


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

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ABSTRACT

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

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

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

Literature review

The concept and impact of technology in education

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

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

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

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

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

The benefits of integrating technology to enhance English communication skills

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The challenges of integrating technology to enhance English communication skills

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

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

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

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

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

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

Related Studies

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

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

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

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

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

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

Research Questions

This paper aims to address two questions:

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

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

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

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

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

Design of the Study

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

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

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

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

Procedure

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

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

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

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

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

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

The grading standards

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

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

Data collection and analysis

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

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

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

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

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

Results/Findings and discussion

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

Demographic information

Table 1. Summary of the demographic data of EFL learners

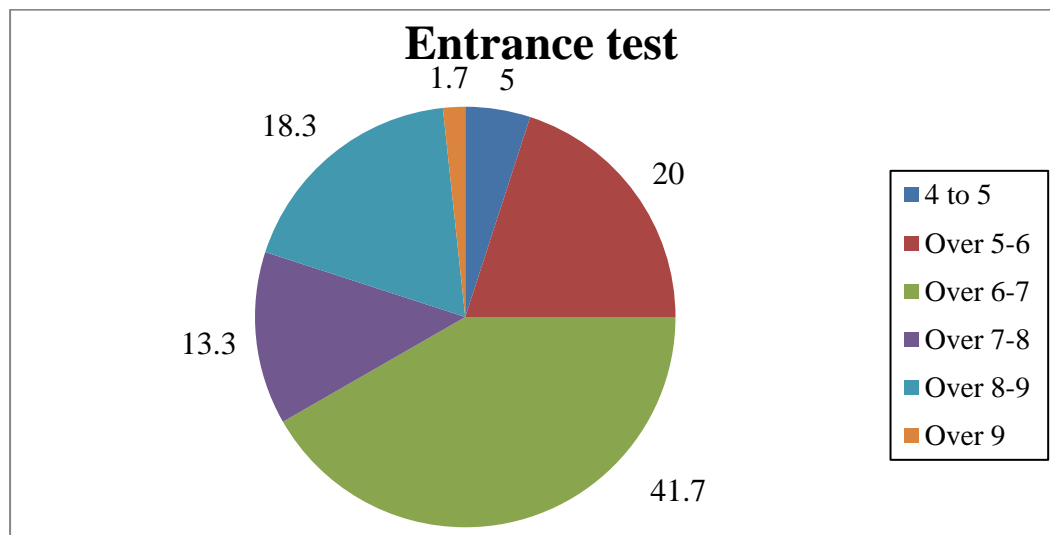
Group	N	Gender	
		Male	Female
Experimental group	60	24 40%	36 60%
Control group	60	19 31.7%	41 68.3%

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

Results from the entrance test

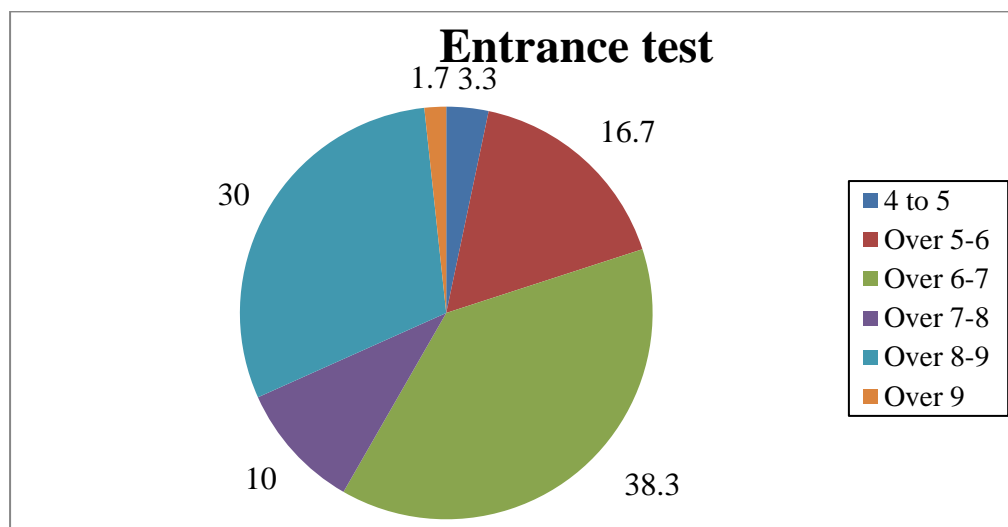
The experimental group

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



The control group

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



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

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

Results from pre-test and post-tests

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

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

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

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

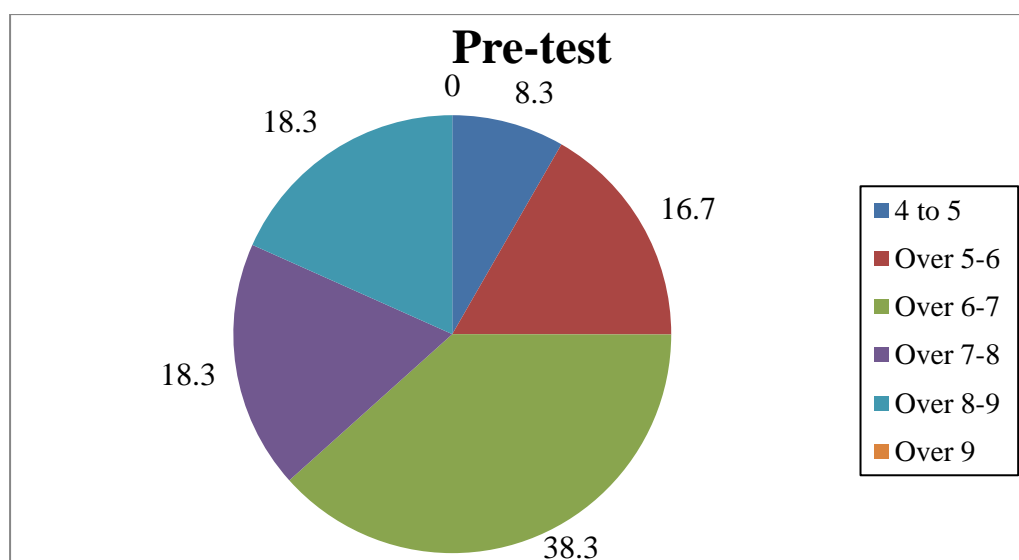
The experimental group

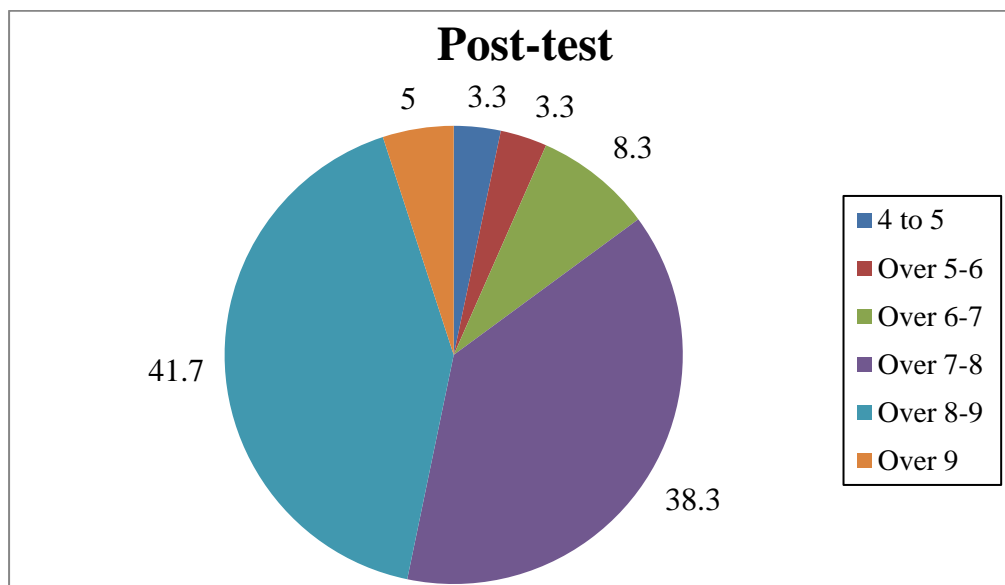
Table 2. Descriptive statistics of results from exams (SPSS 22)

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

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

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





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

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

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

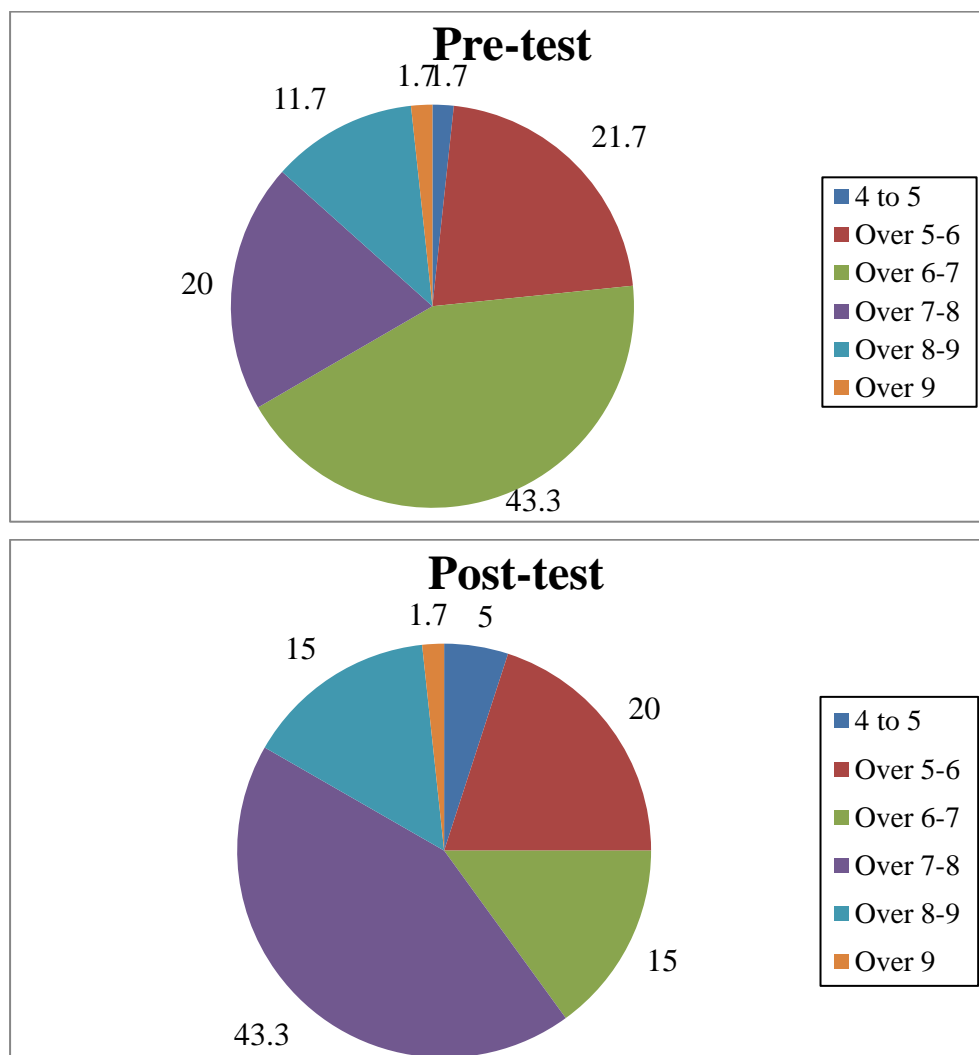
The control group

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**significant at .05 level

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

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

The integration of technology in classes

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

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

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

English conversation rooms and chatting

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

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

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

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

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

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

Advantages and disadvantages of English conversation room and chatting

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Practices after classes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 15. Time spent on each practice

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

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

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

Table 16. Participants' feelings after each practice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Discussion

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

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

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

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

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

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

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

Implications

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

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

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

Recommendations

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

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

Limitations

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

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Appendix 1

Questions in the questionnaire of the experimental group

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

Appendix 2

Questions in the questionnaire of the experimental group

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

Appendix 3

Questions in the structured interviews

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