themes in the findings
- (v) Themes in the authors' implications
- (vi) Themes in authors' suggestions for further research
- (vii) New relevant themes or noteworthy themes

In addition, the results also include an overview of the *commonalities of the selected articles* at the beginning and a *summary of trends* in research on SDT in education and ELT in the end.

Commonalities of the fifty selected articles

The selected articles discuss various aspects of *Self-Determination Theory (SDT)*, focusing on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, psychological needs satisfaction, and their influence on learning outcomes. *The use of Technology in Education* also accounts for a significant number of studies that examine the role of technology, including mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), digital game-based learning, adaptive learning systems, and AI-based tools in enhancing learning experiences and motivation. Furthermore, *motivation and engagement* are the recurring themes of student motivation, its measurement, and the factors that enhance or hinder it, and they are prevalent across many studies, which show how SDT influences student motivation and engagement in different learning environments.

Additionally, the fifty articles point out that SDT has been applied to teaching and learning in a wide variety of educational contexts, ranging from primary to higher education and in many different countries in the world, as shown in Table 2. Its applicability has been growing so much that Oga-Baldwin et al. (2022) emphasize its development with the phrase “taking root.” In fact, the contents of the above fifty articles show that SDT has increasingly appeared in education, especially in language teaching and learning.

Table 2.

The popularity of SDT's application on an international scale

Countries	Studies	Continents
Japan	10	Asia
Saudi Arabia	8	Asia
UK	6	Europe
USA	5	America
Australia	4	Australia/Oceania
Hong Kong	4	Asia
Germany	3	Europe
Canada	1	America
China	1	Asia
Colombia	1	America
Estonia	1	Europe
Greece	1	Europe
Indonesia	1	Asia
Korea	1	Asia
Singapore	1	Asia
The Netherlands	1	Europe
Vietnam	1	Asia
Total	50	

Trends in the research topics

The titles of the fifty articles together signify trends in research on SDT in the early 2020s, as shown in Table 3. This implies that there is significant potential for conducting studies on learner motivation within the SDT framework, particularly in language learning and in education in general.

Table 3.

Trends in the fifty research topics

No.	Trends	Detail
1	<i>Increased use of SDT</i>	Increasing use of SDT in different educational contexts, especially language learning
2	<i>Focus on technology</i>	Rising interest in digital tools to boost motivation and learning
3	<i>Psychological needs and well-being</i>	Greater focus on student psychological well-being to improve learning outcomes
4	<i>Intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation</i>	Ongoing exploration of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in education, especially in language learning
5	<i>Diverse educational contexts</i>	Expanding research into cultural and linguistic settings for a global view on motivation

Frequency of authors' keywords

The authors' keywords (under each abstract) of the fifty articles also reveal some commonalities in terms of word frequency. Figure 4 manifests the most frequent words throughout the articles. The larger and bolder the word is, the more frequently it represents the text data. The biggest word means the most important word or the core term, with the highest frequency in the observed articles. This picture was generated by a word cloud tool¹ based on the frequency and relevance of the authors' keywords.

This visual overview indicates that the commonalities of the fifty selected articles *converge in seven themes* arranged in the order of frequency, such as *self-determination theory* (the biggest and boldest), *motivation*, *BPNs*, *well-being*, *intrinsic motivation*, *ESEM*, and *MALL*. This provides insights into trends in research on learner motivation under SDT, unveiling various ideas for future studies on learner motivation with a new approach to theories of motivation: SDT.



Figure 4. Word cloud based on the keywords from the fifty articles

Themes in authors' keywords

Through the frequency of authors' keywords in Figure 4, several key themes are unveiled, as shown in Table 5. These themes indicate the importance of studying learner motivation, especially intrinsic motivation, by employing SDT to gain a nuanced understanding of how learners achieve well-being through satisfying their BPNs. Moreover, validating factors affecting learner motivation using models like ESEM and MALL in different teaching and learning contexts is also highly promising for future research on the applicability of SDT in ELT.

¹ <https://wordcloud.ahaslides.com/iframe.html>

Table 5.

Themes in the authors' keywords in the fifty research topics

No.	Theme	Message
1	<i>Self-determination theory (SDT)</i>	<i>SDT</i> is the most recurring theme, highlighting its importance in the context of motivation, language learning, and educational research.
2	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Motivation</i> is another key theme, frequently mentioned alongside <i>SDT</i> , indicating a strong focus on understanding and enhancing motivators in learning environments.
3	<i>BPNs</i>	Many studies centralize the importance of fulfilling <i>BPNs</i> (autonomy, competence, relatedness).
4	<i>Well-being</i>	<i>Well-being</i> underscores the importance of holistic learner support.
5	<i>Intrinsic motivation</i>	<i>Intrinsic motivation</i> is strongly related to better learning outcomes compared to extrinsic motivation.
6	<i>Exploratory structural equation modeling (ESEM)</i>	<i>ESEM</i> is prominent in methodological approaches, reflecting the importance of robust statistical techniques in educational research.
7	<i>Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)</i>	<i>MALL</i> emphasizes the application of theories and methods in language acquisition and technology-assisted learning contexts.

Frequency of the methods employed

As Table 6 shows, quantitative methods have been employed most (58%), and mixed methods are in second place, with 22%. This is a commonality or a trend in using more quantitative and mixed methods than qualitative approaches when conducting research on learner motivation.

Table 6.

Frequency of methods used in the fifty articles

Research Method	Number of Studies	(%)
Quantitative	29	58
Qualitative	10	20
Mixed Methods	11	22
Total	50	100

Themes in findings

The findings of the fifty articles have five things in common. First, the results indicate that *SDT-based interventions* positively impact motivation and learning outcomes. Second, there is strong evidence supporting the *role of BPNs* in fostering motivation; in fact, satisfying *BPNs* is crucial for sustained motivation. In addition, *digital tools* like WhatsApp and Duolingo can effectively enhance motivation and reduce anxiety in language learners. Moreover, *autonomy-supportive environments* have a positive impact on learner motivation. Last but not least, *intrinsic motivation* plays a crucial role in leading to better learning outcomes.

Themes in authors' implications

The implications of the selected articles specify some common things, such as *educational interventions*, *teacher training*, *technology integration*, and *policy development*. The first suggestion refers to designing and implementing interventions based on *SDT* to enhance learner motivation, especially *intrinsic motivation*. The second implication encourages training educators to apply *SDT* principles in their teaching practices to foster student motivation. For

example, identifying effective strategies to elevate motivation and learning outcomes is a key objective. Next, the authors of the articles also recommend that there should be guidelines for the effective use of technology to boost learner motivation and academic achievements. Finally, the implications also provide policymakers with insights into the importance of supporting BPNs in educational settings.

Themes in suggestions for further research

Technology integration, longitudinal studies, cross-cultural validation, intervention studies, and integrated approaches are prevalent directions for further or future research. Regarding the first theme, further investigation should be conducted into different digital tools and their impacts on motivation and learning outcomes. Plus, more longitudinal research should be carried out to understand how motivation and learning outcomes evolve over time; in a word, there needs to be more long-term studies to understand or track changes in motivation over time.

Furthermore, it is essential for researchers to validate SDT-based scales and findings across different cultural contexts. In connection with intervention studies, developing and testing targeted interventions to enhance intrinsic motivation and address extrinsic motivators are promoted. Additionally, studies on integrating SDT with other motivational theories and educational frameworks are indispensable.

New relevant themes or noteworthy themes

In addition to the aforementioned common themes, the selected articles disclose new relevant or noteworthy themes, such as *AI integration in education, gamification, and frustration of psychological needs*. As for the first one, using AI tools like ChatGPT to support self-regulated learning and motivation is an emerging area of interest among some selected articles. Similarly, an emerging interest in applying SDT in education is using gamification based on SDT principles to boost motivation. Plus, the satisfaction of learners' BPNs was mentioned, but psychological needs frustration is a new relevant theme that implies the significance of understanding how the frustration of psychological needs influences learner motivation.

Recent trends in research on SDT in modern education reveal several key foci, such as *emphasis on motivation, technology integration, adaptive learning, student well-being, and motivational theories*.

As a matter of fact, there has been more investigation into how intrinsic and extrinsic motivation affects learner motivation and learning outcomes using different theoretical frameworks, particularly SDT. Additionally, research into how emerging technologies like AI, mobile apps, and digital game-based learning can enhance educational practices. Essentially, studies on the effectiveness of these technologies in various educational settings, from K-12 to higher education, have been conducted to enhance learning outcomes and student engagement. Another trend in research on SDT in education is an exploration of adaptive learning systems and their potential to personalize education to understand and promote student well-being. Finally, the applicability of motivational theories, particularly self-determination theory, has been constantly applied and tested to explain student behavior and outcomes.

In short, these trends convey insightful messages of conducting more research on how to support students by creating innovative learning environments that improve motivational strategies to satisfy their BPNs, thereby amplifying their intrinsic motivation. This leads to student well-being and effective learning outcomes, which are the ultimate goals in any educational discipline.

Trends in research on SDT in ELT

In modern educational research and practice, a growing trend in applying SDT in ELT research focuses on the **increased use of technology** like MALL apps or digital tools (e.g., WhatsApp, Duolingo) to motivate learners and improve language acquisition, especially outside traditional classroom settings. Moreover, there is a growing interest in investigating the impact of digital tools on learner motivation and language learning through SDT.

Another trend in ELT research is **psychological support in language learning**. Studies increasingly center on understanding and supporting learners' psychological needs. Specifically, there is more investigation into the role of advising and psychological support in enhancing language learner well-being; indeed, the importance of BPNs in fostering language learner motivation is frequently highlighted. Take autonomy-supportive strategies, for example. Designing autonomy-supportive learning environments to enhance intrinsic motivation is progressively emphasized.

Intrinsic motivation is also one of the key trends in ELT research. Recent literature indicates that various studies have been conducted to explore how intrinsic motivation can be fostered through diverse interventions, as well as its impact on language learning outcomes. Notably, **motivational strategies** have been developed to strengthen L2 motivation by combining SDT and other motivational frameworks to examine specific motivational factors (autonomy, competence, and relatedness) that impact English language learners.

What's more, **validation of SDT constructs** manifests in numerous studies that focus on validating different SDT-based scales and tools used to measure motivation and psychological constructs in language learning. In other words, using these validated tools to assess the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and technologies demonstrates ongoing efforts to develop and validate surveys and instruments to measure motivation in English language learning more effectively. The final key trend in applying SDT in ELT is longitudinal and cross-cultural studies. Researchers emphasize the need for longitudinal and cross-cultural studies to validate and extend findings across different contexts.

Furthermore, **validation of SDT constructs** is evident in numerous studies focusing on validating different SDT-based scales and tools used to measure motivation and psychological constructs in language learning. In other words, using these validated tools to assess the effectiveness of different teaching strategies and technologies demonstrates ongoing efforts to develop and validate surveys and instruments to measure motivation in English language learning more effectively. The final key trend in applying SDT in ELT is the emphasis on **longitudinal and cross-cultural studies**. In fact, researchers are highlighting the need for such studies to validate and extend findings across different contexts.

In a nutshell, the fifty articles highlight specific trends in research on SDT in ELT, indicating significant potential for further exploration of learner motivation in ELT.

Conclusion

The findings reveal commonalities, prevalent themes, and specific trends across the fifty articles published in the early 2020s (between January 2020 and June 2024), providing insights into the applicability of SDT in education, particularly in language learning.

The trends found in the fifty selected articles on SDT and learner motivation reveal ideas for future research. First, intrinsic motivation, related to the satisfaction of BPNs, has a strong impact on *learning outcomes*, which are the core issue of each syllabus in educational programs.

This implies ideas for educators and policymakers in curriculum development.

Second, there is *less evidence from qualitative studies* on learner motivation compared to quantitative research (Ryan, 2022). This suggests there should be more research employing qualitative methods to gain a deeper understanding of learner motivation in education in general and in language learning in particular. When learner motivation is completely explored, there may be more innovative ideas for improving educational programs, teaching methods, etc.

In addition, *technology-integrated teaching approaches* that enhance students' motivation should receive more attention in the Vietnamese context. This suggests more studies on technology integration in teaching and learning under SDT, which seems to be new in the educational contexts of Vietnam.

The themes and trends found in this study are limited to the number of articles on SDT and language learner motivation published between January 2020 and June 2024. A research trend is the collective focus of researchers on a specific topic within a field in a specific period of time, characterized by a sustained increase in research activity on that topic (Mazov et al., 2020). Accordingly, upcoming articles on SDT in ELT should be continuously tracked to determine the extent to which these trends change over time.

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Biodata

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: SDT's framework

Concepts	Explanations/Examples
BPNs	
autonomy	The need to feel in control of one's own choices.
competence	The need to feel capable and effective in learning.
relatedness	The need to feel connected to others in the class.
Self-determination	
self-determination (SD)	Students feeling they can make choices about their learning (sense of self-determination) are more engaged and committed.
self-determination continuum	A range of SD, from least SD to highest SD
self-determined	Students want to do extra reading because they love the topic, not because they are told or forced to.
Motivation	
motivation	The reasons why students join learning activities fully manifest on a continuum or spectrum.
intrinsic motivation	Students learn English for the fun of it, not for rewards or punishment avoidance.
extrinsic motivation	Motivation by external rewards or avoiding negative consequences
external regulation	Students study to get good grades or avoid being punished.
introjection	Students learn English as they feel they "should" to please their parents.
identification	Students learn English because they see it as important for their future careers.
integration	The highest level of extrinsic motivation, where students see the value of activities or tasks in the classroom
motivation continuum	A motivation spectrum, from amotivation to being fully intrinsically motivated, shows how people's motivation changes over time, depending on endogenous and exogenous factors .
Other concepts	
optimal functioning	Students feel energetic and focused in class, participating in tasks with enthusiasm.

performance	How well a student completes a task or test.
outcomes	After a course, students' learning outcomes manifest in grades and how improved their knowledge and skills are.
goals	Students set a goal to improve their scores on school subjects by 10 points.
persistence	Students continue working on a difficult project or task despite facing setbacks.
well-being	Sense of happiness and satisfaction
Sub-theories	
Cognitive Evaluation Theory	Foci are how external factors (rewards, praise, or positive feedback) can either support or hinder intrinsic motivation.
Organismic Integration Theory	Students at first do homework just to avoid punishment, but later, with their awareness, they do it as they see its long-term value for their future.
Causality Orientations Theory	Describing different personality types based on motivation: (i) <i>autonomous orientation</i> (personal interest), (ii) <i>controlled orientation</i> (external demands, (iii) <i>impersonal orientation</i> (students feel they have little control over their study). Example: Autonomous students are often curious and explore topics proactively. Controlled students might only focus on what is needed to pass exams.
Basic Psychological Needs Theory	When students' needs for <i>autonomy, competence, and relatedness</i> are satisfied, they are more motivated and mentally healthy since they help them to thrive. Example: A school environment giving students freedom of choice (autonomy), positive feedback from teachers (competence), and a sense of class or school community (relatedness) will help them succeed and lead to well-being.
Goal Contents Theory	Distinguishing <i>intrinsic goals</i> (personal growth, relationships) and <i>extrinsic goals</i> (money, fame) Intrinsic goals lead to better motivation and well-being.
Relationships Motivation Theory	Students feeling close to their teacher and classmates in terms of supportive relationships may be more engaged in schoolwork because these positive relationships help boost or foster their intrinsic motivation.

Appendix 2: Table for summarizing the articles

Article	Author(s) (Year)	Topic	Keywords	Methods	Results/ Findings	Limitations	Suggestions for further research
1							
2							
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In-service teacher's perceptions toward teaching collocation to intermediate EFL learner's productive skills

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

perceptions, teaching collocations, productive skills, in-service teachers

Collocations play a crucial role in second language learning and teaching, especially in relation to writing and speaking skills. The existing studies examine teachers' more personal and subjective views in using collocations to teach productive skills. Moreover, previous studies have been limited to discovering possible teaching approaches to assist teachers in effectively teaching collocations at the intermediate level. The current study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of the challenges of teaching collocations to enhance EFL learners' productive skills at the intermediate level. To get optimal results, twenty in-service teachers who are pursuing master's degrees in English linguistics contribute to answering the research questionnaire. The study's findings indicate that collocations are important for students to generate the English language, and most teachers found it difficult to teach their learners to use collocations accurately in writing and speaking skills. Furthermore, the researchers found the limitations and suggestions to conduct in future research about teaching collocation.

Introduction

Background of the study

In second language acquisition, Wilkins (1972, p. 111-112) asserts that "without grammar very little can be conveyed, but without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." Similarly, McCathy (1990) emphasizes that vocabulary is an important language training component. Folse (2004) and other linguistics also highlight vocabulary's essential role in learning a foreign language. Therefore, vocabulary is essential for language learning; it is crucial in effective communication and language acquisition.

Collocations are considered combinations of two or more words that change their meaning. Nattinger (2014) argues that collocations are crucial for learning vocabulary. Furthermore, using common collocations can enhance speaking and writing skills. Understanding the significance of vocabulary is crucial for acquiring proficiency in a foreign language, and collocations are a key aspect of this relevance.

Collocations are essential for learners to achieve in learning a language. Collocations are especially important for learners to improve both accuracy and fluency, aiming for a high level of skills in the second language (Wray, 2002). Furthermore, collocation efficiency serves as an indicator or standard for assessing a learner's linguistic knowledge (Hill, 2000). Therefore, learners must acquire sufficient collocation to be fluent and capable of using a language effectively (Pawley & Syder, 2014). When learners pay sufficient attention, collocational information could significantly impact learners' language ability and help them upgrade their levels. (Lewis, 2000).

The need for teaching collocation is a concern; the role of the teacher is an important factor in the learner's language ability. Al-Seghayer (2017) indicates that EFL teachers must be aware of fundamental competencies to help learners succeed in English learning acquisition and thus succeed in teaching the English language. Thus, the role of EFL teachers is to master teaching collocation so that what is delivered to learners is able to understand and acquire the knowledge of collocation clearly.

Statement of the problems

On the part of EFL learners, learning collocation is used to make errors in productive skills. Bui (2021) states that EFL learners frequently internalize collocations in their mother tongue, but they are not natural in English. Similarly, the majority of collocation mistakes are caused by a lack of awareness of collocations and interference from the mother tongue (Shih, 2000). Hashemi et al. (2012) also significantly highlight the errors of EFL learners using collocation, such as the mother tongue, the mistake of collocational style, the collocational knowledge, and the interlingual and intralingual transformation. The other aspects of learners it is also dependent on instructors related to the school environment, English materials, and teaching approach.

The purpose of the study

The value of collocation refers to vocabulary, which is an essential part of vocabulary. (Hammer, 1992). Thus, teachers should guide collocation in the classroom and ensure that EFL learners have sufficient knowledge of collocation while using the proper teaching technique. In contrast, teachers also deal with challenges in teaching collocations to EFL learners (Bui, 2021). The paper attempts to shed light on the challenges of in-service teachers when teaching collocations to ELF learners in English classrooms, specifically at the intermediate level.

Literature review

Definitions of collocation

The special significance of collocation in language has been acknowledged for years, and most linguists have shared a similar outlook on the concept of collocation. The term "collocation" originates from the Latin verb "collocare," which is translated as "to set in order/to arrange" (Ahmed, 2012). Firth (1957) defines semantic connections as the regular and common collocation of words. An illustration of this phenomenon is the ability between the term "night" and the concept of "dark", as they possess the capacity to combine and form a cohesive unit.

Baker (1992) stated that collocation is the specific words together on a frequent basis in a language. Similarly, according to Lewis (2000), collocation is defined as words that co-occur in typical content in statistically significant ways. The co-occurrences of words or phrases such as "bitter chocolate" and "strong coffee" are recurrent, and they sound acceptable and natural to native speakers (Martyńska, 2004). In addition, Prodromou (2003) defined collocation as the

product of years of regular use of fluent English speakers. The automation of collocations facilitated the usage of chunks so native speakers to communicate effectively and fluently. Moreover, Evert (2008) defines collocation as a combination of two words that appear next to one another in language. Oxford Collocations Dictionary (2002) described the term collocation as a combination of words in a language to generate natural sounds in speaking and writing skills. For example, these combinations in English, such as "heavy wind" or "strong rain," are not natural and accurate.

Classification of collocations

The categorization of collocations can be used in several ways, but the most common classifications of collocations are lexical and grammatical collocations and strong and weak collocations.

According to Lewis (2000) classified collocations as follow:

1. *Strong collocations*: collocations consist of a set of specified collocates. For instance, rancid butter or rancid oil, etc.
2. *Weak collocations*: collocations have many collocates. For example, a variety of things can be cheap or expensive, good or bad, etc.
3. *Medium-strength collocations*: words appear together more often than weak collocations. For example, hold a meeting, carry out a study, etc.

In addition, Benson and Ilson (1986) state that collocations can be classified into two primary categories: grammatical and lexical. Grammatical collocations consist of words that are either a noun, an adjective, or a verb combined with a preposition or infinitive. Lexical collocations consist of content words and do not include prepositions or infinitives. Some examples are:

Grammatical collocations:

Pattern	Examples
Noun + preposition	Blockade against
Adjective + preposition	Pleased with
Preposition + noun	By accident

Lexical collocations:

Pattern	Examples
Noun + noun	Traffic accident
Verb + adverb	Smile broadly
Verb + noun	Do homework

The importance of collocations in productive skills

Definitions of productive skills

Golkova and Hubackova (2014) assert that productive skills, referred to as active skills, are the spoken or written communication of knowledge generated by a language user. Furthermore, productive skills refer to writing and speaking skills that can be used as a "barometer" to assess learners' understanding (Hossain, 2015).

The importance of collocations in writing skills

Collocations play a crucial role in creating and writing text for learners. The lack of collocational knowledge can cause the writing skills of language learners to be weak (Akhter & Nordin, 2022). Therefore, language performance can enhance proficiency and fluency when

learners perceive collocations of instruction into writing skills.

Moreover, the need to concentrate on collocational structure in writing is paramount, as the mother tongue interference may be a significant factor in productive skills where collocations appear to be more salient. According to Kawakato et al. (2005), language learners should be given greater opportunity to experience the common linguistic forms and structures of academic discourse as well as learn to recognize the terms that frequently occur together in academic writing. The practical experience enables learners to produce the correct collocations and the use of language correctly in their own writing.

Bahardoust and Moeini (2012) state that the main purpose of the writing course should be collocation instruction. Although the learners may recognize every word in isolation, they are likely unfamiliar with all collocations (Bui, 2021). The role of collocations can have a significant impact on writing ability.

McCarthy and O'Dell (2005) suggest that the common combination of words can assist students in expressing their ideas in the most natural way. It also gives them additional options to choose from, including more colorful, expressive, and precise combinations. Furthermore, collocations might help students enhance their writing style (Ying & Hendricks, 2004). This means that learners can use collocations to make their content greater and easier to read. Moreover, McIntosh et al. (2009) imply that choosing the proper collocations makes a learner's writing the same as a native speaker and represents "intermediate" writing.

The importance of collocations in speaking skills

According to Sung (2003), there is a relationship between speaking skills and the understanding and application of lexical collocations. It is acknowledged that incorrect combinations of words (collocations) and collocational errors negatively affect learners' spoken language Mahmoud (2005).

In addition, Hsu and Chiu (2008) claim that the same with English lexical collocations seemed to have positive impacts on the speaking ability and proficiency of English learners. Learners using lexical collocations helps them make speech sound more fluently and reduce hesitation in communication skills. Furthermore, Shoostari and Karami (2013) and other researchers have demonstrated that possessing a strong grasp of collocations is beneficial for enhancing the ability to speak fluently. Learners have a strong grasp of collocations to construct sentences smoothly and reduce the cognitive load to produce speech.

EFL learners' collocational errors in productive skills

Bahns and Eldaw (1993) argue that the mother tongue is the cause of EFL learners' collocation errors. Liu (1999) identifies the factors contributing to EFL learners' proficiency in organizing collocations:

1. Lack of collocational concept: Learners were unsure which word it would combine with.
2. Direct translation: Learners remembered the word as it was translated into the mother tongue.
3. Ignorance of rule restrictions: Learners were unaware that some collocations were based on word meaning and range, while others failed to consider grammar rules.
4. Lack of knowledge of collocational properties: Learners were unaware of the possible collocational properties of the words studied.

The findings study of Mahmoud (2005) support the assumption that EFL learners depend on both interlingual and intralingual approaches to transfer English collocations. Mahmoud (2005)

demonstrates that Arabic-speaking learners made collocation errors, particularly lexical collocations, because of interlingual transfer from Arabic to English. They implement the interlingual transfer approach, replacing Arabic terms with English ones. Therefore, researchers point out collocations were produced inaccurately because of negative mother tongue transfer.

Besides, Farghal and Obiedat (1995) observe that students who lacked knowledge of particular collocations tended to rely on techniques such as synonyms, paraphrase, avoidance, and transfer. Students didn't transfer appropriate collocations, which led to frequent lexical collocation errors in the writing performance (Do & Le, 2023). To sum up, EFL learners often use collocational errors in both written and spoken skills because of "the interference of their mother tongue, lack of the collocational concept, the interlingual transformation, the shortage of collocational knowledge" (Hashemi et al., 2012 p. 523).

The challenges of teaching collocations in productive skills

According to Deveci (2004), the challenges of teaching collocations indicate learners encounter problems when learning collocations, including intralingual difficulties, negative transfer from the mother tongue, incorrect use of prepositions in phrasal verbs, mistakes in using collocations as meaningful, decreased retention collocation when learning on definitions.

Bui (2021) states that the majority of teaching resources in secondary and high schools in Vietnam prioritize the instruction of grammar and vocabulary in isolation without addressing collocations' Context. In the study by Duong and Nguyen (2021), the researchers found that teachers are not able to pay enough attention to teach collocations in English classes when teachers tend to focus on grammar or isolate words instead of chunks of English. The EFL learners only focus on grammar and isolated vocabulary in their spoken and written performance. Thus, this causes learners to lack the sequencing of collocations and inhibits their ability to conduct their skills effectively.

The follow-up study by Nguyen (2024) claims that the biggest challenge to teachers when teaching collocations in the classroom is time constraints. Teachers deal with the difficulties of time to provide many collocations to learners, especially in the Vietnamese Context. She also finds the aspect of time management solutions that teachers can use to conduct activities and explain the main collocations. Thus, learners pay attention to implementing many useful collocations, but time limits are avoidable to teachers in the classroom.

Previous studies

Sung (2003) investigated the use of collocations knowledge to speaking skills among international learners enrolling at a Pittsburgh university. Her study involved 72 non-native English speakers. There are two tests for each subject: collocations and speaking tests. The first test evaluated the learners' comprehension of lexical collocations, while the subsequent test assessed the participants' usage of lexical collocations and their speaking skills. The finding revealed a significant relationship between lexical collocation knowledge and the subject of speaking skills.

Hsu and Chiu (2008) said that the impact of collocation knowledge is related to the level of speaking performance among Taiwanese EFL learners in university. The research was collected from 56 junior English majors. The researcher conducted three tests, including the lexical collocations exam, the English-speaking exam, and the Phonepass spoken English exam. The aim of these tests is to assess the knowledge of collocations as well as learners' speaking proficiency. The finding indicated that the mastery of collocations significantly facilitates learners' speaking performance.

Another study of teaching collocations conducted by Attar and Allami (2013) investigated the relationship between teaching collocations and EFL learners' speaking performance. The study participants were 80 intermediate-level learners. They were divided into experimental and control groups, and the test consisted of 30 questions and an interview as a pretest and posttest. The findings demonstrated that the experimental group worked better than the control group following collocation instructions. Additionally, the learners showed positive attitudes through explicit collocations of instruction.

Regarding teacher perception, Phuong (2012) examined teachers' perceptions of teaching English collocations to learners at the pre-intermediate level in the Vietnamese Context. Her study was accomplished by 35 teachers who implemented the survey questionnaire and collocation test. Thus, she claimed that teachers' positive behaviors in teaching collocations play an important role in language skills. Phuong (2012) also found that teachers should focus on commonly using collocations in the comparison of the synonyms' collocation activities.

In a study conducted in Turkey, Mutlu & Kaslioglu (2016) examined the views and instructional methods of Turkish EFL teachers on the teaching of collocations to learners. The researchers administered the questionnaire to 32 high school teachers and 326 learners and conducted semi-structured interviews with 6 teachers. Thus, their study emphasized that high school teachers conducted a lot of collocations knowledge in language teaching. Besides, teachers influence learners' attitudes toward the main content, teaching performance, and tendencies to use specific instructional techniques in EFL settings.

According to Le (2017), the researcher explored the teachers' perceptions about teaching collocations with an appropriate approach in high school. The research implemented a case study approach analysis, using data collected from both a survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The study's results revealed that the teacher's comprehension was lacking in the field of lexical collocations. In addition, pupils receive insufficient collocation advice. Besides, teachers should be provided with methods to effectively integrate teaching collocations into the lesson.

Duong and Nguyen (2021) studied how learners and teachers use collocations to enhance writing skills. The study consisted of 47 English-majored juniors and 5 English teachers at Van Lang University. Researchers employed both online questionnaires and email interviews to collect the data, and SPSS was used to analyze these data. The study found that perceptions toward the advantages of collocations in academic writing are similar; the ignorance of collocations in language instruction and ineffective learning strategies might result in numerous restrictions.

Adriosh (2023) explored teachers' perspectives on teaching collocations to undergraduate EFL learners in Libya. The researcher applied qualitative methods to collect and analyze data. The participants joined 8 lecturers in four universities who were interviewed. The findings suggested that teachers should provide learners with opportunities to practice and use collocations in meaningful contexts.

Nesselhauf (2003) described a study that analyses the use of collocations by advanced German learners' level of speaking skill in written production. The researcher aims to examine the errors made by learners when using collocations in their writing, as well as the influence of incorporating collocations in the target language. The participants are thirty-two junior and senior German-speaking English learners, who are required to complete an argumentative and non-technical essay in three steps. All of the writings were chosen at random and are intended to investigate the use of collocation. According to the researcher's findings, learners find it

challenging to use and master grammatical collocation combinations.

Mounya (2010) explored the teaching of lexical collocations relevant to foreign language competency and writing skills. In a case study, the study investigated the use and impact of collocation on first-year learners at Guelma University's English Department in Algeria and the use of first and second languages by learners. Her research reveals that learners must use collocation for effective writing, and she suggests that they be treated as lexical chunks rather than single words.

According to Eidian et al. (2013), they investigated the influence of lexical collocations on Iranian EFL learners' writing abilities. The participants are EFL learners at the pre-intermediate level who will complete online writing assignments for the study. Following the findings, lexical collocations awareness on writing skills is overpowering, implying that collocational competence could assist authors in achieving writing fluency.

Sadeghi and Panahifar (2012) explored the use of collocations in Iranian EFL learners' speaking skills. The data were acquired from 30 intermediate-level Iranian EFL learners who completed a collocation test and answered topic-specific interview questions. The study's findings demonstrated a significant association between learners' understanding of collocations and their speaking skills.

Biskri (2012) investigated how raising awareness of lexical collocations affects EFL learners' speaking proficiency. She collected data for the study from 50 Algerian first-year learners at the University of Guelma. The researchers divided the pupils into two experimental and control groups. The post-test results for the experimental group were positive as opposed to the control group. As a result, the study concluded that lexical collocation could help learners enhance their speaking skills.

Shamsudin et al. (2013) analyzed Iranian EFL learners' errors in their use of collocation in speaking skills. The researchers chose fifteen Iranian postgraduate learners to study in an intensive English course at the University of Technology in Malaysia. Two speech tests are administered as study instruments: one unscripted and one public. The findings revealed that Iranian EFL learners committed lexical collocation errors in both exams. As a result, the researchers recommended that learners work harder to master more lexical collocations and practice speaking skills on a regular basis.

Hassani & Jamali (2014) studied the impact of teaching English lexical clusters on Iranian EFL intermediate learners' speaking accuracy. The study included 41 male and female intermediate-level EFL learners studying English at Zabankade Institute in Tehran. The participants were randomly divided into experimental and control groups. Both groups were given a pretest to determine their speaking ability. The results demonstrated that teaching lexical clusters to the experimental group greatly improved the participants' speaking accuracy and competence.

Begagić (2014) conducted a thorough analysis of the first- and fourth-year English major learners in Zenica's receptive and productive understanding of lexical collocations, focusing on three types: "verb + noun," "adjective + noun," and "verb + adverb collocations through exams that are both productive and receptive. Despite their general lack of understanding of collocations, the results showed that all of them appeared to know more about receptive collocations than productive collocations, with both groups of learners finding the "verb + adverb" collocation type to be the most challenging.

Research gaps

As mentioned in the previous study, a few studies have dealt with teachers' perceptions of

teaching collocation in high school and university (Le, 2017; Mutlu & Kaslioglu, 2016; Sung, 2003). Other research focuses on teaching EFL learners at pre-intermediate, intermediate, and undergraduate levels (Phuong, 2012; Attar & Allami, 2013; Adriosh, 2023); however, this has been limited to in-service teachers' perception toward teaching collocation with EFL learners' intermediate level. Therefore, this study has been investigated to conduct the in-service teachers' perceptions who are studying Master class at VLU University toward the challenges of teaching collocation with EFL learners in productive skills.

Research Questions

As mentioned above, the study's main purpose is to examine what in-service teachers can teach collocation with EFL learners. To achieve this purpose, the research has posed two questions:

1. What are in-service teachers' perceptions toward teaching collocation to intermediate EFL learners?
2. What are the challenges of teaching collocation to intermediate EFL learners' productive skills?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The current study is conducted at the faculty of foreign languages of Van Lang University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The study took place in the first semester of the academic year 2024 – 2025. Twenty in-service teachers pursuing a master's class in English study and used to teach English at English centers and secondary schools joined the research participants, and they were asked to participate in the questionnaire survey. Their ages ranged from 23 to 30, regardless of gender. Prior to this study, the in-service teachers had a chance to teach English to learners of intermediate level, and they had at least one year of experience teaching. Moreover, these in-service teachers frequently used and conveyed collocational knowledge in writing and speaking lessons.

Design of the Study

A quantitative method was utilized to conduct this study. Collecting data on teachers' perceptions can be consistent. Specifically, the data were gathered by analyzing a questionnaire distributed to twenty in-service teachers who are studying master's classes at Van Lang University during the 2024 – 2025 academic year.

Procedure

The procedures were carried out for approximately two months, and considerable results were obtained. An online website named Google Forms was used to create the questionnaire. This survey was adapted study of Phuong (2012) and Le (2017) about teacher's perception of teaching collocation, the pattern of collocation by Benson and Ilson (1986), and the role of collocation and challenges of teaching by Bui (2021), (Liu, 1999). The research question conducted to explore is considerable and suitable for exploratory participants in the study. By using this internet-based tool, the data was gathered conveniently and effectively. After three weeks, the researchers could collect information from 20 out of 20 participants. After successfully acquiring the quantitative data, the researchers tabulate them into statistical figures and interpret their meaning.

Data collection & analysis

Based on the five-point Likert scale, the questionnaire was designed with five degrees of affirmation, ranging from the lowest degree, “strongly disagree,” to the highest degree, “strongly agree” (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree). Therefore, the 20-item questionnaire was to investigate each in-service teacher's perceptions of teaching collocations in productive skills. The questionnaire was categorized into three sections. The first section referred to the personal information of participants. The second section involved in-service teachers' perceptions toward teaching collocations for EFL learners' writing and speaking skills. The last section related to challenges teachers may encounter during the process of teaching collocational knowledge to EFL learners.

Results/Findings and Discussion

Research question 1: What are in-service teachers' perceptions toward teaching collocations to intermediate EFL learners?

This study consisted of 20 respondents in total. A 20-item questionnaire was created to collect descriptive data. The results were analyzed and presented in the form of descriptive statistics. The following parts aim to deal with the first research question:

Table 1.

In-service teachers' perceptions of the advantages of teaching collocations in productive skills

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Collocations play an important role in a learner's writing style.	5%	0%	20%	45%	30%
2.	The appropriate collocation makes learners' writing the same as that of native speakers.	10%	10%	0%	45%	35%
3.	Collocation instruction is the main purpose of the writing class.	15%	25%	20%	25%	15%
4.	The use of collocation knowledge can improve learners' language fluency.	10%	0%	10%	50%	30%
5.	The use of collocation knowledge can improve learners' language accuracy.	10%	0%	5%	55%	30%
6.	Lexical collocations have a positive impact on learner's speaking skills.	10%	0%	15%	45%	30%
7.	Collocation training can enhance to learner's speaking skills.	10%	0%	20%	35%	35%
8.	A good command of collocations facilitates the improvement of speaking skills.	10%	0%	30%	20%	40%

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

As shown in Table 1, in-service teachers generally tend to have positive attitudes toward teaching collocational knowledge in writing and speaking classes. Firstly, according to in-

service teachers, the use of collocational knowledge in improving learners' language accuracy received the greatest percentage (85%). The second largest benefits of conveying collocations in productive classrooms were the appropriate collocations in creating native-like written texts and the use of collocations in enhancing learners' language fluency (80%). Additionally, most in-service teachers strongly agreed that teaching collocations in productive class sessions, which accounted for the third highest proportion (75%), significantly impacts learners' writing styles and speaking skills. In contrast, collocation instructions, which were the major goal of writing classes, achieved the least agreement of 40% of in-service teachers. To conclude, most in-service teachers acknowledge the positivity and advantages of teaching collocations in improving learners' writing and speaking skills, especially in enhancing language accuracy; however, they claimed that teaching collocations was not the prime purpose of writing classes.

The finding of this study reveals that almost all participating in-service teachers who teach EFL learners at an intermediate level guide the knowledge of collocation in class. All participants proved that the importance of collocation can affect their learners, specifically lexical collocation rather than grammar collocation. The results parallel the study of Benson and Ilson's categories of collocation (1989). Regarding productive skills, all participants choose productive skills to focus on teaching collocation about writing skills rather than speaking skills. This shows that writing skills are very important in English class (Akher & Nordin, 2022), but speaking skills are also emphasized during the teaching of collocations (Sung, 2003). In addition, the findings of the study were also shown in a row with some previous studies.

Based on the teachers' perception of the teaching collocation in a positive aspect, the finding results match with the study of Phuong (2012) that teaching collocation plays an important role in EFL learners enhancing language skills. Similarly, the study of Akhter and Nordin (2022) stated that the role of collocation in EFL learners produces a writing context. Next, the study also found that the use of collocation knowledge can improve learners' language fluency and accuracy. Wray (2002) affirmed that teaching collocation helps learners enhance their language skills and improve their fluency and accuracy. Lastly, the findings correspond to the findings from Phuong (2012) about teaching collocation with speaking and writing skills. However, the findings found that collocation instruction cannot be the main purpose of writing in the classroom, whereas the study of Bahardoust and Moeini (2012) claims that teachers can shape the main role of collocation in writing skills from the classroom environment.

Research question 2: What are the challenges of teaching collocations to intermediate EFL learners' productive skills?

Table 2 indicates in-service teachers' attitudes toward the challenges of teaching collocations in productive skills. Firstly, the greatest percentage of difficulties in teaching collocations in productive classrooms was learner's unawareness of the grammatical rules of collocations (80%). Moreover, the second largest proportion of challenges of teaching collocations in writing and speaking sessions was the direct transfer of learners' mother tongue to create collocations (75%). In addition, the third highest challenges of teaching collocations in productive classes were the isolation of teaching grammar and vocabulary and the inference of learners' mother tongue when learning collocations (70%). However, 30% of participants reported not lacking teaching materials with collocations' contexts, and this challenge also received the lowest agreement. In conclusion, most in-service teachers encountered difficulties with the grammatical rules of the use of collocations and the influence of learners' mother tongues in learning collocations; however, teaching materials for collocations were not the main problem.

Table 2.

In-service teachers' perceptions of challenges of teaching collocations in productive skills

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
9.	Teachers lack material with collocations' Context.	5%	30%	35%	20%	10%
10.	Teachers find it difficult to teach collocations with limitations on time.	0%	25%	20%	35%	20%
11.	Teacher deals with the isolation of teaching grammar and vocabulary.	0%	25%	5%	50%	20%
12.	Teachers' comprehension of collocation is insufficient.	5%	15%	35%	45%	0%
13.	When teachers are teaching collocation, learners infer the mother tongue when learning collocation.	5%	10%	15%	45%	25%
14.	When teachers are teaching collocation, learners lack the collocational knowledge to generate collocation.	5%	10%	30%	40%	15%
15.	When teachers are teaching collocation, learners are unaware of the grammatical rule of collocation.	5%	10%	5%	55%	25%
16.	When teachers are teaching collocation, learners transfer the mother tongue directly to create collocation.	15%	0%	10%	35%	40%

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

According to teachers' perception of the challenges when they are teaching collocation, the study found similarities to many previous studies, but some of the statements contrast with them. Firstly, the finding reveals that one of the challenges for teachers is that their comprehension of collocation is insufficient. However, the study of Le (2017) explores the challenges teachers face when teaching collocation to learners who have insufficient lexical background knowledge. Secondly, the findings showed that the challenges teachers face when they deal with EFL learners lack a collocation background of knowledge, inferring the mother tongue when learning or generating collocation, and transferring the mother tongue to produce collocation for both speaking and writing skills.

The finding is the same as the study of Liu (1999), which pointed out the characteristic of learners' errors in the process of learning collocation in the English classroom. On the other hand, the finding also has opposing opinions, such as teacher lack of material on collocation' Context, teacher difficulty instructing the knowledge of collocation in limited time, and teacher handling with training vocabulary and grammar collocation.

The finding study contrasts with the study of Bui (2021), which investigated the majority of teaching English context in Vietnam based on teaching grammar and words in isolation.

Additionally, the study by Nguyen (2024) asserts that time constraints in the classroom are the biggest challenges to teachers. This study suggests that English teaching collocation should be developed as much as possible.

Understanding learner errors and choosing the appropriate Context of collocation are very curtailed ways of developing learners' proficiency in productive skills. Last but not least, this study will imply that future studies can examine deeper how in-service teachers generate the teaching approach to help EFL learners in teaching collocation.

Conclusion

Summary of the study

In summary, research suggests that the way in-service teachers perceive instructional collocation can positively influence the productive skills performance of EFL learners. The research also investigates the role of collocation in teaching and how the usage of collocation with EFL learners produces successful results in the learning process. Furthermore, the study plans to investigate teachers' understanding of collocation, the value of collocation education in classrooms, and the difficulties of teaching collocation. During the research, in-service teachers studying in a master's class at Van Lang University taught English classes to EFL learners at the intermediate level. Participants respond to the collocation pattern and can use their skills to teach and support their learners' speaking and writing skills. Furthermore, they recognize that understanding collocation has positive advantages, as it can help EFL learners improve their language proficiency and productive skills. However, teaching collocation in English will be difficult for teachers who do not comprehend their learners' performance. Teachers occasionally expect to improve the teaching environment because of time constraints and the source of instructional collocation. Thus, it is vital to cope with obstacles and independence for many teachers to improve their professional skills and thoroughly prepare curriculum content to make each lesson more dynamic and interesting in the classroom.

Limitation

The study evaluated many theoretical studies from scholarly sources and compiled the conclusions, although it still has limitations. The first limitation of the study is that twenty participants were unable to generalize the results due to a lack of time, although the fact that the researchers are aware that a survey can be undertaken to obtain information from other teachers. Another drawback of the study is a lack of concern for the level of learners. Furthermore, one of the study's shortcomings is the lack of a mixed-method interview to explore the issues that teachers have when teaching collocation.

Recommendation for future research

Various ideas for future research on the same topic have emerged based on present discoveries and probable constraints. Firstly, the topic can continue to have more participants in other Masterclasses and teachers in different schools. Secondly, this survey is limited to the level specified in the questionnaire. Thus, the researcher must update the question type connected to the instruction degree. Furthermore, this study investigates teaching collocation, which allows the researcher to undertake another part of teaching strategies, such as how teachers execute the teaching method in classroom contexts.

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Biodata

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Vocabulary Acquisition based on Personal Learning Pace

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ABSTRACT

Keywords:

Vocabulary enhancement, English vocabulary, Flippity, non-English majors

The quasi-experimental study investigates the use of Flippity, an interactive online platform, to enhance vocabulary acquisition among 62 non-English major undergraduate students at Thai Nguyen University of Education. The research addresses a gap in the literature by focusing on the effectiveness of Flippity for Vocabulary learning at the undergraduate level. The study evaluates the impact of personalized, game-based learning on vocabulary retention through home-based practice. Results show significant improvements in the vocabulary proficiency of the experimental group using Flippity, demonstrating that the platform effectively supports vocabulary learning. These findings suggest that Flippity can be a valuable resource for educators, providing a flexible and engaging tool for improving vocabulary acquisition in home environments.

Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to language learning, impacting reading, writing, listening, and speaking proficiency. Non-English majors face significant challenges due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom (Zhi-Liang, 2010; Yan, 2011; Ashraf, 2015; Afrin, 2016; Chung et al., 2021; Ngan, 2021; Trinh & Pham, 2021; Wang, 2021), leading to constraints related to retaining vocabulary. Technological advancements have supported learning by providing vast online resources (Criollo-C, Guerrero-Arias, et al., 2021) – fostering connectivity and interaction in Education 2.0 and 3.0 (Barreiro, 2022). Education 4.0 merges digital, biological, and physical aspects, enhancing modern skill acquisition, including language learning. Integrating technology in the language classroom bridges the gap between printed material and digital learning through varied vocabulary activities (Kilickaya & Krajka, 2010). Innovative methods, like Flippity, transform Google Sheets into interactive tools such as flashcards and quiz games, making vocabulary learning more engaging. In terms of Flippity applications, prior research has underscored the efficacy in enhancing learning outcomes across diverse participant demographics. Recently, Wong and Yunus (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental mixed-method study involving thirty Year 5 students, which yielded marked enhancements in their speaking abilities' accuracy, fluency, range, interaction, and coherence. Similarly, Tetty (2022) conducted the classroom action research over two cycles, underscoring

the efficacy of Flippity in enhancing English speaking fluency among twenty grade 5 elementary students through various interactive activities. Additionally, Trčková et al. (2022) exclusively utilized Flippity's flashcards to augment student engagement and motivation across lower and upper secondary levels. While prior studies have highlighted the efficacy of Flippity in enhancing English-speaking skills from elementary to upper secondary levels, it is necessary to bridge the gap by examining enhancing vocabulary at the undergraduate level.

Undergraduate students at Thai Nguyen University of Education face several vocabulary-related problems. One significant issue is the limited vocabulary range, which makes it challenging for students to find suitable terms or synonyms when they forget the exact vocabulary or need to expand their answers. Furthermore, many students struggle with expanding their vocabulary, which impacts their fluency and comprehension during conversations. Additionally, pronunciation errors, often arising from limited vocabulary, are frequent and cause difficulties for listeners, further complicating intentions. A study by Yen et al. (2023) highlighted significant difficulties in speaking, grammar, and vocabulary among non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education. This study focuses on improving English speaking skills; therefore, the authors found that learners are usually unwilling to speak in English due to vocabulary-related problems.

This study's significance lies in its evaluation of Flippity, an innovative online platform that provides tools to gamify vocabulary in English language learning activities as a means of enhancing vocabulary acquisition. By leveraging Flippity's interactive, game-based features, omitting the – writing process, and engaging in rote learning memories, the research aims to capitalize on increased student motivation and engagement influencing vocabulary acquisition and self-correction using Flippity through voice feature and practice dictation at personal residents. The findings can offer an effective alternative vocabulary learning method and a positive reinforcement tool for general teachers and educators, particularly in large class sizes, for vocabulary checking and dictation activities with the use of spelling practice tools.

Literature review

Definition of Vocabulary

In the realm of language teaching, the definition of vocabulary holds various perspectives, each contributing to a deeper understanding of this linguistic element. Ur (2012) characterizes vocabulary as a single word or a combination of more than one word; expanding from this, vocabulary is assumed extensively beyond isolated words to encompass multiword expressions (Scrivener, 2005). Based on this idea, the term “multiword” is also mentioned by Numan (2003), referring to combinations or sequences of words functioning cohesively as a unit, expressing a singular concept or idea. This perspective acknowledges the significance of language beyond individual words, emphasizing the cohesive nature of multiword expressions.

In summary, the definition of vocabulary, drawing from the scholarly contributions of Penny Ur, David Nunan, and Jim Scrivener, emerges as a rich, multidimensional concept that encompasses not only individual words but also complex multiword units. This comprehensive view highlights the intricate interplay between vocabulary and other linguistic components within language learning and development contexts. Therefore, the researchers prefer to use "vocabulary."

Dynamics of Vocabulary Acquisition

Transitioning to the vocabulary learning domain, vocabulary's critical role in language

acquisition is undeniable. The intentional effort required in second language vocabulary acquisition, especially in the initial stages, emphasizes the necessity of reaching a threshold level of frequent words for language skills and knowledge to develop. Effective vocabulary involves the retrieval of both receptive and productive knowledge, requiring deep processing for oral and written, also known as long-term retention (Nation, 2013; Altalhab, 2018). Similarly, the achievability of knowledge is underscored by Pauk and Owens (2010), which is explicitly demonstrated by the concept of frontier words. They advocate against skipping the frontier vocabulary area, emphasizing that attempting to learn entirely unknown words can be highly inefficient and counterproductive. This highlights the most significant advancement in vocabulary mastery occurs in this frontier area, where many nearly known words only require minor adjustments to become familiar, including their semantics and pronunciation. To be more specific, the process involves deepening the knowledge of the existing vocabulary and adding unfamiliar vocabulary into a network of form-meaning connections (Pauk & Owens, 2010; Ellis, 2015), underscoring a dynamic and multifaced process of vocabulary acquisition that extends beyond mere root learning.

Furthermore, understanding vocabulary size and coverage is crucial in setting learning goals. As formulating, Nation (2006, 2013) and Hsueh-Chao and Nation (2000) advise incorporating the vocabulary size of native speakers, while also emphasizing the crucial relationship between vocabulary coverage (the percentage of known words in a text) and reading comprehension (Ehri & Rosenthal, 2007; Nation, 2013). In general, native speakers learn 1,000-word families every year until the age of 20, and this figure will be 20,000 for well-educated or around 32,000 vocabulary items, excluding proper names, in comparison to non-native speakers, at 8,000 to 9,000 (Nation, 2013; Renandya & Widodo, 2016). To attain an optimal coverage level of 98%, native speakers must possess a vocabulary of 8,000 - 9,000-word families for effectively engaging with most written texts. Additionally, evidence suggests a parallel between the number of word families necessary to grasp 95% of text in various genres for both young and adult native speakers, ranging from 3,000 to 4,000 words (Nation, 2006, 2013; Webb & Macalister, 2013). This correlation underscores the strategic significance of comprehending vocabulary dimensions to facilitate successful language learning outcomes.

The Benefits of Technology Integration in Teaching

Amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, synchronous online teaching emerged as a pivotal paradigm shift in the education landscape, necessitating the transition of all meetings and social interactions to videoconferencing platforms (LaFond, 2023). However, it's crucial to recognize the fundamental distinctions between online teaching and traditional face-to-face (f2f) instruction. Many educators initially relied on teaching plans designed for physical classrooms, resulting in extended teaching duration exceeding 50 minutes. This prolonged screen time led to various health concerns, including eyestrain, burnout, and overload among educators and learners alike, alongside academic performance (Carvalho et al., 2020; Thanh et al., 2020; Li et al., 2021; Sunawan et al., 2021).

Moreover, in education, the rise of short-form content on social media platforms has raised concerns about students' cognitive engagement and attention span during synchronous sessions (Zhu et al., 2022). Specifically, studies suggest that limiting synchronous and asynchronous online teaching sessions to 6 to 12 minutes can mitigate these challenges (Sunawan et al., 2021). Additionally, prompting a shift in teaching pedagogy and applying student-centered teaching methodologies becomes crucial (Afify, 2020; Revadekar et al., 2020).

Furthermore, during classroom sessions, the integration of activities via online learning tools is crucial, rather than having the teacher only impart information or students answer single-answer

questions after learning. According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), this approach might be termed "teaching by mentioning" or felt in the twin sins.

Turning to the post-pandemic of COVID-19, in offline classes, plenty of teachers increasingly prefer to use technology-integrated activities, which are assumed to be fun and to motivate students' engagement (Agca & Özdemir, 2013; Alanezi & AlAzwani, 2020). Nevertheless, these activities may fall into the first sin of traditional design – "minds-on without hands-on" (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Yannier et al., 2021).

According to Barreiro (2022), in order to ensure learning is based on the new way and study outcomes based on the new work environment, technologies should always be included as a part of the curriculum; therefore, the way of imparting at school might need to be reconsidered in terms of the use of technology in the teaching process. To address the issue, the wide range of learning tools has contributed to fostering students' autonomy, especially vocabulary acquisition tools that support students outside of the classroom (Kilickaya & Krajka, 2010; Lan, 2013).

Technology integration into language learning has become increasingly popular, driving a need to understand factors influencing its effectiveness in technology-enhanced language learning (TELL) environments. Additionally, TELL serves as the overarching concept that includes both computer-assisted language learning (CALL) and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) (Yaman & Ekmekçi, 2016; Hidalgo, 2020), with each approach contributing to enhancing language experiences. One such factor is student technological efficacy, which refers to language learners' beliefs about their ability to successfully use technological tools and resources for developing language competence. As modern language curricula and materials continue to incorporate digital components like TELL platforms, CALL/MALL apps, online dictionaries, video/audio tools, and more, learners' confidence in using these technologies can impact their engagement, persistence, and ultimate achievement.

Theoretical models like the Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989) and computer self-efficacy theory (Compeau & Higgins, 1995) have been applied to examine the role of technologically enhanced and mobile-assisted language learning. These frameworks suggest that learners' judgments of their technological capabilities shape their attitudes and usage behaviors when TELL, encompassing CALL and MALL, is integrated into instruction.

A growing body of research has explored the impacts of technological efficacy on language learning processes and outcomes in CALL and MALL environments. Several studies have found positive relationships between higher technological efficacy and factors like motivation to use CALL/MALL for language practice (Yu et al., 2021), acceptance of mobile language apps (Pindeh et al., 2016; García Botero et al., 2018; Criollo-C, Lema, et al., 2021; Al-Bashayreh et al., 2022), engagement with online activities (Dixson, 2010; Looyestyn et al., 2017; Salas - Pilco et al., 2022) and development of language skills (Deris & Shukor, 2019; Klimova & Polakova, 2020) through technology integration. Conversely, low technological efficacy has been associated with avoidance of technological resources and struggle to gain benefits from CALL/MALL.

Some researchers have examined technological efficacy specific to particular language skills in TELL contexts. A meta-analysis synthesizing multiple studies found that language learners who approached with technological resources and tools (such as apps, online dictionaries, and digital flashcards) achieved greater vocabulary gains compared to learners in traditional, non-technology-assisted conditions (Lu, 2008; Hao et al., 2021). For example, Serag (2011) and Miyazoe and Anderson (2010) reported efficacy beliefs that predicted the use of technological

tools to develop writing skills among Japanese EFL learners. Hwang et al. (2014) found a similar effect for online listening practice activities in a Taiwanese context. Alemi et al. (2012) investigated the impact of MALL, and their findings had a significant contribution to enhancing long-term academic vocabulary retention more effectively than traditional dictionary methods.

Previous experiences with technology can influence language learners' technological efficacy, training received, availability of support resources, and individual dispositions towards digital tools, instructors who provide guidance on using TELL/MALL technologies and create low-risk opportunities for practice may help bolster learners' learning efficacy (Hampel, 2015; Stickler & Hampel, 2015; Stickler et al., 2020). However, gaps remain in understanding optimal strategies across different CALL/MALL educational contexts and learner populations.

As CALL and MALL continue being integrated into language curricula worldwide, research indicates that attending to learners' technological efficacy will be important for maximizing the potential benefits. Fostering confidence and skills in using digital language learning tools could enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and achievement (Vo et al., 2023). Moreover, further investigation into developing technological efficacy, particularly for varying language skills, proficiency levels, and CALL/MALL environments, would valuably inform language teaching methodology and technology implementation approaches.

Personal learning pace

Personal learning pace is a flexible educational approach in which individuals control the timing and speed of their learning activities. In other words, learners allow themselves to complete the course or task intensively or even for a much longer duration of time (Georgiadou & Siakas, 2006). This mode of learning allows learners to engage with educational materials and complete tasks at a pace that suits their personal schedules and learning preferences (Naidu, 2008). Personal learning pace can occur in online environments.

Online personal learning pace leverages digital technologies, including learning management systems such as Google Classroom, Canvas, and Moodle and communication tools such as Zalo and Gmail (Thomas, 2011; Santiana et al., 2021; Le & Tran, 2022; Mpungose & Khoza, 2022). These technologies provide access to various resources and enable learners to interact with educators and peers at their convenience. This method offers significant flexibility, making it easier for learners to balance their studies with other schedules.

Several studies have highlighted the benefits of a personalized learning pace. Research by Mojarad et al. (2018) indicates that students with high consistency in their learning pace tend to achieve better outcomes. For example, group number 4—the Gritty—characterized by high consistency and effort, achieved very high mastery levels. Additionally, Tullis and Benjamin (2011) found that the pace of self-learning increases students' retention rates due to self-regulation of time and study behavior (Nation, 1990).

In relation to vocabulary acquisition, learning at students' own pace can lead to significant improvement. Without feeling rushed or held back, learners are allowed to review and practice new vocabulary as needed, according to Min (2013). The research also emphasizes the importance of systematic vocabulary learning for effective vocabulary acquisition. To be more specific, it highlights that the target vocabulary should be organized systematically by categorizing and organizing into thematic groups, utilizing semantic mapping to create connections, and building word families to deepen understanding are key strategies.

The application of Flippity in this study offers personalized learning by making interactive tools available that students can use at their own pace. Flippity allows learners to engage with vocabulary exercises and self-assessment mode as frequently and intensively as they need to,

catering to their own learning pace.

Flippity

Flippity is a freeware website that offers a variety of online tools and templates primarily designed for educators and students. These tools are often used with Google Sheets, and with 28 freely available templates, teaching professionals can be employed to create interactive activities, games, and resources for educational purposes. Flippity provides templates for things like flashcards, quizzes, bingo, and more, making it a useful platform for those in the field of education.

As a freeware website for education, internet users who intend to use Flippity access the website at [Flippity.net](https://flippity.net) (Trčková et al., 2022). Flippity.net provides a user-friendly platform for creating Spelling Words activities through Google Sheets. To initiate this process, users are required to modify a provided Google Spreadsheet template ([Flippity.net Spelling Words Template - Google Sheets](https://flippity.net/spelling-words-template-google-sheets)) (Giyatmi, 2021), allowing customization of students' names and up to 50-word lists. Additional features include the option to add clarifying phrases for homonyms and setting up automatic email notifications for quiz results.

After modifying the template, users proceed to publish their spreadsheet by accessing the File menu, selecting Share, and then choosing Publish to Web. Subsequently, obtaining the Flippity.net link is accomplished through the "Get the Link Here" tab in the template. This link serves as the gateway for users to view, practice, or take quizzes on their spelling words. Furthermore, a Quiz-only link to prevent students from accessing the List or Practice tabs.

In conclusion, Flippity, with its user-friendly platform that requires no registration, is an idea for educators and learners alike, with the possibility of parental involvement when necessary. Furthermore, from the perspective of learners, there exists an empowering dynamic wherein they actively engage in selecting their preferred mode of learning. This flexibility underscores Flippity's adaptability to diverse educational contexts and emphasizes its potential as a versatile tool catering to both teachers and learners alike.

Prior research has underscored the efficacy of enhancing learning outcomes across diverse participant demographics. Recently, Wong and Yunus (2023) conducted a quasi-experimental mix-method study involving thirty Year 5 students, which yielded marked enhancements in their speaking abilities' accuracy, fluency, range, interaction, and coherence. Similarly, Tetty (2022) conducted the classroom action research over two cycles, underscoring the efficacy of Flippity in enhancing English speaking fluency among twenty grade 5 elementary students through various interactive activities. Additionally, Trčková et al. (2022) exclusively utilized Flippity's flashcards to augment student engagement and motivation across lower and upper secondary levels. While prior studies have highlighted the efficacy of Flippity in enhancing English-speaking skills from elementary to upper secondary levels, it is necessary to bridge the gap by examining enhancing vocabulary at the undergraduate level.

This study's significance lies in its evaluation of Flippity, an innovative online platform that provides tools to gamify vocabulary in English language learning activities as a means of enhancing vocabulary acquisition. By leveraging Flippity's interactive, game-based features, omitting the – writing process, and engaging in rote learning memories, the research aims to capitalize on increased student motivation and engagement influencing vocabulary acquisition and self-correction using Flippity through voice feature and practice dictation at personal residents. The findings can offer an effective alternative vocabulary learning method and a positive reinforcement tool for general teachers and educators, particularly in large class sizes, for vocabulary checking and dictation activity with the use of spelling practice tools.

Research Questions

The authors endeavor to investigate the following research inquiries:

1. What are the effects of Flippity on vocabulary acquisition of non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education?
2. What are the attitudes of non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education towards the use of Flippity to learn vocabulary?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at Thai Nguyen University of Education to enhance non-English major students' vocabulary using the Flippity platform. It spanned from 15 to 30 periods for the practical phase of an English module within a semester. Following a quasi-experimental research design, two groups of 31 undergraduate non-English majors actively participated, each with moderate proficiency levels. One group, the experimental group, received the designated treatment using a spelling practice tool on the Flippity platform to enhance vocabulary, while the other group served as the control and did not receive the treatment.

Learning Instruments

In this research, learning materials include a website for storing vocabulary that researchers created based on the Life Vietnam edition (A2-B1) coursebook (Hughes et al., 2023) and attached the directed links from Flippity Spelling Words. Instructional material is limited to the four units of the coursebook, namely Health, Competitions, Challenges, and Transport.

Prior to publishing on Flippity, all the coursebook vocabulary was meticulously converted into Google Sheets documents. The website, designed using readymag.com, was thoughtfully structured to showcase new vocabulary associated with each unit. These vocabulary lists were systematically organized into 7 to 9 groups, each containing 9 to 10 words (Laufer, 1990), for a total of 287 vocabulary words. Importantly, the researchers synchronized these lists with Flippity, ensuring a methodical alignment between the content presented and the curated lists.

Research Instruments

Test

The test's response options were meticulously presented through single-word or phrase selections labeled as A, B, and C with content. Further customization was integrated into the assessment, with the content of the 10 sentences covering the first 4 topics of the coursebook. In order to ensure the test assessed a wide range of English proficiency levels (ranging from A1-A2, B1-B2, to C1-C2) of the test, two lecturers from the Foreign Language Department of Thai Nguyen University of Education participated in the review process.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire, adapted from Chung et al. (2021), examined participants' interaction with the learning intervention in research question number two. It consisted of 10 questions, each with 5 response options (strongly disagree; disagree; neutral; agree; strongly agree).

Design of the Study

The project proceeds through three distinct stages with the use of tests and questionnaires as the main data collection instruments:

Stage 1: Participants individually undertook the assessment via Microsoft Forms during the pre-test phase. Within this task, participants were required to scrutinize cloze sentences and select the most appropriate answer for the blank. The outcomes were meticulously documented in Microsoft Forms, subsequently exported, and preserved in Microsoft Excel for further analysis.

Stage 2: All experimental group participants collaborated within a group facilitated by the Zalo platform, which served to monitor the progression of vocabulary practice. In the vocabulary acquisition stage, learners review vocabulary via the website and Flippity after studying the teacher's presentation. Researchers disseminated instructional links and provided access to the learning website to employ the given tasks as home vocabulary practice via the assistance of personal technology devices, such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc. Furthermore, participants accessed the Flippity button at the site's header to facilitate learning and practice through Spelling Words. Additionally, Word scramble, and Word Search options were made available for offline learning for each list corresponding to every unit. These materials were designed to be both printable and downloadable, with storage facilitated through OneDrive. Upon completion of the online tasks, participants conveyed their quiz learning mode results by capturing their device screens and submitting them to the group chat for submitting the completed tasks. The control group they are not involved in vocabulary learning at home via the website and Flippity.

Stage 3: In the post-test phase, the participants of the two groups re-completed the test, which had the same content as the pre-test. The questionnaire was delivered to those who finished the post-test of the experimental group. All the information submitted by the participants was saved into Microsoft Forms and then exported to Microsoft Excel.

The authors used quasi-experimental research to evaluate vocabulary enhancements for non-English major undergraduate students and to explore their attitudes toward using the Flippity platform for vocabulary acquisition. The quasi-experimental design intends to measure the impact of the Flippity intervention by comparing the outcomes before and after the intervention within a structured but non-randomized setting. This approach helps to provide evidence of the intervention's effectiveness despite the inherent biases of non-randomization.

Data Collection & analysis

Describe the study procedure, tools, and analysis methods to respond to the research questions.

During the analysis phase, the test scores and questionnaire were compared and calculated using IBM SPSS Statistic 27 (27.0.1.0 version) from the International Business Machine Corporation and Microsoft Excel. The process of participant quantitative calculation involved several sequential steps:

The results of the pre-test and post-test following the implementation of the new learning method were meticulously analyzed using frequency and paired sample tests to clearly illustrate the progress observed in the score data.

To enhance the statistical findings' interpretability, the questionnaire items' results were meticulously tallied,, transformed into percentage values, and thoughtfully visualized through charts and tables. This comprehensive approach ensures a robust understanding of the data and its implications.

Results

Test Results

Students' pre-test and post-test scores of the academic achievement test about their vocabulary knowledge were analyzed with a table of related frequencies. There is a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results after the analysis.

Table 1

Pre-test score distribution of experimental and control groups by CEFR levels

Score range	Level	Experimental group		Control group	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1-5	A1	1	3.2	3	9.7
6-10	A2	26	83.9	22	71.0
11-15	B1	4	12.9	5	16.1
16-20	B2	0	0	1	3.2
21-25	C1	0	0	0	0
26-30	C2	0	0	0	0
Total		31	100	31	100

The table provides a site to perform a distribution of experimental and control groups, categorized by the six levels of score ranges, each corresponding to an English language proficiency as defined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language (CEFR).

Overall, the chat resumes were scaled from A1 to B1, with the majority of participants achieving levels below B2.

Regarding the experimental group, the majority of students (83.9%) scored within the A2 level (6-10 points), while 12.9% fell within the B1 level (11-15 points), and a small portion (3.2%) scored in the A1 level (1-5 points). None of the students in this group achieved scores in the B2, C1, or C2 ranges.

Similarly, in the control group, the largest proportion of students (71.0%) also scored within the A2 level, followed by 16.1% in the B1 level, and 9.7% in the A1 level. Notably, one student (3.2%) reached the B2 level, but no students scored in the C1 or C2 levels.

These results suggest that both groups had comparable vocabulary proficiency at the beginning of the experiment, with most students in both groups falling within the A2 level, and neither group displaying advanced proficiency at the start. This balanced distribution highlights the validity of comparing these groups in the subsequent study phases.

The results indicate a notable increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test (Table 1), rising from 9.25 to 15.75. This substantial improvement suggests that participants significantly enhanced their vocabulary knowledge after using Flippity. Additionally, the range of scores expanded from 5-11 in the pre-test to 8-21 in the post-test, highlighting that while some participants achieved much higher scores, there was also greater variability in the results. The increase in standard deviation from 1.44 to 4.27 further supports this, indicating a wider spread of scores in the post-test. This suggests that while some participants experienced significant gains, others made more modest improvements.

Table 2

Vocabulary test results of the experimental and control group

		Experimental group		Control group	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Minimum score		5.00	8.00	2.00	3.00
Maximum score		11.00	21.00	16.00	19.00
Mean		9.25	15.75	8.29	9.84
Std. Deviation		1.44	4.27	1.44	5.05
Paired Samples Test	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		0.159	

Most compellingly, the p-value of 0.000 is well below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirming that the improvement in scores is highly significant and unlikely to be due to random chance. This highlights the educational value of this learning tool for vocabulary acquisition.

The results for the control group show an increase in mean scores from the pre-test to the post-test, rising from 8.29 to 9.83. This indicates a modest improvement in the participants' vocabulary knowledge over time, even without the intervention of Flippity. The range of scores expanded slightly from 2-16 in the pre-test to 3-19 in the post-test, suggesting that some participants improved their scores significantly while others did not show as much change. The increase in standard deviation from 1.44 to 5.05 indicates a greater variability in post-test scores compared to pre-test scores. This higher standard deviation in the post-test suggests that there was a wider spread of scores, implying that the control group experienced varied outcomes in their learning progress.

The p-value is 0.159. This indicates the probability of observing a difference as extreme as, or more extreme than, the one observed if the null hypothesis of no difference is true. Since this p-value is greater than the conventional alpha level of 0.05, the researchers do not reject the null hypothesis.

Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire measuring participants' interaction with the learning intervention was conducted after the post-test. The data collection form contains ten questions with a Likert scale.

Table 6 reveals significant insights into participants' perceptions of Flippity as a tool for vocabulary learning. Overall, these findings indicate that participants strongly perceive Flippity's effectiveness in various aspects of vocabulary learning. The high percentages of agreement suggest that Flippity is a valuable tool for educators to consider incorporating into their vocabulary instruction strategies.

Regarding the question that measures the effectiveness of learning vocabulary on Flippity, a significant majority of students either agree or strongly agree that spelling practice is effective for learning vocabulary, at 40.60% and 37.50%, respectively. This positive sentiment is consistent across various statements. Meanwhile, a minority of students disagreed with the statement, with "strongly disagree" and "disagree" accounting for under 4%. Additionally, nearly 20% of students took a neutral stance, giving no clear opinion on the effectiveness of learning vocabulary on Flippity. This strong positive perception suggests that Flippity is widely

regarded as an effective method for vocabulary acquisition.

Table 6

Questionnaires outcomes

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Students' opinions about the effectiveness of learning vocabulary on Flippity	2.10%	1.70%	18.10%	40.60%	37.50%
2. Students' opinions about the effectiveness of learning vocabulary by spelling practice on Flippity	0.00%	21.90%	0.00%	37.50%	40.60%
3. Students' perception related to the improvement of dictation and vocabulary via spelling practice on Flippity	1.30%	0.00%	20.60%	40.60%	37.50%
4. Students' opinions about the helpfulness of spelling practice for expanding vocabulary on Flippity	0.00%	3.10%	28.10%	37.50%	31.30%
5. Students' opinions about confidence supporting applying new vocabulary in a productive skills context after applying the spelling practice method on Flippity	4.20%	5.20%	37.50%	37.50%	15.60%
6. Students' perception of spelling practice via Flippity enhances the retaining competence and precise utilization of the new vocabulary	15.60%	12.50%	0.00%	31.30%	40.60%
7. Students' opinions that spelling practice is an efficient way in terms of time to learn and retain vocabulary via Flippity	10.60%	10.50%	1.50%	40.40%	37.00%
8. Students' opinions related to recommending spelling practice on Flippity as an enhancing vocabulary method for others	1.20%	10.10%	10.60%	40.60%	37.50%
9. Students' opinions that spelling practice is one of the effective methods of vocabulary learning methods	9.40%	7.40%	14.40%	37.50%	31.30%
10. Students' opinions about the regular use of spelling practice learning and reinforcing vocabulary	5.30%	12.60%	10.20%	34.40%	37.50%

The statement assessing the effectiveness of spelling practice on Flippity reveals a clear, strong opinion, with 78.10% of participants agreeing. In terms of the opposite opinion, only 21.90% of participants disagreed, and no one showed strong disagreement. Similarly, no one chose the neutral option. This indicates a clear consensus among participants that spelling practice on Flippity is beneficial for learning vocabulary.

Results of students' perception related to the improvement of dictation and vocabulary via spelling practice reveal a strong stance of agreement, with 78.10% agreeing or strongly agreeing, which was higher than the 20.60% who were neutral. This suggests that most of the students surveyed view spelling practice as a beneficial tool in language learning. Only 1.30%

strongly disagreed, and no one disagreed.

Students' perceptions about spelling practice enhancing the retention and precise utilization of new vocabulary are clear from the chart: the majority of students either agree or strongly agree with this statement, accounting for 31.30% and 40.60%, respectively. This suggests that more than half of the students believe in the effectiveness of spelling practice in improving their vocabulary retention and usage. No students remained neutral on this issue, indicating strong opinions. On the other hand, a significant minority of students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, making up 12.50% and 15.60%, respectively. These students might believe that there are more effective methods for vocabulary retention and usage than spelling practice.

Finally, the data on the regular use of spelling practice for vocabulary learning and reinforcement suggests varied perceptions. A notable percentage, accounting for 37.50% of respondents, strongly agree with the statement, indicating that a significant percentage of people are sure about the effectiveness of spelling practice in vocabulary learning. Following this, individuals who agree comprised 34.40%, indicating a high frequency of daily vocabulary practice on Flippity. However, the lowest percentage of respondents (12.60%) disagreed, and 5.30% strongly disagreed with the statement, suggesting that the learning platform's frequency was relatively low. Interestingly, over 10% of the respondents gave unclear responses regarding the frequency of use. This high level of agreement highlights the perceived benefits of regular practice using Flippity in reinforcing vocabulary learning.

In summary, the average proportion of "agree" and "strongly agree" responses was greater than that of "disagree" and "strongly disagree" responses, with an average of 72.43% agreeing. It can be deduced that the majority opinion leans towards agreement with the application of spelling practice for vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, the distribution across these categories suggests a few key insights. While answering questions 4 and 5, some respondents might have avoided choosing extreme responses (strongly agree and strongly disagree). The statements might have had a low level of objectivity, leading to the result of taking a stance. This finding was in line with the statement of Christopher (2022) in helping students enhance vocabulary.

Discussion

Summarizing the results of the studies.

The results of this study provide valuable insights into Flippity's effectiveness as a tool for vocabulary acquisition among non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education.

The improvement of the experimental group test scores with positive questionnaire results highlights the effectiveness of Flippity in transforming vocabulary learning into an educational setting. Additionally, learning pace and learning at the personal level suggest a further promising direction for the future of education and further research.

Interpretation of the results

The experimental group's pre-test results indicated that most participants were able to grasp basic vocabulary related to personal and familiar topics at the A2 level. After the intervention with Flippity, the post-test results showed that participants could understand and use more complex vocabulary, which supported expressing what they were thinking on a variety of topics.

The results showed a significant improvement in the post-test scores of the experimental group,

indicating that Flippity positively impacted vocabulary acquisition. The tool's game-based features, like spelling practice, helped students learn at their own pace, providing autonomy in learning which has been shown to improve retention and understanding (Chuah & Lim, 2018; Borova et al., 2021). The experimental group showed a more substantial improvement compared to the control group, which did not use Flippity. The significant difference in the post-test mean scores between the groups highlights Flippity's role in enhancing vocabulary retention, showing that a technology-integrated method can outperform traditional teaching methods.

A crucial aspect of your findings relates to learning pace. Since students could engage with the material at home and review it as needed, this personal learning pace likely contributed to the improved vocabulary acquisition. This aligns with the self-paced learning model discussed in prior research, where autonomy in learning fosters better academic outcomes (Guay et al., 2016; Kashefian-Naeeni & Kouhpeyma, 2020; Reinders, 2020).

Based on the questionnaire results, this study was about the ability of participants to learn without rushing and pressure, which could be created during classroom sessions (Sasi et al., 2017; Paine, 2019; Sivalingam, 2022). This suggests that using Flippity potentially controls their comfort of learning as a personal residence, which was the key factor contributing to the overall success of this vocabulary acquisition process. Additionally, the principles of autonomous learning align well with this self-paced learning model (Moore, 1972; Howard & Scott, 2017; Ilgaz, 2019; Ardito, 2020; Trang, 2021), motivate students to study more complex topics in terms of vocabulary, which can enhance retention and insight of new vocabulary. By revisiting the vocabulary multiple times, they can ensure the ability to understand and retain new vocabulary. In relation to traditional classroom settings, the teachers might take control of the pace while some students have slowed, moderate, or even fast acquisition speed (Sturt, 1921; Wang, 1983; Khan & Madden, 2016; Ngo, 2023). Therefore, learning at personal residence by the use of Flippity is likely to contribute to creating a positive learning experience, allowing learners to focus and engage with learning material themselves.

Conclusion

Summarizing the results

The research aimed to bridge the gap around Flippity's effects on vocabulary acquisition of non-English majors at Thai Nguyen University of Education. It also aimed to find out whether learners are willing to use the learning application to learn vocabulary and whether it provides a positive learning experience.

The questionnaire results answered the second research question, indicating that learners generally leaned towards agreement on using spelling practice as a vocabulary learning method. The main findings from the questionnaires indicate that a considerable proportion of participants endorsed the learning intervention that employed spelling practice for vocabulary acquisition. Consequently, it is reasonable to assume that online vocabulary applications, such as Flippity, are helpful tools for students to self-study with a diversity of learning modes.

Overall, this research contributes valuable insights to the field of language instruction by implementing a learning tool to foster vocabulary retention outside classroom environments among undergraduate non-English major students. Furthermore, it is imperative that educators have an appropriate teaching methodology and curricula to help ESL learners achieve language learning goals.

Recommendation

It is crucial to integrate Flippity comprehensively into the curriculum to maximize its effectiveness in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among non-English majors.

Teachers should incorporate Flippity into weekly lesson plans, ensuring that vocabulary practice is a regular part of the learning process. Developing subject-specific vocabulary lists that align with course content can help students learn relevant terms more effectively. Additionally, Flippity should be used as a supplementary tool for homework and self-study, with assignments that encourage independent learning, such as creating custom flashcards or completing practice quizzes.

The integration of productive skills partially contributes to the efficacy of the learning intervention, which helps learners guarantee that they have mastered the newly acquired knowledge. Lee and Muncie (2006) increase active vocabulary students through the integration of writing skills at the end of the process. Learning by sharing was implemented by Faraj (2015); participants grasped the given vocabulary and had a chance to use the word via describing pictures, acting out, and orally sharing the knowledge of the words in class. Additionally, in terms of assessment, peer testing was provided for a more effective way of raising self-awareness. Therefore, the teachers must attach several reflection tasks supporting students' self-awareness.

Furthermore, initial and ongoing training is essential to ensure effective use of Flippity. Comprehensive training sessions should cover basic usage, advanced features, and integration strategies, supported by resources like tutorial videos and user guides. Encouraging peer collaboration through regular meetings or online forums can help teachers share experiences and best practices. In the classroom, Flippity should be used daily, with customized activities tailored to meet the diverse needs of students. Teachers should utilize Flippity's analytics to monitor progress, identify struggling students, and provide targeted interventions.

Regarding spelling bee competitions, the spelling practice tool of Flippity can potentially play a crucial role in effective preparation. By using this tool, students can enhance their spelling skills, expand their vocabulary, and boost their confidence (Duckworth et al., 2011; Sekarini, 2013; Rohmawati, 2015; Yusuf et al., 2017; Mayasari, 2018).

In relation to enhancing vocabulary through the integration of listening skills, in the world of language teaching, Chinese whisper, the most entertaining meaningful learning activity, and dictation, the most common self-practice strategy in developing listening skills, could be generally comprehended as the students hear the materials and then generate to the results in written or spoken form. The effectiveness of the learning strategies, according to several research studies (Rahimi, 2008; Christ et al., 2011; Kazazoğlu, 2013; Utami, 2018; Chiang, 2019; Musa, 2019; Ndraha & Kurniawan, 2019; Fatkhul & Rahmawati, 2022; Nafisah et al., 2022; Wong & Yunus, 2023; Li et al., 2024) also aligns with the benefits of spelling practice on Flippity in terms of vocabulary enhancement.

According to Wiggins and McTighe (2005), modern classrooms often fall into the categories of "hands-on without being minds-on" and "aimlessness". The use of Flippity might be an alternative way to address these issues. By integrating Flippity into the Chinese whisper activity, the initial task and the verification task at the end of the activity pose no obstacles in terms of pronunciation. With the Quiz mode or Practice mode of spelling practice tool on the Flippity platform integrated into the dictation method, teachers can assess all students' vocabulary retention more effectively in class.

For students, engagement and motivation can be boosted through technology integration

(Nation, 2013; Sasi et al., 2017; Surkamp & Viebrock, 2018; Bates, 2019; Geschwind et al., 2020; Henriques et al., 2021; Jenks, 2023; Jiang et al., 2023). Regular spelling bee and class-wide vocabulary dictation challenges can make learning more meaningful. Prompting self-directed learning by encouraging the use of Flippity outside classroom hours can foster independence and responsibility. Students should be encouraged to provide regular feedback on their experience with Flippity, which can be used to create personalized learning paths tailored to their needs.

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Biodata

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Nonverbal Cues in Teaching Foreign Language for Vietnamese Higher Education Learners


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ABSTRACT

Keywords: nonverbal cues, education, nonverbal impact, classroom, engagement nonverbally, cultural nonverbal aids, intercultural nonverbal skills

This research focuses on how nonverbal signals affect engagement in university English classrooms in Vietnam. The major obstacles that Vietnamese colleges still need to overcome include large class sizes with plenty of students with different English proficiency levels, inadequate teacher preparation, and outdated teaching methods that lower students' engagement. Qualitative data was gathered via document analysis, student interviews, and classroom observations of two classes comprising 40 non-English major students who come from different regions of Vietnam and their instructors at the Foreign Language Center of Nong Lam University. The results indicate that nonverbal cues significantly improve student comprehension and involvement, fostering a more inclusive and dynamic educational atmosphere. Enhancing non-verbal communication provides Vietnamese instructors with an efficient means to impart English and intercultural communication knowledge. This work adds to the domain of foreign language instruction, specifically the English language, and underscores the significance of non-verbal communication in improving pedagogical approaches.

Introduction

Background of the study

English - the most common language around the world - is crucial in many fields, especially education in Vietnam. In a period of global integration and rapid technological development, having a workforce fluent in English is an important basis for the socio-economic development of each country (Rassool, 2013). English has become Vietnam's most popular foreign language (Nguyen, 2017). This is a mandatory subject in the general education program starting from grade 6 nationwide and is applied in teaching from grade 3. It can be seen that the importance of learning English cannot be denied in Vietnam – where this language has greatly contributed

to the country's development (Tran & Ngo, 2024). There is no official document on the emergence of the English language in Vietnam. (Hoang, 2011).

Despite the significant efforts of the Vietnamese Government and the Ministry of Education and Training, English language teaching in Vietnam has still not met the expectations of experts and learners (Mai & Nguyen, 2020). Moreover, teaching English at all levels in Vietnam faces many challenges and is a top government concern. One of the challenges is the class size. Sometimes, it is up to 65 students per class. Therefore, the classroom is noisy, and many students sitting in the back cannot see the teacher clearly and also the knowledge on the board or screen. Some of the other problems include limited time, teacher qualifications, and ineffective teaching methods. These are factors that contribute to hindering students's English skills (Gonen & Saglam, 2012). Students still have limited English skills after 7 years of school (4 years of middle school and 3 years of high school) (Le, 2012). Vietnamese students are still afraid to communicate with foreigners (Nguyen, 2011).

Mastering vocabulary and grammar is not the only goal of learning English. It must be included with understanding and using nonverbal cues to communicate effectively. Nonverbal behaviors such as gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language are essential in conveying meaning and emotion because they can replace spoken words. Language learners who can pay attention to these nonverbal cues can bridge the gap between learning English in the classroom and using it in real-life situations (Gregersen, 2007). By observing the teachers using this body language, students can improve their communication skills, express themselves more naturally, and understand others better, which makes their interactions more engaging and effective.

Communicative Language Teaching has been applied in English classrooms in Vietnam, but there is not much research on the effectiveness of this method. Even less attention is paid to the bilateral interaction between teacher and learner, especially as expressed through the nonverbal language of both parties. Teachers must understand the importance of nonverbal communication in the teaching process, because it is very important to generations of students, specifically as follows. Firstly, to capture messages from students, teachers need to create a positive learning environment and collect students' opinions and feedback to strengthen the learning process. Next, nonverbal communication skills help teachers avoid negative communication situations that can affect student learning. This study aims to apply non-verbal communication techniques such as eye contact, smiles, facial expressions, gestures, intimacy, and clothing to reinforce and direct students' learning process. in teaching activities at universities in Vietnam.

An instructor's verbal and nonverbal actions might influence certain aspects of student motivation. Educators must recognize, articulate, and exemplify these aspects directly to teacher interns. Velez and Cano (2008) clarified that by congratulating students on their efforts, employing humor in the classroom, fostering open dialogue, and engaging with students, educators can demonstrate behaviors that facilitate the development of verbal and nonverbal intimacy skills in candidates. There are five categories of nonverbal behaviors shown by instructors in the classroom. These include hand gestures, head movements, facial expressions, eye contact, and symbols.

In English lessons, when students possess a restricted vocabulary, nonverbal communication aids in comprehending professors' spoken instructions. Bambaerrou and Shokrpour (2017) said that instructors' increased verbal and nonverbal communication enhances teaching effectiveness and improves students' academic performance.

In addition to being referred to as sign language or silent language, nonverbal communication skills include any activities carried out in the presence of other people or recognized consciously or subconsciously. By the end of this research, English instructors will be able to enhance their communication skills by efficiently using verbal and nonverbal communication to encourage students enrolled in English programs at universities.

The Aims of the Study

This paper's two main aims are to evaluate the importance of nonverbal signals in teaching foreign languages to university students in Vietnam and analyze the role of nonverbal communication in the learning process.

The Significance of the Study

This paper helps understand the effects of nonverbal signals in language learning at university. It can also propose teaching methods to facilitate effective communication in a multicultural environment.

Literature review

Definition of Nonverbal Communication

From the perspective of cultural language, author Nguyen Quang (2008) commented: "Nonverbal communication is all the components of communication that are not part of the verbal code, meaning that they are not encoded in words". It includes para verbal elements such as speed, intensity, and flow. Moreover, extravertal elements of body language include posture, gestures, facial expressions, clothes, jewelry, perfume, gifts, etc. It also belongs to the environmental language, such as the language of dialogue and the place of communication. In particular, body language accounts for a large amount of non-verbal communication.

Nonverbal communication plays an important role in human communication. There are many concepts of nonverbal communication from different perspectives. Author Nguyen Thien Giap (2005) believes that "Nonverbal communication is communication that uses the entire body and senses". According to the author, communication includes verbal means and non-verbal factors such as context, appearance, clothing, posture, gestures, and distance. Research has analyzed a conversation that requires non-verbal elements, and one can truly understand language usage when non-verbal elements are closely examined.

Mehrabian (1981) suggests that only 7% of information exchange occurs through speech, 38% through vocal elements (such as tone, voice, intonation, and sound), and a significant 55% through non-verbal elements (including gestures, body language, images, etc.). Obviously, this factor significantly affects human communication effectiveness.

Western scholars believe that the role of nonverbal communication in classroom teaching is greater than the role of formal teaching in student learning. Research has shown that teachers need to learn how to use nonverbal communication to improve classroom teaching (Huang, 2011). Teachers, especially college English teachers, as international communication bridges and information transmitters, should be well aware of the importance of nonverbal communication. Because nonverbal behavior conveys many messages in the classroom, it becomes extremely helpful for teachers to convey their thoughts to the class and understand the caring or confrontational messages students send. Their positive nonverbal signals can also affect the teacher's mental state and classroom atmosphere (Huang, 2011). Students' engagement and interest in the subject can be seen through their relaxed faces and smiles.

Gestures, postures, tactile, kinesthetic, and visual communication are essential components of interaction between instructors and students in the classroom, collaboratively constructing meaning via the encoding and decoding of signals beyond spoken language. The proper usage of these components is often regarded as beneficial for teaching and learning during class time. They intentionally assist instructors and students in articulating their messages, facilitating communication and the conveyance of information, while also promoting language acquisition.

Definition of Terms

Definition of Body Language in Foreign Language Teaching

Cohen et al. (2009) mention that nonverbal behaviors positively influence teaching and interaction between teachers and students, including the use of space interaction, eye contact, smiles, nodding, gestures, and body relaxation. The body language that instructors use in the classroom is challenging due to complex cultural differences and potential cross-cultural misunderstandings. It is argued that a common problem for both teachers in public schools and English centers is that some of them may not be competent in intercultural nonverbal communication, and just a few of them have received the appropriate training related to their job role even though their verbal communication skills are very good. (Ping Yang, 2015)

The role of nonverbal communication in foreign language classes is very important. However, most lecturers and students still ignore this factor in communication or foreign language lessons. It is necessary to use nonverbal behaviors in actual teaching and to research students' attitudes about the effectiveness of these lessons.

Definition of Facial Expression in Foreign Language Teaching

Facial expressions of basic emotions include distinct facial muscle movements (Ekman & Rosenberg, 2005). Facial expressions are used to express each person's emotions, expressing both the form and the level of emotions the person is communicating. In addition, facial expressions are also a part of expressing personality, and human nature in the communication process (Phan, 2022). Ekman and Friesen (1978) claimed that the "6 basic emotions" are happiness, sadness, surprise, disgust, anger, and fear, which are believed to be present in everyday emotions and are felt by humans in different ways, regardless of cultural differences.

Huang (2011) suggested that facial signals are the first information we receive from others. People recognize the opposite's personality trait information from their faces. Therefore, facial expressions between instructors and students are one of the important types of nonverbal signals in the classroom. In the English foreign language classroom, animated facial expressions promote an atmosphere that helps students have positive attitudes and achieve higher levels of learning foreign languages. When teachers ask questions, their nonverbal cues of expectation can encourage students to think carefully and respond proactively during class time. Sometimes a frown of the teacher can cause a sensitive student to immediately change their answer. It is much better to say "I don't think so" than "You're wrong", which can protect the student's pride in front of his/her classmates. Besides, teachers should often smile in class because a happy teacher is said to convey warmth and encouragement to their students in all cultures. Also, that teacher will be considered friendly, warmer and more approachable with students.

Definition of Eye Contact in Foreign Language Teaching

According to Bancroft (1995), the importance of eye contact when talking to convey human emotions is undeniable because looking at someone's eyes can be seen as a statement, a threat, or fear to the other. The importance of the eyes varies across cultures. In America, eye contact

is considered a gesture of respect and appreciation for the value of others. However, in Korea, a glance or even not looking at the other people's eyes directly is preferred (Hişmanoglu, 2008).

Eye contact most clearly reveals human emotions during communication. Because the eyes support spoken language, we can understand other people's emotions through their eyes and behave appropriately. Therefore, when communicating, we should always turn our eyes towards a friendly and polite look and avoid scrutiny, contempt, staring, looking away, or around the subject (Phan, 2022).

Andersen (2002) and Huang (2011) found that good eye contact teachers have more effective ways of transmitting lesson information to their students. The eyes capture a lot of meanings more than other parts of the body. Because of this, the author believes that eye movements are a very important nonverbal communication channel. There are two types of eye contact that college English instructors often use. Firstly, looking around can attract students' attention and encourage them to give out the answer. The second way is to focus on the triangle on the student's face. This style of looking can help preserve the teachers' seriousness, care, and honesty when criticizing a student's bad behavior. Teachers need to closely monitor students for signs of fatigue, boredom, confusion, or interest because all of these will be communicated to the teacher through their eyes during the lesson. English classes will be more special than other classes because they require students to talk and interact more with teachers, especially in English. When the teacher asks students to answer a question or a certain topic during class, the message conveyed through the eyes should be more encouraging and gentler, with a strong, direct, and trustworthy look from the teacher. At that time, students can feel more comfortable and confident, and then they are motivated to practice speaking English more freely and proactively. Therefore, a cozy atmosphere can appear, and students' English speaking levels can improve markedly over time.

According to Huang (2011), the instructing and learning of English within the college classroom, as a social interaction between instructors and understudies, is carried out by verbal implies and non-verbal implies including facial expression, eye contact, gestures, posture, and touch. Classroom instruction's viability depends to a degree on the suitable utilization of nonverbal behaviors. As a college English instructor, teaching English in college points to advance students' cross-cultural communication competence, counting both verbal and non-verbal. Not only professors of foreign languages at university have to be prepared with nonverbal communication, but also the understudies - the ones that need to be energized to make strides in their nonverbal communication capacities.

Husaini (2021) conducted research at a university in Indonesia, arguing that teachers interacting with students during the teaching process is necessary to create and affect the closeness between teachers and young students. Therefore, physical expressions such as eye contact, gestures, touch, facial expressions, and body posture can enhance student participation and engagement.

Review of Previous Studies

Husaini (2021) studied how teachers' nonverbal teaching affects students' motivation to learn. The participants in this study were 2 English teachers at SMP Negeri 2 Meureudu. Teachers use nonverbal communication as a way of communication, emphasizing verbal communication during the teaching process. In the end, nonverbal communication can create a strong bond between teachers and students, making it easier for teachers to engage students in the learning process.

According to Huang (2011), human communication is separated into two sorts: verbal communication and non-verbal communication, in which discourse is regularly considered the

foremost vital, viable, and capable implies of communication. One of the reasons is that nonverbal communication is ignored in everyday classroom instruction. Teachers' nonverbal communication plays a vital part in college English instruction. Numerous considerations make that instructors ought to learn to utilize nonverbal communication to make strides in the quality of classroom instruction. The relationship between instructors and understudies will make strides, and students' cognitive capacities and learning productivity will moreover be created.

Di's (2014) research shows that nonverbal communication is an important aspect of English teaching. These strategies and techniques have significantly improved the nonverbal communication abilities of teachers and students, contributing to their academic records.

Omar Mousa and Qadoori Yahya (2023) explore Iraqi teachers' and students' attitudes towards "nonverbal communication in the classroom" at a women's educational college in Tikrit. Teachers can use a variety of verbal and nonverbal strategies to assist students in mastering difficult topics. This research has demonstrated nonverbal communication's importance for teachers and students learning English. According to research outcomes, "nonverbal communication" between instructors and students increased students' awareness and participation in learning, resulting in better learning outcomes for both parties.

Research Gaps

The research results of Husaini (2021) are not completely accurate due to the small number of participants. It is necessary to interview students to understand their views on teachers using nonverbal closeness to encourage them in the learning process. Nonverbal communication changes under different cultural conditions. However, in Di's (2014) study, this is only discussed in a limited way, so further research in this area will put in more and greater effort because it is an important aspect. Important and beneficial for research. The limitation of Omar Mousa's (2023) research is that it only studied at girls' schools, and there were no male survey subjects. Research results will not be accurate because of this reason. Moreover, most of the studies were conducted during the period affected by Covid-19, the findings of the studies may be limited. Moreover, one of the major problems is the limited vocabulary range of higher education students. This leads to difficulty in finding appropriate terms or synonyms when the students forget the exact word or need to expand their answers. Furthermore, many learners have to deal with how to expand their vocabulary because it affects their Fluency and comprehension in conversations. In addition, pronunciation errors, which often arise due to limited vocabulary, make it speaker's intention become more complicated and hard for listeners to hear and understand (Nguyen et al., 2024). This shortage leads to a lack of confidence in systematizing and applying knowledge into practice. This study analyzes the impact of an online intercultural exchange program; intercultural competence plays an important role in 21st-century education.

Implications for the Current Study

This research boost implicit nonverbal communication strategies in hopes of enhancing the efficacy of the process in teaching English to Vietnamese college students.

Firstly, the findings underscore the necessity of promoting body language use in Vietnamese EFL students' language learning progress. Another key component of becoming more communicative is the improvement of students' ability to read subtle signals that cannot be sent verbally (Brown, 2004). These signs also encourage the more intuitive understanding in students needed to help them overcome language barriers and improve their ability to follow spoken explanations when teachers specifically monitor for students who might have trouble following these instructions due to language barriers.

The study also emphasizes the importance of being aware of nonverbal cues to bring improvement to communication and learning settings, which help college students become less shy to participate in class and communicate more through their body language. This is perhaps an opportunity for teachers to promote a more vibrant and supportive learning environment. Based on the Vietnamese context in a classroom where students are typically passive and quiet, nonverbal communication can help ease their anxiety, promote a sense of community, and motivate them to participate more in the classes. Through strategic use of nonverbal techniques, teachers can create a warm atmosphere in which students feel more comfortable communicating in English.

Additionally, these results underscore the need to develop research-based enhancements associated with verbal and nonverbal teaching features. A portion of an ideal teacher training program should focus on nonverbal skills, as a teacher needs to use his/her body language, which will support the language taught. The consideration of these pragmatic markers is compatible with the Vietnamese communicative style, and therefore, they can contribute to making English learning culturally relevant and more beneficial to Vietnamese learners.

Finally, conducting this study also contributes to an initial study in a Vietnamese context on the role of nonverbal behaviors in language learning, thus enriching the broader fields of educational linguistics, especially in the language-related issues. The results obtained from this study can help educational policymakers and institutions of higher education, in general, to produce syllabi for the purpose of teaching that integrate both verbal and nonverbal language elements with a view to improving the quality of English language teaching in Vietnamese higher education.

Methods

Participants

This study was conducted at the foreign language center for forty non-English major students, ages 19 to 21, from Nong Lam University.

Procedures

First, the author asked the teachers' permission to observe the 2 classes of EE1 (English Exam preparation) for 2 lessons of each class. Before the observation, the author and the lecturer met to discuss the purpose of the study and the teaching methods for the two classes. Class 1 applied the nonverbal cues approach while the teacher in class 2 wore a mask to teach and sat on the podium only. Then, after the observation, the author would interview random students from each class to get the insights of them. Finally, the author synthesizes the information for the study.

Qualitative methods

The author uses qualitative methods to investigate the subject. The author first observes foreign language courses in the Foreign Language Center at the University of Agriculture and Forestry. The author then interviews some random students to investigate their thoughts on nonverbal cues that influence the efficacy of foreign language instruction at this place. After that, the author synthesizes overarching theoretical concerns about non-verbal communication and explores body language, facial expressions, and eye contact within the framework of foreign language instruction. The author has established a theoretical foundation for the significance of these aspects in the educational process.

Research Context

Using two distinct pedagogical approaches, the author conducted teaching observations in two classrooms of twenty students, each who was not majoring in English and came from different regions in Vietnam. Class 1 is taught by nonverbal teaching methods, which means the teacher will often use gestures, facial expressions, and eye contact during class time. Class 2 isn't taught by this method; it is only communicated through words. The teacher of class 2 also wears masks and sits on the podium because of his illness.

Classroom observation and student interview

The objective of this observation method is to evaluate the use of nonverbal cues in classroom instruction. Observational instruments will be used to analyze the teachers' gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, and body language. The procedure includes conducting two sessions across two different classrooms, with an observation form for systematic data collection and analysis.

Conducting interviews to gather student's insights throughout their involvement in the study's experimental procedure.

Results and Findings

Knowledge retention and Fluency in communication

Table 1. Comparison of Retention and Fluency between Class 1 and Class 2

	Knowledge retention	Fluency in communication
Class 1	90%	60%
Class 2	85%	50%

The research findings and student interviews of 02 classes indicate that non-verbal communication is essential in teaching Vietnamese learners foreign languages at the university level. In Class 1, nonverbal teaching methods were implemented; prophets of up to 90% of students recalled knowledge better, and on the other hand, 60% felt fluent in their communication. This predictably appeared in the student's responses as they highlighted that non-verbal cues assisted them to retain knowledge longer. For instance, a Class 1 student said: "Khi cô diễn tả từ vựng đó bằng hành động ... Tôi thấy dễ nhớ hơn rất nhiều". In the same way, student 4 indicated the example of "Air pollution" with the teacher's body language and hand gestures, making it more memorable for him/her.

Furthermore, the use of non-verbal cues further enhanced students' interest and participation in class. Student 2, Class 1, said he/she were impressed with how the teacher used non-verbal cues: "Điều này khiến em bị ấn tượng khá mạnh vì như thể cô thực sự đưa em vào một cuộc trò chuyện chân thực với người bản xứ." Student 5, Class 1 said that during the same time though non-verbal activities "không bị nhàm chán và buồn ngủ... làm tôi cảm thấy phấn khích hơn trong môn học." Not only did these nonverbal cues contribute to a positive climate for learning, but they also helped students become more natural communicators. Class 1, Student 3 mentioned it was also that the teacher smiled a lot and did a great job with gestures to make connections, entice feelings, help students feel confident in speaking during lessons, and bring happiness back into the classroom.

In contrast, where no non-verbal approaches were used in Class 2, only 85% said they retained knowledge well and just 50% felt fluent in communication. A few students seemed uninterested and had trouble focusing in class. Student 1, Class 2 said: "Thầy giáo chỉ ngồi tại bục giảng và giảng bài từ đầu đến cuối ... khiến mình cảm thấy khó tập trung và buồn ngủ." Student 2, Class 2 a level bored when the teacher quietly sat down and did not make lively gestures. That attacking passive voice in the course will kind of make them less casual. The lesson can be less effective or enthusiastic since we lack non-verbal skills and enthusiasm is reduced.

The interview results are reviewed, and it concludes that non-verbal expression helps students both to remember and communicate with more confidence; besides, it helps create better energy in the classroom. Such non-verbal ways bring students a richer learning experience and enhance the motivation and interaction from teachers, which in turn proves to be a breakthrough factor affecting significantly the efficacy and learning of interest in the foreign language process.

The impact of Nonverbal cues on learning outcomes

By observation, Class 1 learners exhibited more attention and excitement throughout the teacher's lectures than Class 2. 80% of the interviewed students said that nonverbal cues, including gestures and facial expressions from instructors, enhanced their comprehension of the lecture and significantly benefited their English learning. Specifically, 85% of Class 1 students demonstrated Fluency in communication, but just 20% of Class 2 students reached similar proficiency.

Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusions Drawn from the Research

Teaching English is the main goal of university education. Of course, body language plays an important role in students' foreign language acquisition. Body language accounts for 50% of daily conversations because our bodies are constantly sending us messages without even realizing it (Hua, 2018).

Nonverbal communication takes place in the classroom. Body language is a popular method for teaching and learning foreign languages. Foreign language teachers use body language for a number of purposes.

Using nonverbal cues in teaching a foreign language has a positive impact on communication during the foreign language learning process. It helps increase understanding between teachers and students. To take advantage of the full potential of nonverbal cues in teaching foreign languages, there needs to be a teacher training program on how to integrate and use nonverbal cues e proactively and creatively in the classroom.

Summarize the key findings

This paper has found that nonverbal communication is an effective means of communication and plays an important role in creating a positive learning environment and promoting cultural understanding. Using nonverbal cues is not only a means of conveying messages but also a factor in creating cultural connections, helping college students gain deeper insight into the language and culture they are studying, which avoids boredom. However, to maximize the role of nonverbal signals, teachers need training so they can use nonverbal cues most effectively in teaching foreign languages.

Recommendation to enhance teaching skills

Educators in Vietnam need training in the use of nonverbal communication in the classroom. Without that, they could perpetuate the old-fashioned belief that students only attend classes to listen while only professors are allowed to make gestures and glances.

Furthermore, educators should position themselves at the podium to enhance student engagement. Additionally, instructors can walk between groups during class activities to promote interaction. This will improve communication in the classroom, foster a more friendly mood, and motivate students to integrate into the learning environment.

The Ministry of Education and Training should prioritize the creation of a new book on speaking skills that fully explores and illustrates the concept of nonverbal communication within a multicultural context. If that happens, it will foster a good learning atmosphere, promote communication, and help students acquire language skills. Based on the analysis presented above, this essay expects that the Vietnamese government will increase its investment in education and training. Additionally, educators should modify their instructional techniques.

Students' participation

A shared cultural background in Vietnam often reinforces the bond between instructors and students. As a result, both instructors and students can accurately interpret each other's gestures and facial expressions and keep eye contact within the classroom setting. Since students often look up to their professors as role models, their influence will expand when teachers take responsibility in this area. Therefore, students' engagement in the presentation will enhance educational results.

Improving classroom management

Recently, many talented learners have liked to occupy the front row of the classroom since this is where the teacher often focuses their attention, resulting in their interactions being frequently acknowledged by the instructors. To foster a varied atmosphere and promote interaction, educators should contemplate arranging children to ensure a blend of varying talents and capabilities.

The class should be divided into groups to alternate participation in activities. After that, students will independently choose their seats, facilitating more interaction with the instructor. Teachers should also position themselves in the middle of the classroom to improve students' engagement. Besides, teachers can walk around the class to interact more with different kinds of students. These things can enhance communication in the classroom by fostering a more friendly atmosphere.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

In addition to the benefits of the research, we faced various limitations during the process. A notable limitation of this study is that it only focuses on students from one university. This may undermine the integrity and objectivity of the research results, making the overall model weak in several aspects. Secondly, the author of this study encountered difficulties in the allocation of research time. The limitation of time might hinder the ability to do comprehensive research and a more objective assessment of the study matter. Temporal limitations restrict the ability to observe the progression and modification of research variables throughout time.

The current study indicates several opportunities for more research. This study used a qualitative research methodology focused on collecting and analyzing data mostly based on the author's perspectives, experiences, and opinions of a select group of students, thus decreasing

the objectivity and accuracy of the research outcomes. A prospective direction for future study is to include quantitative approaches, which would provide a more thorough perspective and assess the sample's representativeness. Furthermore, future research should dedicate more resources to thorough studies, including additional data phases and expanding the study's scope. Research must be conducted across many countries and cultures to improve our understanding of how geography and culture influence the efficacy of nonverbal cues in foreign language education, as well as the generalizability of research results to other contexts.

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Biodata

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The Influences of Task-based Approach on Young Adult Learners' Listening Comprehension

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: listening comprehension, Task-based approach, the learners' attitudes

This study aimed to explore the effect of the Task-based method on the learners' attitudes toward learning listening skills using this approach. In this paper, thirty university students who are at the intermediate level learned the Task-based method in classes at Van Lang University, and after that, they expressed their minds in the questionnaire so as to explore whether this type of teaching could help them improve or not. What is really important here is their attitudes in completing the listening tasks as well as indicating their views by responding to the questionnaire. Additionally, the specific descriptive data provided in this paper after collecting their responses are yielded to reach the planned targets at the end. More specifically, students held positive attitudes towards the Task-based approach in developing listening skills and believed it was useful in enhancing their listening competencies. The task-based approach to listening will help the teacher select a more compatible method for every class in the foreseeable future.

Introduction

It is generally challenging for a teacher to find the appropriate listening approach for students. Another consideration is that it seems arduous to assess listening because listening comprehension appears ambiguous and complicated for the learners. Additionally, teachers really want to know how to use listening activities that reflect real-life listening, which is another problem. The fact that teachers should involve all activities in authentic language and contexts to make listening more motivating and useful for students seems quite complicated.

In Vietnam, the development of listening skills has not been a major focus in language education (Bui, 2024). When learning English listening skills, students can face quite a lot of listening difficulties. The first problem students may have is the topic of listening to texts. In fact, how familiar the listening topic is to students is very important. It can arouse students' interest in

paying close attention to the listening text, facilitating their listening comprehension. Conversely, students easily get bored with the topics like politics and society. Vocabulary and different pronunciations are another problem for most students, which may prevent them from getting the specific meanings of the listening test no matter how they realize every word from the text.

Due to this educational background, this study aims to find out the learners' attitudes toward task-based approaches in listening comprehension. As an English teacher, the instructors have applied this method in traditional classes and observe my students' progress in the long run. It is commonly believed that utilizing this method appropriately will pursue for the learners' adherence as well as encourage them to study or complete the tasks frequently.

Research questions and aims

This study seeks to answer the question:

- What are the young adult learners' attitudes toward task-based approach in listening comprehension?

Thus, this paper will attempt to collect students' views from a task-based approach that is integral to their listening skills.

Definitions of key terms

Task-based approach: The approach that emphasizes activities that reflect real-world language use, making it a practical framework for improving listening skills (Samuda & Bygate, 2008)

Listening comprehension: Richards (2005) defines listening comprehension as "including both comprehension and acquisition activities, allowing learners to interact with vocabulary and syntax in the listening material" (p. 89).

Literature review

By and large, learning English is becoming more and more popular worldwide due to its enormous benefits. David (2003) indicates that English is an emergency in the globe, which has a significant influence on both policies and practices in all countries surveyed. However, to access English effectively, it is crucial to master English skills, especially listening skills. While listening is a vital language skill, many learners still find it frustrating and difficult to master (Tran, 2022). What is really important here is that the teachers should know which method is best for their students to master in listening. Therefore, the article "The effect of task-based listening activities on improvement of listening self-efficacy among Iranian intermediate EFL learners" by Motallebzadeh and Defaei caters to education as a specific way of improving students' listening self-efficacy.

In this context, the authors make an effort to figure out the function of task-based listening activities in EFL classes. In order to reach their findings, they conducted the study with male and female students at Kish Air English Institute, Iran. The questionnaire, experimental groups,

and results are shown in a t-test to determine the students' listening level. Moreover, the authors pay attention to the influence of self-efficacy, which is pivotal in helping the students complete their listening activities; thus, Bandura (1997) also states that the learners' success depends partly on their self-efficacy. Apart from the importance of self-efficacy, task-based language teaching receives more support since it contributes to the learners' completing tasks. Prabhu (1987) is the first supporter of this method. He concludes that TBLT helps the students get involved in the tasks, not just the language itself. In their paper, the two authors try to provide the readers with more particular evidence to prove the benefits of the task-based approach. therefore, after defining the general knowledge regarding self-efficacy and the task-based method, they are able to determine their research question, which draws more potential vision for the viewers at first glance. Their research question is whether applying task-based listening activities impacts Iranian Intermediate EFL learners' listening comprehension self-efficacy beliefs or not. As a result, after they conducted their research and divided the participants into the experimental and the control groups, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to evaluate the students' listening comprehension. Although there is a diverse mixture of complicated in finishing the listening tasks for most of the students additionally, according to Brindley and Slatyer (2002), the vocabulary, structure, accent, and so on will become more sophisticated when linking to uncertain listening strategies may distract the learners from the tasks, this paper still illustrates the favorable aspect of the experimental group in which the task-based approach was utilized in order to cater the outstanding benefits to the learners. Furthermore, the t-test also demonstrates the improvement in the students' listening self-efficacy; hence, the task-based approach is taken into account as an enjoyable method for teaching and learning listening skills. Furthermore, Brown (2018) affirms that the task-based approach is relevant to learners' needs since it can be applied to the adjustment of listening tasks, making the listening tasks meaningful and practical in real-life situations. The author also points out that it also fosters active learning because this approach allows learners to monitor and assess their listening process before, during, and after the task. Sharing a similar view, Van den Branden (2012) asserts that the application of a task-based approach in developing listening skills can fit learners' needs since it can integrate real-life contexts, motivate learners, and foster their communication skills. Additionally, the Task-based approach centers around providing learners with authentic tasks that mirror real-life situations (Luo, 2024). Similarly, Oglu (2023) affirms that Task-based learning, a departure from traditional methods, prioritizes authentic language use and focuses on tasks as the core of instruction.

It is obvious that the paper also has some limitations in relation to the attitudes of the learners when they are taught or experimented with that type of method. In addition, the authors do not provide a more detailed description of the learners' learning strategies so that they can compare and come up with an overwhelming outcome in their paper. What is really significant here is not only how well the task-based method is but also the effect and opinion of the learners toward the task-based approach in their daily learning styles not just in an experimental or control group. Nonetheless, it is clear that these writers made some great contributions to the educational system by proposing such a feasible paper. Even though there are still unexpected

and limited observations in their studies, we should be satisfied with what we explore at present and then make more attempts for future research. All in all, capable teachers know which is the best way to follow and may lead their students to more successful outcomes if they conduct their suitable and beneficial teaching method properly and moderately.

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The participants in this paper are about 30 students from Van Lang University. Their major is English language. They have learned to listen using the task-based method in advance, and a completed questionnaire is distributed to them in order to work out their attitudes toward the task-based approach. In fact, both 30 students may obtain a level ranging from pre-intermediate to upper-intermediate, who are able to adhere to the constructions and have enough responsibilities to take part in my descriptive research after collecting data. Additionally, gender impact was not controlled in this study.

Design of the Study

In this paper, the researchers employed the quantitative method to collect data. The teacher prepared the completed questionnaire about the students' attitudes when using the Task-based method in learning listening skills to figure out whether that approach may help the learners boost their listening level or strengthen their ability to understand or reach their goal in learning English. This paper also adapted the Pyun (2013) questionnaire, which is an outstanding questionnaire about attitudes of College Korean Language Learners regarding the Task-based method. However, due to the shortage of time, it would be ideal to slash the questions from 24 items to 15 items in this paper's new questionnaire to transform it into a more compatible one for my students. Furthermore, each item is measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Intriguingly, these questions are feasible for all the real situations that the students can cope with when learning listening skills; hence, they can calculate their own understanding of task-based methods or other related listening contexts. Besides, the primary aim of this questionnaire is to collect, compare, and come up with crucial findings regarding the participants' levels of listening comprehension before and after the study.

Data collection & analysis

It was unambiguous that this paper would reach the attitudes and understanding of university students by applying task-based methods to teach them to study listening. Therefore, it is essential to check the students' levels after the listening tasks in the long run so that the researchers always cater to the continuous assessment in my classes to make sure that they are aware of what they are learning and create a highly motivating value. The questionnaire was designed to help the learners, who were able to consider themselves after obtaining enough associated knowledge in the task-based approach; they could answer these items to help both teachers and them to narrow down the matters that they were encountering and their teachers

may provide the advice or suitable improvements for each situation. After distributing the questionnaire, the students will be evaluated on the outcomes and attitudes related to listening tasks using a task-based method.

Results/Findings and discussion

The collected data from three focus group interviews related to the writing challenges that they As mentioned in the very early part of this paper, this study aims at finding whether applying the Task-based method in teaching and learning is beneficial for both teacher and students or not that will pave the way for boosting the method in learning listening as well as gaining the learners' attitudes regarding Task-based approach. In order to fulfill the purpose of the study, this paper will make an effort to provide descriptive statistics to reach the discussions. The following tables will show my illustrations:

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of the learners' attitudes toward Task-based approach

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feel nervous before listening	30	1	5	2.73	1.112
Not worry if you cannot listen to one or two sentences	30	1	5	2.93	1.202
Task-based help to brainstorm	30	1	5	2.93	1.311
Listening task performance based on the task-based method is beneficial	30	1	5	3.23	1.278
Task-based makes use of expressions and grammar	30	1	5	3.43	1.104
Complete tasks better after learning task-based	30	1	5	3.30	1.022
Easier when applying real contexts that relevant to tasks	30	1	5	3.07	1.172
Put priority on completing tasks	30	1	5	3.53	.973
Familiar with task-based in listening	30	1	5	3.17	1.020
Focus on task improves listening	30	1	5	3.10	1.029
Valid N (listwise)	30				

As Table 1 indicates, there is a significant outcome in the learners' attitudes toward using the Task-based method, and several improvements were made by the students in learning listening skills. The mean ranges from 2.73 to 3.53, which shows that listening performances are enhanced after employing this method.

The following tables highlight the crucial improvements as well as the positive attitudes of the learners in terms of utilizing the Task-based method.

Table 2.

Feel nervous before listening

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	11	36.7	36.7	46.7
	Neutral	10	33.3	33.3	80.0
	Agree	3	10.0	10.0	90.0
	Strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

This table shows that the learners do not feel nervous if they fully use this type of method; in fact, a relaxing mood may help to ease the learners' stressful attitudes before they come to do the tasks.

Table 3.

Do not worry if you cannot listen to one or two sentence

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	33.3
	Neutral	12	40.0	40.0	73.3
	Agree	4	13.3	13.3	86.7
	Strongly agree	4	13.3	13.3	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Through this table, it is clear that most learners do not just pay attention to completing one or two sentences since it is more important to finish the whole task rather than making an effort in just one single sentence; therefore, it does not matter if they cannot catch up with one or two sentences.

Table 4.

Task-based help to brainstorm

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	16.7	16.7	16.7
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	36.7
	Neutral	10	33.3	33.3	70.0
	Agree	4	13.3	13.3	83.3
	Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Regarding brainstorming benefits, most students do not appreciate this highly, resulting in the neutral opinion being the highest. (33.3%)

Table 5.

Listening to task performance based on the task-based method is beneficial

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	6	20.0	20.0	30.0
	Neutral	8	26.7	26.7	56.7
	Agree	7	23.3	23.3	80.0
	Strongly agree	6	20.0	20.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

This table also highlights the advantage of using the Task-based method in learning listening skills as well as a better listening performance is shown. The percentage from 23.3 to 26.7 indicates a high interest in the learners' attitudes.

Table 6.

Task-based makes use of expressions and grammar

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
	Neutral	10	33.3	33.3	50.0
	Agree	10	33.3	33.3	83.3
	Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

The task-based method also plays an integral part in helping the learners perform better. A third of the learners believe that they may use expressions and grammar better.

Table 7.

Complete tasks better after learning task-based

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	16.7
	Neutral	12	40.0	40.0	56.7
	Agree	10	33.3	33.3	90.0
	Strongly agree	3	10.0	10.0	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

As Table 7 experiences, the task-based method can improve the learners' attitudes toward using

it and applying it to completing the listening tasks.

Table 8.

Easier when applying real contexts that relevant to tasks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	4	13.3	13.3	13.3
	Disagree	5	16.7	16.7	30.0
	Neutral	8	26.7	26.7	56.7
	Agree	11	36.7	36.7	93.3
	Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

It is generally clear that the majority of learners find it easy to complete the relevant tasks if they are aware of this situation beforehand. Thus, they may predict the information, which is really beneficial in fulfilling the listening tasks.

Table 9.

Put priority on completing tasks

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	3.3	3.3	3.3
	Disagree	2	6.7	6.7	10.0
	Neutral	12	40.0	40.0	50.0
	Agree	10	33.3	33.3	83.3
	Strongly agree	5	16.7	16.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

This table aims at completing the tasks, which is also the priority of the Task-based method for each individual, as most of them try to finish the tasks.

Table 10.

Familiar with task-based in listening

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Disagree	5	16.7	16.7	23.3
	Neutral	11	36.7	36.7	60.0
	Agree	10	33.3	33.3	93.3
	Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

Using the Task-based approach means that the learners focus on doing as much as possible in listening exercises that may help them get familiar with these situations for the next time.

Table 11.

Focus on task improves listening

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	3	10.0	10.0	10.0
	Disagree	3	10.0	10.0	20.0
	Neutral	14	46.7	46.7	66.7
	Agree	8	26.7	26.7	93.3
	Strongly agree	2	6.7	6.7	100.0
	Total	30	100.0	100.0	

In Table 11, the learners' attitudes toward task-based methods are nearly positive, and they also consider it a useful method for learning listening.

This study's findings align with those from Brown's (2018) study, which affirms that the task-based approach supported learners' listening comprehension because they were motivated to develop listening and communicate in real-life situations. Additionally, the use of a task-based approach enables learners to plan and control their listening process and suits the learners' needs. Furthermore, this study shares findings similar to those of Pyun (2013), who found that a task-based approach facilitated learners' listening comprehension. The learners believed that by using this approach, they could complete the listening tasks more easily and effectively, and they were able to make use of English grammar and expressions.

All in all, the majority of learners have positive attitudes toward applying the task-based method to study listening skills, which not only improves their performances but also reduces the pressure to complete the tasks.

Conclusion

All things considered, this study focuses on the learners' attitudes toward the Task-based method of teaching and learning listening skills. The results displayed by the tables show that the Task-based approach is beneficial to the students in improving their performance, and their positive attitudes are shown clearly in the descriptive numbers.

Also, descriptive statistics pay more attention to finding and concluding about my students' attitudes in learning to listen using a task-based approach, and they express their opinions that they are interested in this type of teaching method. As an English teacher, I play an important role in appreciating these results and making an effort to explore more and more effective methods in teaching English skills in the foreseeable future. Indeed, the higher the positive attitudes the learners express, the more usable that method can be.

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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

Dear Students,

Thank you for the time you are taking to complete this survey. Your answers will be helpful in Identifying the usefulness of written corrective feedback and errors corrections. Your response will only be used for survey purposes.

Questionnaire (Adapting by Danielle Ooyoung Pyun “Attitudes toward task-based language learning: A Study of College Korean Language Learners”)

Part 1. Student background information

1. Gender: Male Female
2. What is your age?
 18-20 21-23 23-25
3. School year
 Freshmen Sophomore Junior Senior
4. Academic major: _____
5. What is your most dominant/ prominent second language: _____

Part 2. For each sentence below, please circle the answer that best represents your attitudes, using the following scales

1= Strongly disagree

2= Disagree

3= Neutral

4= Agree

5= Strongly agree

1. I usually feel nervous before listening to a new task.

1 2 3 4 5

2. I do not worry if I cannot listen to one or two sentences in the task.
1 2 3 4 5
3. Task-based method can help me brainstorm effectively to complete the task.
1 2 3 4 5
4. Listening task performance based on task based method is beneficial to me.
1 2 3 4 5
5. Using task-based method in listening helps me make actual use of expressions and grammars that I have learned.
1 2 3 4 5
6. I can complete the task better after I learn about task-based method.
1 2 3 4 5
7. I may feel it is easier when applying some real contexts that are relevant to the tasks.
1 2 3 4 5
8. When using task-based method, I try to put the priority in completing the tasks.
1 2 3 4 5
9. I can get familiar to the task-based method in learning listening.
1 2 3 4 5
10. I focus more on the task outcomes so as to improve my listening comprehension.
1 2 3 4 5

Biodata

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