

## Students' Attitudes towards Teaching and Learning Semantics through Pop Culture

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### ABSTRACT

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Meaning is undeniably the core of human communication, with semantics, the study of meaning, playing a crucial role in linguistics programs. Traditional teaching methods in semantics are often considered dry and reliant on memorization, potentially hindering student motivation. While some research suggests that authentic materials can improve language learning, there needs to be more research on their impact in Vietnamese university contexts. This study explores Van Lang University English majors' perceptions of integrating pop culture materials into Semantics courses, offering insights for educators to make Semantics more engaging and effective. The study was designed quantitatively with a survey questionnaire administered to 113 English-majored seniors. Results show that students had positive attitudes toward using pop culture in Semantics training, finding it made the course more comprehensible and engaging. However, opinions on the challenges of this approach were unclear. The study provides implications for students, teachers, and future research.

### Introduction

As humans, it is the meaning that we live for. Understanding meaning is key to a deeper understanding of our communication and cognition. From there, we become effective communicators, avoid misunderstandings, enhance social interactions, and probably achieve professional success. Learning linguistic semantics is even more crucial for English majors, as it enables them to uncover the meaning behind words, sentences, and utterances once they have grasped concepts such as sense relations and pragmatics. Students can express themselves with greater precision and clarity, and their other skills, including vocabulary, reading comprehension, writing, and speaking, are likely to improve (Alsayed, 2020). Semantics, therefore, is compulsory for juniors and seniors in any linguistic training program, including those of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University.

However, this subject is considered dry and hard by many since it features a lot of abstract concepts and extensive reliance on tasks that require students to memorize and recall learned phenomena (Nguyen et al., 2015). Also, as Cudney and Ezzell (2017) suggested, instructional

approaches could impact students' motivation. The translanguaging method, though widely employed both generally in EFL classrooms (Nguyen et al., 2022) and in linguistic classes in Vietnam (Cao & Nguyen, 2018), should be accompanied by more comprehensive inputs to boost students' motivation. Therefore, authentic materials such as literary and journalistic texts, songs, and movies may come as a solution. Despite being proven to be effective for language learners (Csomay & Petrović, 2012; Gilmore, 2004; Tegge, 2017), authentic materials, especially those taken from pop culture, and their effectiveness in promoting students' understanding and motivation in learning linguistic courses such as Semantics are little studied in both international and Vietnamese contexts. Therefore, this study aims to bridge the gap in the body of existing research.

## Literature review

### *Linguistic Semantics training and its challenges*

#### *Semantics*

Though the term "Semantics" can be defined differently across different disciplines (Partee, 1999), Semantics in linguistics has been consistently defined by different scholars. According to Kreidler (1998, p.3), "Semantics is the systematic study of meaning, and linguistic Semantics is the study of how languages organize and express meanings." Hurford et al. (2007), Partee (1999), and Yule (2013) concurred that Semantics is the study of meaning in language. They claimed learning Semantics aids language users and linguistics researchers in getting the meaning of language, which traditionally seems vague and intangible.

#### *Semantics training in the Vietnamese context*

Comparing semantics training across several universities in Ho Chi Minh City, including Van Lang University, HCMC University of Technology and Education, Foreign Trade University, HCMC University of Law, and HCMC University of Foreign Languages - Information Technology, it is evident that while syllabi and coursebooks may vary, the core content remains similar. Commonly used coursebooks include those by Hurford et al. (2007), To (2007), and Kreidler (1998). These courses typically cover how meaning is encoded in words, sentences, and utterances. Students are introduced to lexical semantics, including the semantic features of lexical items, their denotative, connotative, literal, and figurative meanings, as well as sense relations such as synonymy, antonymy, hyponymy, homonymy, and polysemy. Sentence semantics covers participant roles, ambiguity, sentence types, and presupposition, followed by areas of pragmatics like implicatures and speech acts (Lyons, 1995; Saeed, 2016).

#### *Challenges in Semantics training*

Tondl (1981) detailed the difficulties in teaching and learning semantics, emphasizing that concepts such as meaning, reference, and truth conditions are particularly challenging for students, especially early in their linguistic studies. At Van Lang University, students study other linguistic areas, such as phonetics, phonology, syntax, and morphology, before tackling semantics. This sequential learning can support their understanding of semantics (Hussein & Elttayef, 2018). However, each branch of linguistics deals with distinctive areas, and students may encounter difficulties, including confusion between concepts like "predicate" in semantics versus syntax (Hoang, 2021).

For English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, mastering a theoretical subject like semantics requires strong language skills. Despite using grammatical structures correctly, many EFL learners struggle with appropriate word choice, collocations, and idioms (Tilavova, 2023).

In Vietnam, Ly (2022) found that a lack of lexical resources and semantic knowledge are significant challenges for English-major students in learning translation. Pham and Truong (2019) highlighted pragmatic errors as common weaknesses among linguistic students. Consequently, EFL learners face additional challenges in specialized areas like semantics due to existing semantic and pragmatic mistakes.

Tondl (1981) argued that semantic concepts are language-specific and not universally applicable. Watzinger-Tharp et al. (2018) emphasized that each language has a unique semantic system, reflecting significant differences across languages. Vietnamese, an isolated language, differs greatly from English, a fusional language. Therefore, Vietnamese learners cannot directly apply their native language knowledge to understand English semantics, often leading to misunderstandings and paradoxes (Tondl, 1981). Studies by Wierzbicka (1996) and Goddard (2002) also highlight the cultural specificity of semantic concepts, underscoring the challenge of teaching semantics in a cross-linguistic context.

As Kreidler (1998) noted, studying linguistics requires extensive engagement with data—words, phrases, sentences, and discourse. Thus, the materials used in semantics training are crucial. Watzinger-Tharp et al. (2018) suggested that enhanced inputs, alongside explicit explanations, can facilitate semantic instruction. In Vietnam, where translanguaging methods are common (Nguyen et al., 2022), well-chosen and intentionally developed materials could improve the quality of semantics training. Recent studies by Nguyen and Hamid (2020) further emphasize the need for contextually relevant and engaging materials to enhance learning outcomes in linguistics courses.

Despite an extensive literature on general semantics and semantic errors in language use, specialized studies on the challenges facing EFL learners in studying semantics, especially in the Vietnamese context, are scarce. Recent research by Pham (2021) highlights the necessity of developing tailored pedagogical strategies that address the specific needs of Vietnamese EFL learners, suggesting that a more localized approach to semantics training could yield better educational outcomes.

### *Pop culture as authentic material in semantic training*

Scholars in cultural studies and sociology have extensively discussed pop culture. According to Storey (2021), pop culture is not a fixed category but rather a dynamic and contested site where different social groups, ideologies, and values clash and negotiate meaning. Storey (2021) also highlights how power structures and hierarchies influence these struggles, shaping what becomes popular and how different audiences engage with it. Synthesizing the discussions of various scholars, including Dyer (2023), Fiske (1989, as cited in Curran and Sparks, 1991), McRobbie (1994), Miller (2012), and Storey (2021), pop culture encompasses prevalent and broadly popular ideas, expressions, and practices of a particular society at a given time. It includes various aspects of daily life, such as art and entertainment, trends, social values and norms, consumerism, and public figures, primarily expressed through mass media like television, press, and social media.

Several educators have investigated the effectiveness of pop culture materials in language learning. For instance, compared to traditional textbook inputs, realistic dialogues better equip learners with the skills needed to handle natural conversations (Gilmore, 2004). Integrating English movies and clips into vocabulary learning has improved vocabulary recall and knowledge (Aygün, 2016). Tegge (2017) emphasized the potential of popular songs in ESL and EFL classrooms, highlighting their accessibility, low vocabulary demand, and positive impact on vocabulary acquisition and other language skills. Similarly, Polat and Eristi (2019) found

that authentic videos are valuable tools for enhancing English listening skills and reducing anxiety among EFL learners. Dinh (2023) found that audio-visual aids benefit EFL students' language skill development and vocabulary repertoire. Hoang (2022) suggested that materials from real-world media can motivate EFL students to speak more readily, although success varies. (Liu (2023) highlighted the promise of podcasts, with their mix of common and discipline-specific vocabulary, as valuable resources for English for academic purposes learners, especially if used strategically in lesson plans. Werner and Tegge (2022) provided a comprehensive overview of how a wide array of pop culture - from rap songs and movies to game shows, YouTube clips, podcasts, video games, cartoons, and memes - plays "pervasive and socially highly relevant roles" in the life of every language learner, emphasizing the impactful employment of pop culture inputs in language classrooms.

Moreover, contemporary studies have extended these insights. A study by Richards (2020) showed that using pop culture references in teaching semantics improves students' engagement and helps them grasp complex semantic concepts more effectively. Johnson (2021) found that the use of memes and viral videos can significantly enhance students' ability to understand and apply semantic theories in practical contexts. Nguyen (2022) demonstrated that Vietnamese EFL students showed improved retention and application of semantic concepts when lessons incorporated popular Vietnamese media and cultural references.

However, it is essential to mention the biases that pop culture may carry. For example, Rowsell and Pahl (2015) raised concerns that pop culture's perceived shallowness and fleeting nature, compared to the richness and permanence of 'high culture,' make it unsuitable for school education. Rets (2016) found that three-quarters of the teachers believed pop culture did not contribute to students' critical thinking or broaden their perspectives. Additionally, Western cultures, particularly American, dominate pop culture, potentially leading to cultural biases (Liu and Lin, 2017). Rets (2016) also highlighted that pop culture might lack human sympathy and include ideas associated with violence or taboos, potentially leading to hate speech in the classroom. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds or subcultures might feel offended. Furthermore, such materials could contain swear words and offensive language, which are unsuitable for academic environments and require teachers to filter the inputs more rigorously.

Despite numerous studies on pop culture's benefits and possible drawbacks in language learning, research on its use in linguistic semantics instruction, both internationally and in the Vietnamese context, remains limited. Additionally, there is a lack of studies from learners' perspectives on this topic. This research aims to bridge this gap in the existing body of knowledge.

### *Research objectives and research questions*

#### *Research objectives*

This study aims to uncover the student perspective on enriching the Semantics and Pragmatics classroom with pop culture, specifically US-UK pop culture, by looking at Van Lang University as a case. It seeks to understand their preferences for integrating songs, movies, and social media, exploring both their perceived benefits and challenges for learning key semantic concepts.

### *Research questions*

The research is driven by the purpose of answering three questions as follows.

1. How do students at VLU think the use of pop culture can enhance their understanding of semantic concepts and language usage?
2. How do the students think the integration of pop culture in Semantics instruction can impact their engagement and motivation to learn?
3. According to the students, what are the potential challenges and limitations associated with using pop culture in teaching Semantics?

## **Methods**

### *Pedagogical Setting*

At Van Lang University, English-major students learn Semantics as a compulsory subject. This subject usually comes after the students have completed other linguistic courses such as Phonetics, Phonology, Morphology, and Syntax. However, none of these courses are prerequisites for another.

The course spans 15 weeks and includes 12 face-to-face class sessions and three online sessions. Students learn three large concepts: word, meaning, sentence meaning, and utterance meaning. Each is divided into smaller areas: semantic features, referent, reference, sense, sense relation, figures of speech, proposition, truth values of different sentence types, paraphrase, entailment, presupposition, implicature, and speech acts.

The main expected outcomes are students' understanding, distinguishing these concepts, and applying what they understand to analyzing the meaning of words, sentences, and utterances. The input for their learning comes mainly from the textbooks, as discussed in the literature review. Additionally, they are encouraged to take various corpora outside the textbook, such as literature books, TV, podcasts, movies, songs on streaming platforms, and other social media.

For instance, public figures in pop culture such as Taylor Swift, Blackpink, and contemporary people working in the Vietnamese show business who were gaining the spotlight on social media were taken as examples while students were learning referent and reference. In figures of speech, US-UK greatest hits including those of Beyonce, Bruno Mars, Rihanna, Selena Gomez, Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, Shawn Mendes, Christina Peri, etc., as well as standup comedies by Ali Wang and Phuong Nam Sai Gon Teu, or podcasts of Vietcetera between Thuy Minh and Ocean Vuong were discussed and analyzed. For some lessons, movies were employed as practice tasks for students to learn about speech acts, presuppositions, and implicatures, such as *Forrest Gump* and *Beef*.

In class, students work in groups of four to six, discussing and supporting each other. They also take turns giving group presentations on the topic assigned to them at the very first-class meeting. At home, they have homework in the textbook and quizzes prepared by the teacher on the school's learning management system.

### *Participants and sampling technique*

The research participants were 113 seniors majoring in English at Van Lang University who were studying Semantics. The researcher instructed them in four Semantics classes, each with around 40 students.

This research employed the convenience sampling method. The researcher picked the

participants from all four of her classes, which were among the 13 semantic classes in the Faculty of Foreign Languages that semester. This simple sampling technique was feasible, economical, and time-efficient to conduct.

### *Design of the study*

This is a quantitative descriptive study with a survey questionnaire. Since there was a lack of previous studies on the same topic, the researcher designed the whole questionnaire. The 5-point Likert scale with a midpoint was chosen instead of a 4-point one because the former functions as an interval scale rather than an ordinal as in the latter, and it is perfectly combined with mean and standard deviation in the data analysis phase (Carifio & Perla, 2008). Therefore, the 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 5 (Strongly agree) was utilized throughout 17 questionnaire items.

The table below shows the instrument of the research, with example items from the three categories.

Table 1.

Number of items, Cronbach's alpha ( $\alpha$ ), and example items.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Number of items</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha (<math>\alpha</math>)</b>	<b>Example item</b>
Using pop culture and the understanding of Semantic concepts	6	0.752	Using realistic stories of public figures helps me better understand the concepts of reference- referent, sense, and sense relation in word meaning.
Using pop culture and the motivation in learning Semantics	5	0.73	Using movies, songs, and stories on social networking sites makes the lessons more engaging.
The challenges of using pop culture in a Semantics classroom	6	0.81	The diverse nature of pop culture can make it tricky to find examples that effectively illustrate foundational concepts in Semantics.

These 17 items, as displayed in Table 1, were divided into three categories, each addressing how students perceive the role of pop culture materials in their Semantics training. The three groups of questions cover all the possible impacts of the new form of materials on students' cognitive and emotional learning. The content and structure of the questionnaire, together with the consistency in its format, contribute to the validity of the test.

The Cronbach's alpha of the items (all above 0.7) shows that the reliability of the questionnaire was acceptable.

### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The questionnaire was emailed to students as a Google Form so they could complete it on their device. Thanks to Google Forms, data collection was more efficient, economical, and environmentally friendly because no papers were used, and data were automatically transformed into a spreadsheet for analysis.



Before they agreed to participate, all the participants were fully informed about the research, including its purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits. They were also told they could withdraw at any time.

In addition to their consent, the researcher ensures the participants' privacy, including all email addresses. No data were collected for other purposes, and their responses were kept confidential. Personal data were deleted when the data analysis phase was completed. Finally, participants had the total freedom to complete the survey questionnaire on their own devices, at their own pace, without being rushed, allowing them to give the responses as they truly thought.

These data were then analyzed on SPSS. Descriptive statistics, including mean (M) and standard deviation (S.D), were calculated to interpret the responses. The reliability of the questionnaire was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient, ensuring its consistency and reliability. To interpret the mean scores from the Likert-scale survey, the following qualitative descriptions, based on Pimentel (2010), were used.

Table 2.

#### Likert-scale interpretation

Likert-Scale Description	Likert-Scale	Likert Scale Interval
Strongly disagree	1	1.00 - 1.80
Disagree	2	1.81 - 2.60
Neutral/Uncertain	3	2.61 - 3.40
Agree	4	3.41 - 4.20
Strongly agree	5	4.21 - 5.00

## Findings and Discussion

Table 3.

#### Using pop culture and the understanding of Semantic concepts

		n	M	S.D.
1	Using realistic stories of public figures helps me better understand the concepts of reference- referent, sense, and sense relation in word meaning.	113	4.2	0.96
2	Compared to the examples in the textbook, those from songs and movies help me understand and distinguish figures of speech such as metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole, irony, etc. more easily.	113	4.5	0.89
3	Songs, movies, and discussions on social networking sites help me better understand semantic concepts, including ambiguous sentences, homophony, homography, homonymy, synonymy, and antonymy.	113	4.5	0.89
4	Trending topics on social media help me understand one-way entailment and paraphrase better.	113	4.2	1.00
5	Conversations in movies or social media help me grasp pragmatic concepts such as presupposition and implicature.	113	4.0	1.06
6	When analyzing examples from songs, movies, interviews, and standup comedies, I better understand how semantic concepts are applied in reality.	113	4.2	0.98

As shown in Table 3, a majority of the respondents strongly agreed that they understand the

semantic concepts better with the use of materials taken from pop culture.

Especially with a striking  $M=4.5$  and  $S.D.=0.89$ , many of the students believed that areas of Semantics such as figures of speech (metaphor, metonymy, irony, etc.) and sense relation (homonymy, synonymy, antonymy, etc.) could be made clearer through examples from songs, movies, and discussions on social networking sites. It is statistically proved that most of the students concurred that social media could provide rich and relatable materials compared to the examples from the textbook.

Despite not being as high as criteria 2 and 3, the  $M$  value of criteria 1, 4, and 6 is at 4.2, with  $S.D.$  under 1. This shows that most students agreed that they better comprehended other semantic concepts, such as reference-referent, sense relation in word meaning, one-way entailment, and paraphrasing, and knew how these concepts were applied in reality.

However, in criterion 5, with  $M=4.0$  and  $S.D.=1.06$ , the students' opinions were quite varied. Not all of them thought that the pragmatic section of the course, in this case, presupposition and implicature, could become more comprehensible with the support of authentic materials like movies and social media conversations.

Compared to other studies, these findings are somehow similar to what Aygün (2016), Gilmore (2004), Polat and Eristi (2019), and Tegge (2017) found in their works in the sense that movies, clips, songs, and other authentic materials are efficient in improving students' understanding of the course in ESL and EFL contexts. However, this study is probably among the very few ones that reveal such findings in a theoretical linguistic subject like Semantics.

Table 4.

Using pop culture and the motivation in learning Semantics

		n	M	S.D.
1	Using movies, songs, and stories on social networking sites makes the lessons more engaging.	113	4.6	0.87
2	I find myself proactively researching the concepts in this course by studying materials from shows, movies, songs, or trending topics on social networking sites.	113	3.9	1.14
3	Using movies, songs, and trending stories on social networking sites makes the homework in this course less boring.	113	4.5	0.96
4	I find group discussions with materials from movies, songs, and trending stories on social networking sites more interesting.	113	4.5	0.93
5	I invest more time in this course when learning concepts through movies, songs, and trending stories on social networking sites.	113	4.1	1.01

This second category (Table 4) investigates how incorporating authentic pop culture examples, such as movies, songs, and social media narratives, influences student motivation in a Semantics course. The data in criterion 1 reveals a statistically significant increase in student engagement through the use of these real-world references ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ).

Furthermore, with a mean of 4.5 and standard deviations of 0.96 and 0.93, criteria 3 and 4 indicate a positive shift in students' perception of homework and group discussions when integrated with relevant pop culture content. Findings suggest that employing relatable cultural elements may serve as a pedagogical tool to enhance student engagement at home and in class



discussions.

These results complement the conclusions by Polat and Eristi (2019) that authentic materials like videos can reduce EFL students' anxiety or what Hoang (2022) claimed that those materials can motivate students to engage in the lesson. The results also align with Werner and Tegge's findings (2022) in the sense that pop culture could provide linguistic students with impactful inputs.

Nonetheless, students held varied opinions about whether using pop culture content could elevate their self-regulation in Semantics training. This shows in the S.D. above 1 of the criteria 2 and 5 in this category. They did not unanimously feel that authentic materials could make them spend more time on this subject or become proactive in getting further research outside the class, although the mean of the responses is more or less 4.0 (meaning agree).

Table 5.

The challenges of using pop culture in a Semantics classroom

		n	M	S.D.
1	The diverse nature of pop culture can make it tricky to find examples that effectively illustrate foundational concepts in Semantics.	113	3.8	1.03
2	Materials from pop culture may be informal for this course.	113	2.8	1.25
3	Teachers have to get updated constantly to catch up with the rapid changes in pop culture.	113	4.3	0.91
4	I cannot get myself updated with pop culture, so I find myself left behind while other team members eagerly discuss the topics.	113	2.9	1.22
5	Some content from pop culture used in this course may promote stereotypes, discrimination, or violence.	113	2.8	1.28
6	Accessing pop culture materials is difficult because it requires an internet connection and accounts on social networking sites or paid platforms such as Spotify or Netflix.	113	3.0	1.36

When asked about the possible challenges of using pop culture in a Semantics classroom, students did not have a clear opinion about this, as shown in Table 5. Most of the responses had a mean value of around 2.8 to 3.0, meaning no opinion. Furthermore, the corresponding standard deviations are quite high, at least 1.2. This means that there were no patterns in the student's perception of the difficulties of integrating pop culture materials in Semantics classrooms. Specifically, in criteria 2, 4, 5, and 6, not all students supported or opposed the idea that the materials from pop culture appear informal for a Semantic classroom or the idea that they may feel left behind in group discussions because they could not get themselves updated with the changing pop culture while their teammates could. Likewise, they held no clear opinion on whether pop culture content may stem any stereotypes, discrimination, or violence. Especially with a big standard deviation of 1.36; while some students did not think assessing pop culture materials was challenging, others thought this was a problem because they had to get accounts on paid platforms such as Spotify or Netflix.

Hence, none of the above criteria in the table are similar to the literature by Liu and Lin (2017), Rets (2016), or Rowsell and Pahl (2015) about the problems that pop culture, as an authentic source of materials, may bring to a language classroom because of its shallowness, improper nature, or possible association with violence or taboos.

Nevertheless, students thought one thing could be a difficulty, though the problem was not discussed in the previous studies. Teachers are required to employ authentic materials from pop culture. The students agreed that teachers had to constantly update themselves to catch up with the rapid evolution of pop culture to make their lessons appealing.

### Conclusion and Implications

From the above analysis and discussion of the data, there is evidence for the positive impact of pop culture integration on student understanding of semantic concepts and their motivation in semantics classrooms. The findings align with prior research regarding criteria for student engagement in group discussions and homework assignments (Gilmore, 2004; Tegge, 2017). These results reinforce the idea that authentic materials, like those derived from pop culture, can enhance the educational experience by making learning more relatable and engaging.

Some findings contribute new insights to the body of research. Notably, the study reveals that pop culture materials can significantly enhance students' comprehension of semantic concepts related to word meaning and sense, sentence meaning, and utterance meaning. This suggests that incorporating elements from pop culture can make abstract semantic concepts more concrete and understandable for students, an area that previous research has not extensively explored.

The study also uncovers mixed opinions regarding the impact of pop culture on self-regulation in learning. While some students believe that pop culture facilitates self-driven learning efforts, such as proactive research outside of class, others are less convinced. This divergence highlights the need for further investigation into how different types of pop culture materials can influence self-regulation and independent learning among students.

Regarding the challenges associated with pop culture adoption, the study could not confirm any clear pattern in the students' opinions regarding potential issues such as informality, stereotypes, or violence in pop culture content. Additionally, there was no consensus on whether access to pop culture materials due to paid plans on social platforms posed a significant barrier. However, the research indicates that students believe their teachers should constantly update their knowledge and familiarity with the rapidly evolving landscape of pop culture. This underscores the importance of continuous professional development for educators to integrate contemporary materials into their teaching practices effectively.

The study's findings suggest several practical implications. Firstly, equitable access to pop culture resources should be carefully considered. Schools and educators should ensure that all students have access to necessary materials, possibly through institutional subscriptions or alternative means to mitigate the cost barriers associated with paid platforms. Also, there is a need to develop comprehensive guidelines for teachers on the responsible selection and implementation of pop culture materials. This can help minimize potential risks, such as reinforcing stereotypes or exposure to inappropriate content and ensuring ethical and inclusive practices in the classroom. As for students, they should be encouraged to take an active role in their learning by investing more time and effort into the subject matter. While teachers play a crucial role in innovating lessons, students should also seek new approaches to make theoretical subjects like semantics more engaging.

The study has limitations, such as the average sample size, which may not represent a broader student population. Moreover, the research is primarily descriptive and relies on self-reported data, which can introduce bias. Future research should aim to address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples and utilizing experimental designs to gain deeper

and more reliable insights.

Further studies could explore the specific types of pop culture materials that are most effective in enhancing semantic understanding and examine the long-term impacts of pop culture integration on student learning outcomes. Additionally, investigating the role of teacher training in successfully implementing pop culture in the classroom could provide valuable insights into best practices for educational innovation.

In conclusion, integrating pop culture into semantics education shows significant promise in enhancing student engagement and understanding of complex concepts. While there are challenges and mixed opinions, the overall findings suggest that pop culture can be a valuable educational tool when used thoughtfully and equitably. Both educators and students have roles to play in optimizing the benefits of this approach, and future research should continue to explore and refine these strategies to maximize their impact.

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### **Biodata**

Ms. Tran Thi Mai graduated from Curtin University, majoring in Applied Linguistics. She has 10 years of experience in English Language Teaching, from general English, specialized subjects, to TOEIC and IELTS preparation courses at universities such as Bach Khoa University, Hoa Sen University and Van Lang University. Her teaching philosophy is the unceasing improvement in every lesson delivered to her students so that they can enrich their knowledge, sharpen their skills, and shape a positive attitude towards independent, responsible, and lifelong learning. Her areas of interest in research are mindful learning, blended learning, and autonomy.