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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear Esteemed Authors, Reviewers, Affiliations, and Editorial Board Members,

With great pleasure and gratitude, we extend our warmest appreciation to all who have contributed to the successful completion of Volume 3, Issue 3 of the International Journal of TESOL & Education. Your dedication, expertise, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of TESOL research and education have undoubtedly enriched the contents of this issue.

To our esteemed authors, we extend our heartfelt gratitude for your invaluable contributions. Your insightful research, innovative perspectives, and rigorous scholarship have added depth and breadth to the discourse in the field of TESOL. Your dedication to excellence is evident in the rigorous pursuit of knowledge showcased in each of the articles presented in this issue.

We would also like to extend our sincere gratitude to the affiliations and institutions that have supported the authors in their research endeavors. Your commitment to fostering an environment of learning and intellectual growth has played an essential role in the production of high-quality research.

Our peer reviewers deserve special recognition for their rigorous evaluation and constructive feedback. Your commitment to maintaining the highest standards of academic quality has been instrumental in ensuring that the articles published in this issue are both rigorous and impactful. Your expertise and insights have greatly contributed to enhancing the scholarly merit of the journal.

Last but not least, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the editorial board. Your dedication to the journal's mission, your insightful guidance, and your tireless efforts have been indispensable in shaping the journal's direction and maintaining its high standards.

The collaborative efforts of authors, reviewers, affiliations, and the editorial board have once again resulted in a compelling issue that reflects the dynamic and evolving landscape of TESOL and education. We are immensely proud to be associated with a community that consistently pushes the boundaries of knowledge and contributes to the betterment of language education worldwide.

Thank you all for your continued support, commitment, and passion. We look forward to your continued engagement as we work together to advance the field of TESOL and education.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Warm regards!

Associate Professor Dr. Pham Vu Phi Ho
Editor-in-chief
International Journal of TESOL & Education

An Investigation of the Effects of Processing Instruction in the Online Learning of the Past Perfect Tense: A Case at a University

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ABSTRACT

	Vietnamese learners and teachers experienced enormous difficulty in online learning during COVID-19 due to their previous limited exposure to virtual learning. The primary purpose of the study is to develop an appropriate and effective grammar instruction approach for virtual learning. To achieve that purpose, this study compared the relative effects of two types of grammar instruction (Traditional Instruction and Processing Instruction) on online learning of the Past Perfect Tense. More than 160 learners from two elementary classes at a university in Ho Chi Minh City participated in the study with two treatment groups: Traditional Instruction (TI) and Processing Instruction (PI). All the lessons were conducted in a virtual classroom. Pre-test and post-test involving comprehension and production tasks were measured. Overall, the learners who experienced PI gained significantly better results than the TI group in comprehension tasks, while both groups performed similarly in production tasks. Moreover, many features of Processing Instruction are well-suited for the nature of online learning, which benefits learners while they are struggling with virtual classrooms.
Keywords: Processing Instruction, Traditional Instruction, virtual learning	

Introduction

Grammar instruction has aroused considerable controversy among researchers about its effectiveness and usefulness. Therefore, approaches to teaching grammar have experienced a development through a long history thanks to a large number of theoretical and empirical studies in the field. Some approaches focus on forms, namely Grammar Translation Method (GTM), Audio-lingual Method (ALM), while some concentrate on meaning, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Immersion Instruction. However, Long (1991) claimed that Form-focused Instruction pays attention to both meaning and forms. In the Vietnamese grammar instruction context, Traditional Instruction with three stages of Presentation, Practice, and Production has become widely prevalent in many language schools. It is notable that this approach leads to a plateau in gaining communicative skills. Learners are

unable to communicate fluently outside the classroom, which represents the inferiority of productive skills in Vietnamese learners' IELTS achievement. This is due to the formulaic and decontextualized features of the Practice and Production stage, while the form is a main focus in this stage. In order to develop learners' communicative skills, a focus on meaning in teaching grammar should be seriously considered.

Moreover, in the Covid-19 era, most of the classes were switched to online versions, where learners need help developing their communicative skills. The elaboration of conducting an online lesson accompanied by poor infrastructure as well as insufficient preparation from both educators and learners has prevented learners from improving their communicative skills. Moreover, both teachers and learners are not in good preparation for online learning in terms of teaching methodology and online learning infrastructure (Pham, 2022). Due to the fact that it is incapable of changing the physical features of online learning, changing the grammar instruction method become more feasible. Among many types of instruction in Form-focused instruction, Processing Instruction seems to fit the nature of online lessons. For that reason, this study is going examine the effectiveness of both Processing Instruction and Traditional Instruction through online learning. Although the education system has switched back to face-to-face lessons, many learners still favor online learning due to its convenience in the technological era. As a result, the investigation of the effects of Processing Instruction on the learning of Past Perfect university students in virtual classrooms is still necessary.

Literature review

Definition

Processing Instruction is a part of Comprehension-based language instruction in which learners process the input to connect form and meaning, leading to the vital role of input. 'Input' is described as a "sample of language that learners are exposed to and attempt to process for meaning." (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011, p. 20). Input processing is the process of converting input into the intake in a learners' acquired system, which is a second language acquisition model developed by VanPatten (1993). The strategies and mechanisms promoting form-meaning connections during comprehension are involved in this stage (VanPatten, 1993).

Framework

Processing Instruction (PI) is based on VanPatten's principles of Input Processing, aiming to help learners abandon inappropriate processing strategies and apply the appropriate ones because learners do not always use efficient strategies when processing input (VanPatten, 2004). Processing Instruction focuses on the input processing stage by manipulating the input (as in Figure 1), while Traditional Instruction (TI) concentrates on the output practice (as in Figure 2) because asking learners to produce the structure when they are not ready is like putting the cart before the horse (Lee & VanPatten, 1995)
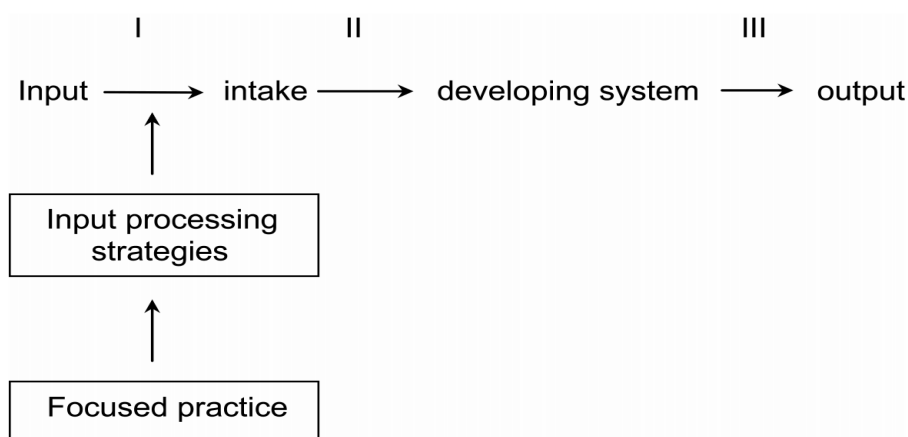
Figure 1. Processing Instruction model (VanPatten, 1993)
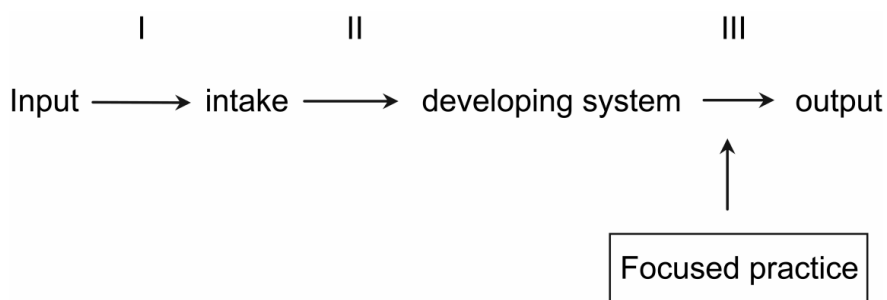
Figure 2. Traditional Instruction model

Previous studies

Many previous studies put forward an overall view of the effectiveness of Processing Instruction in the classroom version. VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) initiated the concept of Processing Instruction according to VanPattern's model of Input processing in second language acquisition. Through time, there was a wide range of studies examining this type of instruction and confirming the significant improvement among learners who experience Processing Instruction. There was some particularly remarkable research that proved that Processing Instruction exerts a noticeable effect on learners' second language processing, namely Cadierno (1995), Benati (2001 and 2005), Benati, Lee and Houghton (2008), Benati and Lee (2010) and Chan (2018 and 2019). Cadierno (1995) proved that PI has a considerable effect on both interpretation and production tasks even though there was no output practice during PI treatment, while TI only improves the production tasks. Furthermore, PI outperformed TI on interpretation tasks and had the same effects as TI on production tasks. Benati's (2001 and 2005) studies achieved similar results as VanPatten and Cadierno's (1993, 1995), which presented the enhancement of both TI and PI groups from pre-test to post-test. PI is also proven to surpass TI in interpretation tasks and has the same effects as TI on production tasks. Benati, Lee and Houghton explained to the superior of PI that "TI practice only makes the form available for production; it cannot make it available to processing mechanisms" (Benati, Lee & Houghton,

2008, p. 118). PI was designed for learners to comprehend the meaning of the structures instead of the memorization of physical features of the structure as TI did for learners.

Wong and Ito (2018) confirmed the superiority of Processing Instruction in French acquisition. Besides, Henry (2022) also compared the effects of Processing Instruction among German learners and acknowledged the outperformance of PI on the sentence interpretation task. The study also explained that PI was superior due to the alteration of learners' processing strategies. Moreover, PI activities played a role as an assistant to teachers in implementing effective strategies to enhance L2 learners' knowledge and acquisition (Patra et al., 2022).

Research gaps

On the one hand, PI has an essential feature of structured-input activities that do not require production during the practice stage. On the other hand, the virtual classroom has a lot of difficulties in conducting production practice because of low bandwidth Internet speed, technological issues, and even distractions (Ky, 2021). Moreover, students also claimed that learning in a virtual classroom caused considerable difficulty in practicing speaking because they had little chance to raise their voices in this type of class as they were afraid of interrupting the flow of the lesson (Ky, 2021). Another difficulty during online lessons was the lack of interaction between teachers and students (Pham et al., 2022). Pham (2022) also suggested that teachers need more careful preparation for online lessons, encouraging learners to join the class activities actively. In addition, Pham et al. (2022) recommended some approaches to conducting Writing, Speaking, and Listening lessons online. To be specific, the teacher could teach Writing skills through Google Docs or ask students to turn on the camera for Speaking practice and create some activities to engage students in listening lessons. However, that study did not recommend solutions for teaching Grammar online.

For those reasons, the characteristics of Processing Instruction may help solve online learning difficulties in terms of grammar instruction. Students who experienced the PI approach were not required to produce the target structure immediately in the lesson. They only need to engage in structured input activities which seem to fit the characteristics of the virtual classroom.

The purpose of the research

This study is going to compare the effects of PI and TI in teaching Past Perfect in virtual classrooms among university students.

Research Questions

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

1. How do learners receiving PI and TI improve from pre-test to post-test in the comprehension and production tests of English Past Perfect tense?

2. Would learners receiving PI make more significant gains in comprehension tests and production tests than the TI group in the learning of Past Perfect tense?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at Ton Duc Thang University, which consists of a wide range of fields from finance, design, and information technology to civil engineering or electricity. There are six levels of English classes at the university, ranging from elementary to advanced level. This study focuses on the learning of Past Perfect tense, which is considered to be appropriate for the elementary level, and this grammar point is in the syllabus for this level. The course book used in this course is Empower A2. The lessons were conducted in a virtual classroom.

The participants in this study were freshmen and at the elementary level (A2, according to CEFR). They were at the second level of six levels in the university language program. There were 169 students in total assigned to two groups: Processing Instruction (PI) and Traditional Instruction (TI). There are 82 students in the PI group and 87 students in the TI group. The subject pool involved adult learners who were mostly Vietnamese native speakers, while there were two Lao students in the Processing Instruction class. The English lessons were conducted completely in English. The participants rarely use English outside the classroom because Vietnamese people mainly use their first language in daily activities.

Design of the Study

This study employed a quantitative and quasi-experimental research method to find the answer to two research questions. Pre-tests and post-tests were employed to examine and compare the effects of PI and TI on learners' learning of Past Perfect Tense.

Tests

The tests used in this study were adapted from previous studies (Benati, 2005; Benati, Lee & Houghton, 2008; Benati & Lee, 2010; Chan, 2018, 2019) and some grammar tests. Those tests were conducted online and concentrated on measuring learners' input comprehension competence and structure production ability. There were two types of tests in this study: Comprehension and Production.

There were also two versions of the test, namely version A and version B. In order to ensure validity and reliability, half of the class did version A and the other half did version B for both pre-tests. The test consisted of 40 items in total for both comprehension and production tests and lasted for an hour, with 30 minutes for the comprehension test and 30 minutes for the production test. Comprehension tests measured learners' ability to interpret the meaning of the input, while Production tests were employed to measure learners' competence in producing the target structure. There were five tasks in comprehension tests, including listening with multiple choices and True False choices, choosing the interpretation of the sentences, reading, and choosing True or False. The production tests included filling in the blank of a sentence, open-ended questions, and writing a story.

Practice packages

The tokens of practice items remained approximately the same among groups with a balanced number of input sentences. PI practice consisted of 80 tokens, while TI involved 60 tokens with two story writing tasks. Vocabulary items are exactly similar between the two groups, which

were extracted from the Cambridge A2 Vocabulary list. The practice activities are designed according to the feature of each instruction.

Before conducting the practice stage, the teacher explained how the structure works to learners. Learners were provided with handouts about the Past Perfect tense forms and usages. The explicit explanation remained unchanged in the two groups. However, the PI group mentioned the Lexical Preference principle in processing the structure, while the TI group did not. The principle reminds learners that attention should be paid to the verb to identify the time of the events instead of relying on the temporal verbs. The handout mentioned all 3 forms of Past Perfect tense in affirmative, negative, and interrogation forms. Learners were already familiar with the basic notion of verbs, nouns, and adjectives.

Traditional instruction involved presenting learners the metalinguistic explanation about the forms and uses of the Past Perfect tense and then giving them practice in the application of the structure in context. The way learners process the input was not mentioned in this group. Practice activities in the TI group consist of 3 main phases: mechanical drills, meaningful drills, and communicative activities. Mechanical drills involved filling-in-the-blank exercises, while meaningful drills included writing sentences according to the picture, deciding the tenses of the given verbs, and writing sentences according to given words. Communicative activities in the TI group consist of open-ended questions and writing a story.

Processing Instruction packet directed learners' attention to the Past Perfect form in the input and provided some activities which required learners to respond to the content and make form-meaning connections. The packet had two phases which were explicit explanation and Structured Input activities. The explanation stage followed the same procedure as TI, with the only difference, which was to instruct learners on how to instill appropriate processing strategies (VanPatten, 1993, 1995, 2004; Benati & Lee, 2010). Structured Input activities followed the guideline of VanPatten about developing SI activities strictly. The Structured Input activities in this study were adapted from Benati (2005), Benati, Lee and Houghton (2008), Benati and Lee (2010), and Chan (2018, 2019). Structured input activities included referential activities and affective activities. Referential activities were with right or wrong answers, such as multiple choice or True False, while affective activities referred to students' real life without right or wrong answers, including deciding whether the sentences were true to students' life.

Data collection

The treatment lasted two weeks with four days of class meetings in total, with 30 minutes each day for the target structure instruction. There were two hours in total for the Past Perfect instruction. The rest of the time for each day was used for other skills depending on the syllabus. The treatment took place online via virtual classroom on Zoom due to the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic. The teacher conducted the treatment while students listened and did the practice according to the teacher. The researcher was also the teacher for both two groups PI and TI groups. On the first day of the treatment, the explicit explanation was delivered in 30 minutes, followed by 30 minutes of practice stage each day until the fourth day. The practice stage occurred differently for each group according to the distinctive features of each type of grammar instruction mentioned above. Learners did the post-tests on the last day of the treatment after

the final practice for Past Perfect Tense. The tests were also organized online, where learners were required to turn on the cameras and complete the test under the teacher's surveillance as in the face-to-face classroom. The tests were sent to students via Google Forms, and students completed them directly on the link and were able to submit them only once after one hour.

Data analysis

Before conducting the experiment, pre-tests took place to measure learners' abilities before the treatment. The results of the pre-tests were compared between two groups to make sure learners' competence before the study remained similar across the groups. Pre-tests were conducted for both groups one week before the treatment. All the learners who score higher than 50% will be eliminated from the result of the study. The first research question investigated the improvement of participants from pre-tests to post-tests. In order to find the answer to these questions, a comparison of the results of the pre-tests and post-tests of each group was made. The second research question dealt with the different effects of two types of instruction. There were two groups, namely Processing Instruction and Traditional Instruction groups (PI and TI). The control group in this study was the group that employed Traditional Instruction, which was widely applied in all grammar lessons in Vietnam. Different types of grammar instruction were applied to each group accordingly. The instructed structure was a part of the syllabus, which was in the course book. The results of the two groups' post-tests were considered to compare the effects and determine the more advantageous and appropriate instruction for learners. The results of post-tests were submitted to a t-test to examine the significant differences between the two groups.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability refers to the consistency of the measure in experimental research. The reliability of the experimental groups was illustrated through the process of designing the test. To ensure the reliability of the results, the tests were adapted from previous studies. The format of the tests in this study resembled the test design of previous studies. Each task in the test was adapted from many different studies to ensure the reliability of the tests.

Validity involves accurately measuring what is intended to evaluate that reflects the situation. This study intended to assess learners' competence in understanding and using the structure at both sentence and discourse levels. The test concentrated on designing a task that can measure those criteria. Learners are tested on what they have already learned. Past Perfect Tense is a focus in the test where comprehension of the structure and the ability to use the structure are tested. The tests also used the vocabulary at the A2 level, which was the learners' current level, to ensure the validity of this test. The tests were designed according to previous studies as well as adhered to the theory of comprehension and production of the target structure, which was the input processing theory (VanPatten, 1993). Moreover, the tests were conducted online and were under strict surveillance of the teacher. Students were also asked to submit their screen recordings during the test time to ensure the validity of the tests. For those reasons, the tests were reliable and valid.

Results/Findings

Results

How do learners receiving PI and TI improve from pre-test to post-test in the comprehension and production tests of English Past Perfect tense?

Students' performance before treatment

One week before the treatment, students had to complete the pre-test in order to ensure the similarities between the two groups and to measure the improvement through the treatment. The similarities between the two groups in pre-tests demonstrated that any differences in the post-tests are due to the treatment. The scores were analyzed separately between comprehension tests and production tests. According to the mean score, the results of PI and TI in the comprehension pre-tests were nearly the same, with 4.086 for the TI group and 4.006 for the PI group; a similar trend was true for the results of the two groups in production tests ($M_{PI} = 3.756$; $M_{TI} = 3.77$) (as in Table 1 and 2)

Table 1

Comparing pre-tests results in comprehension tests

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
TI	87	4.086	.8964	.609	167	.543
PI	82	4.006	.8069			

Table 2

Comparing pre-tests results in production tests

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
TI	87	3.7701	.9639	.098	167	.922
PI	82	3.7561	.88277			

The Independent Means t-test was administered on the Pre-test for both groups determining no significant differences between the groups' means according to Tables 1 and 2 below. Specifically, the comprehension tests witnessed a similar mean with p-value = .543, and the mean scores of production tests were also nearly similar with p = .922. For those reasons, there was no change in the mean scores that were witnessed among the tests in the two groups.

Student's improvement from pre-tests to post-tests

Table 3

Comparing the effects of PI on the comprehension tests from pre-test to post-test

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Pre-test	82	4.0061	.80697	19.073	162	.000
Post-test	82	7.5732	1.48889			

The pre-test and post-test results were compared to examine whether learners in both groups have improved after treatment. The comparison of the scores was used to discover the answer to research question 1. Learners' scores were submitted to the Independent Sample t-test to analyze the differences.

As can be seen in Table 3, the Mean score and Standard Deviation of Pre-tests and Post-tests in comprehension tests for the PI group showed that the participants in the PI group experienced a significant increase in the mean score (from 4.0061 to 7.5732). The maximum score on the comprehension tests was 10. The scores were submitted to the Independence Mean t-test and gave the results that PI had a significant improvement with p = .000 (with t-value = 19.073, which was higher than the critical t-value ($t_{(162,0.05)}$ = 1.9747).

Table 4

Comparing the effects of TI on the comprehension tests from pre-test to post-test

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Pre-test	87	4.0862	.89640	16.076	172	.000
Post-test	87	6.9253	1.38205			

Similarly, the results from pre-tests to post-tests among TI students in production tests were submitted to the Independence Mean t-test, which clearly showed that TI students have improved from pre-tests to post-tests with p = .000. The t-value in this situation was 16.076 higher than critical t-value ($t_{(172,0.05)}$ = 1.9739), which led to the conclusion that TI students experienced growth in comprehension tests. Moreover, the mean scores also saw an increase from pre-tests to post-tests by 2.8391 points.

In conclusion, both the PI and TI groups witnessed a positive change from pre-tests to post-tests in comprehension tests.

Table 5

Comparing the effects of PI on the production tests from pre-test to post-test

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Pre-test	82	3.7561	.88277	18.768	162	.000
Post-test	82	7.3720	1.50475			

Table 6

Comparing the effects of TI on the production tests from pre-test to post-test

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
Pre-test	87	3.7701	.96390	18.101	172	.000
Post-test	87	7.2644	1.52086			

In production tests, both TI and PI groups enhanced from pre-tests to post-tests. According to Tables 5 and 6, there was a sharp rise in post-test scores among both groups. Specifically, PI students have improved from 3.7561 to 7.3720, while the TI group increased from 3.7701 to 7.2644. Regarding the Independence sample test, both TI and PI groups experienced growth with p-value = .000. The t-value of the TI group was 18.101, which was higher than the critical t-value ($t_{(172,0.05)}$ = 1.9739). Besides, the PI group recorded that the t-value was higher than the critical value ($t_{(162,0.05)}$ = 1.9747). In conclusion, both the PI and TI groups improved from pre-tests to post-tests which were represented through mean scores and t-value.

Would learners receiving PI make more significant gains in comprehension tests and production tests than the TI group in the learning of Past Perfect tense?

Table 7

Comparing the effects of PI and TI on the comprehension tests

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
PI	82	7.5732	1.48889	2.934	167	.004
TI	87	6.9253	1.38205			

Table 7 gives information about the comparison of the effects of PI and TI on the comprehension tests. According to the table, the mean score of the PI group was 7.5732, while the mean score of the TI group was a bit lower (M_{TI} = 6.9253). The scores were also submitted to the Independent Means t-Test to specify the significant difference. The t-value is 2.934, which is higher than the critical value ($t_{(167,0.05)}$ = 1.9743). The PI group performed significantly better than the TI group in discourse comprehension with a p-value = .004 (as presented in Table 7).

The difference is attributed to the significant improvement of PI due to the treatment because the p-value was lower than .05. In short, the PI group outperformed the TI group in comprehension tests.

Table 8

Comparing the effects of PI and TI on the production tests

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	p
PI	82	7.3720	1.50475	.462	167	.645
TI	87	7.2644	1.52086			

Table 8 shows information about the effects of PI and TI on production tests. The mean scores of the PI and TI groups were equally represented (M_{PI} = 7.3720; M_{TI} = 7.2644). The scores were also submitted to Independence sample tests, where no significant change was recorded in this situation. The t-value was significantly lower than the critical value (t = .462 < $t_{(167,0.05)}$ = 1.9743). In addition, the p-value was higher than .05 (p-value = .645 > .05). For those reasons, PI and TI students performed similarly in production tests.

In conclusion, the answer for research question 2 is yes for comprehension tests. Students in the PI group were superior to the TI group in comprehension tests, whereas both groups had similar results in production tests.

Discussion

How do learners receiving PI and TI improve in the comprehension and production tests of English Past Perfect tense from pre-test to post-test?

The first research question considered the improvements of PI and TI learners in both comprehension and production tests. The statistical analysis results determined the significant increase from the pre-test to the post-test of two treatment groups on comprehension and production tests.

Regarding PI group, learners' gain in comprehension post-tests was confirmed by previous studies, namely VanPatten and Cadierno (1993), Cadierno (1995), Benati (2001, 2005), Farley (2001), Benati, Lee and Houghton (2008), and Qin (2008). As many researchers explained, PI improved on both comprehension and production tests because the instruction focuses on the way learners process the input with a view to helping learners make form-meaning connections that affect the developing system. The developing system helps learners comprehend the structure by accessing the knowledge source in the developing system (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). The improvement of PI participants in this study also put forward the same explanation as previous studies that Processing Instruction has altered the learners' input processing which enhances learners' developing system to acquire the structure. Many previous studies reinforced PI learners' production improvement (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; Cadierno, 1995; Benati, 2001, 2005; Farley, 2001; Benati, Lee & Houghton, 2008; Qin, 2008). Many previous

researchers stated that PI learners had never practiced producing the structure, but they were still able to produce the structure after the instruction (VanPatten Cadierno, 1993; Cadierno, 1995; Lee & VanPatten, 1995; Benati, 2001, 2005; Farley, 2001; Benati, Lee & Houghton, 2008; Qin, 2008). Those researchers explained for this situation that PI affects learners' developing systems which they can access to produce the structure. Resembling many previous studies, this study also reached the same conclusion that the improvement of production tests among learners was due to the gain in developing the system during the instruction progress. The gain in developing systems led to access to the developing system to produce the target structure. Lee and VanPatten (1995) found out that the lack of production practice did not hinder learners' ability to provide the output. They will produce whenever they are ready so that learners' ability to produce the structure depends on their level of understanding of the form.

Similar to the PI group, the TI group also experienced a significant gain from pre-tests to post-tests in comprehension and production tests. In the comprehension post-tests, the result showed significant gains among Traditional Instruction students. These results were confirmed by many previous studies (Allen, 2000; Benati, 2001). The improvement of TI students in comprehension tests could be explained that the production practice also affected learners developing systems where they accessed to produce the structure (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993). In comprehension tests, TI learners were also considered to access that system to interpret the input. Moreover, other students' output becomes incidental input for learners, which helps them make form-meaning connections in developing systems (Cadierno, 1995; Benati, 2001; Short & Bowden, 2006). For that reason, learners were able to access the developing system to interpret the structure, so the performance of TI students in comprehension had an enormous rise. Besides, the improvement in production tests of the TI group was certain and was in conformity with previous studies VanPatten and Cadierno (1993); Cadierno (1995); and Benati (2001, 2005) because TI students focused on production practice which was responsible for the production gain.

Would learners receiving PI make more significant gains on comprehension tests and production tests than the TI group in the learning of Past Perfect tense?

Comprehension tests

The results indicated that Processing Instruction outperformed Traditional Instruction in comprehension tests. The results were consistent with previous studies that PI appeared to have a discernible effect on developing a system of learners learning new structure compared to TI (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; Cadierno, 1995; Benati, 2001, 2005; Benati, Lee & Houghton, 2008; Lee & Benati, 2010). This study also suggested that PI holds the upper hand in learners' accomplishment in interpreting the structure.

The advantage of PI over TI in comprehending the structure is due to a substantial improvement in the developing system, which learners can access when interpreting the meaning of the sentence through the structure. TI learners actually gained after instruction but in a different system. In this situation, TI learners focused tremendously on production practice. Therefore, it is possible that the TI group made less improvement in comprehension tests than the PI group because of the lack of input practice and input exposure. It is plausible to deduce that input

practice works for comprehension tests while output practice improves production. TI, including output practice, facilitates fluency and sometimes accuracy in production because learners have chances to practice thoroughly, while PI instructing learners to process the input properly is responsible for getting the structure into their heads. Learners then are able to access the developing system to comprehend the structure. For that reason, the fact that PI was proven to be better than TI in comprehension tests was expected.

Besides, although other learners' outcomes and teachers' feedback may serve as incidental input, which explains the improvement in interpretation tests in the TI group, the amount of the exposed output needs to be more and better-structured than the PI group. While the PI group exposed and processed the well-prepared input consciously through structured input activities, the TI group only let learners discover the input during the feedback stage incidentally. TI learners only processed the input when the teacher gave feedback, which was likely to be impossible for those who pay little attention in class. Therefore, PI students performed better in comprehension tests.

Last but not least, Cheng (2002) proclaimed that the limited effect of TI learners in interpreting the target form as compared to the PI group is because learners' pressure of producing the structure prevents them from establishing the form-meaning connection to comprehend the appropriate grammatical structure in the specific context. This study seems to put forward this explanation that PI outperformance in comprehension tests is attributed to input processing. While TI learners focus too much on producing the output grammatically, PI learners concentrate on processing the input. For that reason, PI learners have more room to digest the form so that they are better at interpretation tests.

Production tests

The results of production tests in this study confirmed previous results that the two treatment groups had no significant difference in the production tests (VanPatten & Cadierno, 1993; Cadierno, 1995; Benati, 2001, 2005; Cheng, 2002; Benati, Lee & Houghton, 2008). They argued that learners who experienced PI have never had a chance to produce the structure during instruction, but they were able to complete the production tests as a TI group. This phenomenon was explained by Cadierno (1995) that "TI resulted in Learned Linguistic Knowledge."

The results of this study about the similar effects of PI and TI on production tests suggest that the way that learners comprehend sentences, as well as the way that learners produce sentences, are susceptible to PI effects. PI has clearly manipulated the way learners process the input, which influences the developing system where the learners' access production tests. In addition, TI group improvement in production tests was absolutely certain because TI concentrated on production practice. However, this study suggests that although TI mainly focuses on production practice, PI students also performed as well as TI students. This result shows that manipulating input plays a role in the ability to produce structure.

While the effects of managing input processing during the practice stage bring benefits to learners in both comprehension and production tests, PI outperformed TI. Moreover, in a virtual classroom context where learners are reluctant to practice producing structure, as in the TI group, PI dominates the TI group in this field. As Ky (2021) contended that learners are

unwilling to produce the structure via the computer where interaction is limited, PI, which does not require learners to produce the structure during the treatment, seems to be preferable in the virtual classroom. PI students have improved significantly from pre-tests to post-tests in both comprehension and production tests, while PI students were superior to TI students in comprehension tests and performed similarly in production tests. Moreover, the feature of not concentrating on production practice in the PI group fits perfectly with the characteristics of the virtual classroom. Students' reluctance to produce the structure which is considered to be a hinder in virtual classrooms but is regarded as an advantage with PI instead of TI. For that reason, PI is totally appropriate for virtual classrooms.

Conclusion

The study has arrived at the results that PI positively impacts learners' learning of Past Perfect. Moreover, Processing Instruction was also proved to be more beneficial to learners than Traditional Instruction in comprehension tests and no significant difference in production tests. This study also pointed out that the characteristics of PI fit the virtual classroom features perfectly. Students seem to get the benefits from PI during online learning through virtual classrooms.

Implication

The study has proved that ability to interpret the structure helps learners to comprehend and use the structures accordingly. Further studies need to investigate whether learners are able to use that ability to distinguish the features of different structures. When students understand how the structure works through PI practice, students may be able to distinguish the remarkable features of each structure. A longitude study should be conducted to discover that PI has effects on the distinguishing of structure features among learners. Besides, this study only focused on the Past Perfect tense. There should be another study on this issue with other structures because the different structures may have different characteristics which may be suitable to different teaching approaches.

Limitation

Only writing skill is measured in this study because of the limited scale of the study. Moreover, assessing speaking skills is a challenge to some non-native researchers, so speaking is not applied in this study. Besides, this study was conducted online, which was extremely hard for the researcher to manage the class as the researcher was unable to recognize what the students were doing during class time. Therefore, asking students to turn on the camera during the lesson and comprehension check questions were employed during the practice stage to manage the class.

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Biodata

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A Case Study on Using Presentation Software in Teaching and Learning Grammar for English-majored Undergraduates

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: presentation, learning grammar, attitude, and influence

In second language acquisition, grammar is important in enhancing skills and language ability. Freshmen who majored in English at university are required to study grammar as a specific subject along with other skills like reading, speaking, listening, and writing. At the tertiary level, students learn grammar differently from at lower levels, so it requires new methods to engage and encourage them in this subject. This qualitative research investigates the effectiveness of using presentation software as the main method of learning grammar in two classes at a university. The study employs classroom observation and interviews with a teacher and some students to explore the attitudes and influences of this method of learning grammar as a separate subject at university. The results show that students are engaged in learning grammar, and they are more confident to explain different grammar knowledge and improve their grammar better. Both the teacher and students have positive attitudes toward learning grammar with this method, and they also hope that presentation can be applied to improve other subjects actively and effectively, like in grammar subject.

Introduction

It is undeniable that grammar plays an important role in language acquisition. A rich source of vocabulary needs the assistance of grammar, which is considered as the backbone, to build a basic sentence, a paragraph, an essay, and in general, language ability. In modern times, people do not focus on learning grammar as much as in the past, and grammar is encouraged to be obtained through context or be learned implicitly. Nunan (2005) mentions teaching grammar in different ways from what teachers did in the past. Students learn grammar during the early stages of language acquisition. Specifically, in the Vietnam education system, students have learned grammar and vocabulary along with four main skills, including reading, listening, speaking, and writing, since primary school. Textbooks and other teaching materials are various for teachers to use in their teaching so that students can practice grammar through a variety of

activities, including traditional exercises, quizzes, games, and other creative ways of teaching and learning grammar. However, not all students can assess these useful means of learning due to their different educational backgrounds in their towns and cities.

Language teachers at higher education institutions focus on teaching grammar because students with good grammar and vocabulary can apply their English ability in their future jobs and higher education. Students at the university level in most schools also study English as a compulsory subject, which means they study and revise grammar along with other skills through thematical lessons. Even English-majored students still learn grammar as a required subject in their first year. English-majored students have a better basis of English than most others, which requires teachers and lecturers to select an appropriate method of teaching grammar carefully. These students have different knowledge backgrounds, so their teachers can neither teach the basic rules of grammar nor advanced applied grammar through contexts. In a limited time of 45 periods, it is not easy for teachers to cover all basic and advanced grammar points for students if they apply traditional methods of presentation, practice, and production. In addition, there are many different methods of teaching grammar, such as using context (Amin, 2016), a communicative approach (Çiftci & Özcan, 2021), using technology and games (Cabrera et al., 2018; Kanyan & Aydin, 2020; Saeedi & Biri, 2016), using stories (Nguyen, 2021). However, these methods with strengths and weaknesses may not be easily applied at the tertiary level.

At Ho Chi Minh University of Food Industry, grammar is a compulsory subject for English-majored students. Students are required to master different points of grammar and can apply their grammar knowledge to business contexts given in the material. In limited time and with the current teaching and learning environment, to meet the needs of this subject, teachers need help with using the mentioned methods. Presentation is increasingly used in the university because it improves speaking skills and other skills like presenting and persuasive skills for students. Student-centered approaches are encouraged so that activities like making presentations are not new but easily welcomed by undergraduates. Learning grammar through presentation can help teachers figure out how well students understand and apply that point of grammar in some contexts. However, there is rarely research on the effectiveness of using presentation in learning languages and especially learning grammar at the tertiary level, so research is conducted and developed to investigate this method of teaching and learning.

Literature review

The role of grammar in language acquisition

According to Ur (1988), grammar 'may be roughly defined as the way a language manipulates and combines words (or bits of words) in order to form longer units of meaning' (p.4). Grammar helps people make longer sentences, paragraphs, or even essays. There are some main reasons why this subject is taught widely at school levels. Firstly, without grammar, sentences can be confused and vague, whereas grammar structures play a big role in organizing sentence structure, providing the same meaning for all people (Crystal, 2004). Secondly, Ur (1988) mentions that people cannot use words if they do not know how to combine these words. That

means even people can use a dictionary to look up vocabulary, but without syntax knowledge, it seems impossible for them to create meaningful structures. In addition, each language has its own rules, so people combine words by the rules of their first language leading to misunderstanding when communicating with others.

Grammar has a long history of development. Grammar and its role are clearly explained by many linguists like Chomsky (1965) or Bresnan (1978) with transformational generative grammar. Based on the theory of these authors, Langendoen (2013) argues and divides grammar roles into performance grammar and competence grammar. Performance grammar -direct role- 'is used to construct the semantic interpretations' of language which is used while competence grammar-indirect role- 'provides the vocabulary for the construction of performance grammar.' (p.239). In addition, Celce-Murcia (1991) and Hedge (2000) also mention the importance of grammar competence in building effectiveness and success of communication.

Teaching and learning grammar is considered a necessary aspect of teaching languages because of the essential role of grammar in language skills such as reading, listening, speaking, and writing. In the assessment of skills as well as in English proficiency tests like IELTS, grammar is always one of the important criteria which measure how well test takers use a language. However, the question of whether it is necessary to teach grammar separately is still a debatable issue.

Teaching or not teaching grammar

Many issues about grammar, such as teaching or not teaching grammar, how to teach grammar effectively, or whether being good at grammar means good at language, have been controversial topics for years.

Some people argue that grammar is an umbrella concept or term which is one of the aspects of a language, and it is not necessary to focus deeply on grammar when people concentrate on meaning (Kumar, 2006; Saraceni, 2008). Some people have not mastered grammar but can communicate very well. Kumar (2006) claims that speaking a language is not just strictly using rules. Language ability can be improved through practice, not through learning grammar rules by heart, but it cannot be applied in practical situations. Bakhtin (2004) agrees that 'students who recognize, successfully identify, and correctly punctuate certain grammatical or syntactic structures do not necessarily employ those same structures in their own writing' (p. 15). Saraceni (2008) lessens the importance of teaching grammar when he suggests that it should be combined with other linguistic aspects.

However, according to DeKeyser (2005), grammar is not easy because of its factors, including the complexity of form, meaning, and the form and meaning relationship. Therefore, learners should master the form, apply the form for discourse purposes, and naturally use grammar in different contexts. The process of teaching and learning is required to find appropriate methods to meet the needs of this subject. Additionally, Krashen (1988) agrees that grammar should be included in the study but not as a core subject in the curriculum for two reasons: grammar is a good beginning to learning linguistics, and grammar is a tool for editing. Particularly, effective reading skills need grammar knowledge, and the concise and quality of writing works are partly decided by grammar use. Krashen (1988) also mentions that suitable times for learning

grammar should be after the learners have absorbed a great deal of reading because grammar improves the accuracy of using language.

In general, grammar has a great role in language acquisition and should be taught when many authors emphasize the importance of teaching grammar (Krahnke,1985; Lightbown & Spada, 1990, 2021; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Terrell, 1991). Grammar helps improve reading, writing, speaking, and even listening skills, which is a fact that no one can deny. Without a basic knowledge of grammar, language learners face difficulties in making a complete sentence and many errors related to mechanisms that can confuse others and not understand them. Tabbert (1984) uses many grammar examples to prove the need to learn grammar, like confused pairs of words (lie-lay), subject and verb agreement, double negative, etc. Grammar is like the backbone from which a good body is built. With good knowledge of grammar, learners can develop their communicative skills, both written and spoken form. When learners master grammar points, they know the core principles of a language, and then, they can improve their language ability through practice in real contexts. Azar (2007) enhances the importance of grammar teaching as he claims that people communicate through separate words, sounds, or body language without grammar. Thanks to grammar points, all aspects of linguistics agree with each other to create a masterpiece of what we call language.

Methods of learning and teaching grammar

Teaching grammar is not just teaching the structures of grammar because a person who can do grammar exercises correctly may not apply them effectively in real conversations. Teaching grammar is defined by Ellis (2006) as follows:

Grammar Teaching involves any instructional technique that draws learners' attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and / or process it in comprehension and / or production so that they can internalize it. (p.84).

Grammar teaching means helping learners understand and use grammar points comprehensively, which is different from learning by heart the structures and using those structures correctly in various exercises. The role of teachers is a facilitator, and learners are the main people who need to discover the forms and internalize the grammatical forms. During a long history of grammar teaching, there are so many methods employed to transfer grammar to learners. Firstly, according to Celce-Murcia (2001), the audio-lingual method mainly focuses on teaching grammar points from basic to advance, and teachers pay more attention to correcting grammatical errors because learning a language is like forming a habit, so learners should form 'good' habits and avoiding 'bad' habits or errors. Rules are provided through the process of imitating given forms and learning the structures. Secondly, in the cognitive code method, grammar points are taught deductively and inductively. Like in the audio-lingual method, errors are considered because of the influence of the first language. However, in the cognitive code approach, errors are acceptable and unavoidable when people learn languages (Celce-Murcia, 2001). When it comes to communicative methods, it seems that teaching grammar is downplayed when communicative methods focus on meaning and communication ability. The curriculum and textbooks vary in activities that develop communicative skills,

which means learning language focuses on discourse and pragmatic function more than strictly sticking to grammar points and error correction.

There is various research on deductive and inductive methods in teaching grammar as a modern or innovative approach to teaching and learning. The deductive method refers to the traditional ways of teaching in which teachers introduce the rules and learners practice through exercises or make their sentences based on the given structures (Harmer, 2007). This method focuses on explicitly explaining grammar points, meaning learners learn the form before the meaning (Haight et al., 2007). Teachers play an important role in class and become the center. Unlike deductive, the inductive approach focuses on learner-center when learners figure out the form or the rules of certain grammar points through examples (Ellis, 2006). It means that grammar is taught implicitly through examples so that learners naturally absorb grammar knowledge as they do in their first language.

Technology-based grammar teaching and learning

Technology is increasingly developing, and it is applied in almost all areas, including education. Heift & Vyatkina (2017) claim that technology-based approaches were introduced and have been implemented in teaching grammar since around the 1960s. There are many different types of technology-based or technology-assisted approaches based on the platforms they use such as computer-assisted language learning (which offers wide ranges of resources, instructions, feedbacks, practice exercises for learners to improve grammar and grammatical accuracy (Dikli & Bleyle, 2014; Li et al., 2017)), mobile/tablet-assisted language learning (refers to using games developed for mobile or tablets to motivate students and as a result improve their grammar efficiency (Chen, et al., 2019; Kayapinar et al., 2019; Rachels & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2018), virtual-assisted language learning (in which students are provided with records or native-like environment to practice their language in general and according to Chen (2016) it improves learner's grammar and syntax knowledge along with other linguistics aspects like phonetic and morphologic knowledge at a higher level), or robot-assisted language learning (in which the effectiveness of robots in the role of tutors and assistance of teachers in teaching grammar is proved by Lee et al. (2011) when they claim that this approach motivates students, boosts their confidence, satisfaction and interest).

According to Hegelheimer & Fisher (2006), innovative online grammar sources created by technology help increase the learner's awareness of grammatical issues. Using computers to teach grammar is more effective than traditional methods (Faizah & Nazen, 2009; Nutta,1998). There are tremendous studies about technology in teaching skills and especially teaching grammar more efficiently, such as games, videos, animated sitcoms, 'Pixton' (which refers to comic strip generation), or even using computer-assisted language learning to engage learners in activities that used to be done on papers. According to Dudeney et al. (2014), more than exercises and printed material is needed for modern learners to practice and experience actual grammar, which they need to improve their language skills. Therefore, the technology-based tool positively affects learning and teaching English grammar and increases their learning results (Adil & İbrahim, 2020; Shagga & Omar, 2012). Educational games and designed games like Scratch positively impact achievement and can also boost learners' motivation (Lai & Lai, 2012; Sanjanaashree et al., 2014). Zari & Aso (2016) claim that students change their attitude

and view on grammar when they learn grammar through the more communicative approach of videos through animated sitcoms.

Challenges and attitude of learners towards learning grammar

As the rules of evolution, transferring from traditional teaching methods to computer-assisted language learning faces challenges that come from both teachers and learners. Technology-based teaching and learning face different challenges, such as a lack of policy of management and coordination (Kent et al., 2016; Loizzo & Ertmer, 2016), low availability of technology (Watson et al., 2016), internet connection (Wiebe et al., 2015). However, challenges in applying technologies to teaching and learning grammar are rarely mentioned in research on technology-based teaching grammar. In their research on different technology-assisted approaches for grammar learning, Bahami & Gholomi (2020) mentions challenges such as overload of peer comments when they watch grammar videos, the output of task-based grammar activities in a virtual environment, boundary conditions of practical and artificial grammar learning environment, time control, individual results/score, validity, and reliability of test for different levels, and the integrating of the digital device into the classroom. Additionally, Yusorb (2018) mentions challenges that students face in learning grammar, like attitude, perception, facilities, experience, expectation, and lesson, and even teachers find explaining grammar is a challenging task. In general, technology-based grammar learning platforms still have issues that need further research, especially on the output, validity, and reliability of grammar assessment.

The fact that Vietnamese learners nowadays can be exposed to grammar through many different channels creates a gap between them. Therefore, although they have learned English grammar at least since they were in grade 6, some university students need help remembering grammar points, so they make many writing mistakes and have difficulties in other skills, too. At university, most students have a basic knowledge of grammar which they learned from a lower educational level, so the traditional method seems inappropriate. However, technology-assisted platforms cannot easily be implemented without teacher training and suitable classroom facilities and equipment. Moreover, in most curricula for English-major students, grammar is added as one of the required subjects, so teachers need to select a method or combine methods to engage their students in this subject as well as improve their grammar knowledge and its pragmatic function.

The technology-based approach is a considerable choice for Vietnamese university context for many reasons. Technology is increasingly applied in teaching and learning because of its effectiveness. In addition, people understand better when they transfer their understanding of issues to others. With the development of technology, both teachers and learners have more choices, but it is also a challenging task because it is not easy to engage a university class with different levels and backgrounds in the same activity. Grammar is important, but it is also a boring subject from the perspective of most students, so selecting an appropriate method to teach grammar at university is not easy. Teachers should find a suitable teaching approach to meet the needs of the course as well as the needs of their students.

Presentation is increasingly popular in teaching and learning. According to Pham et al. (2022),

presentation skill is essential for students' future success, although they still have some difficulties during the preparation and making the presentation in class because they were not trained in this skill at lower educational levels. In their study, students struggle with 'fear of making mistakes,' 'shyness' (p. 37), and lack of knowledge of the topic. In terms of using technology in learning and teaching at university, Van et al. (2021) and Nguyen (2021) show that students prefer it, and it also helps them improve their language knowledge. Corbeil (2013) claims that students prefer learning French grammar by PowerPoint more than textbooks. When students make a presentation, they need to prepare and master the topic they are going to talk about in front of the class. Therefore, the presentation can be an excellent way to engage students in learning (Miriam &Sara, 1999). In the presentation, they can show what they know about a particular topic as well as develop their creativity through combined activities such as games, open tasks, and interactive communication between students. Miriam & Sara (1999) also mention two types of presentation, and they claim that presentation using software is more effective than an oral presentation. In their research, they confirm the effectiveness of using PowerPoint after observing hundreds of schools applying it in teaching EFL. Students read, understand the material and then create slides to present and interact with their classmates and teacher. In most of the research on technology-based methods of teaching grammar, researchers investigate the issue in the view of teachers because teachers are the ones applying technology. However, in this study, the ones who apply technology are students, and they are also presenters in class. There are rare studies on applying presentation to teaching and learning a specific aspect of a language like English grammar, so the study wants to discover this approach's effectiveness and determine the challenges teachers and learners face when applying this method. This study aims to investigate whether a combination of technology and communicative methods can provide a better experience of learning English grammar and then improve learners' attitudes and grammar knowledge.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, classroom observations and interviews are employed to seek the answers for the following research questions:

1. Does the use of presentation make any difference to English-majored students' attitude toward learning grammar?

2. What difficulties do teachers and students face when applying presentations to learning grammar?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study employs 100 English-majored undergraduates in two grammar classes in which the teacher and students use presentation software in teaching and learning. The students are assigned to these classes based on their registration at the beginning of the semester, so their English levels and backgrounds are various. These students are freshmen, and they learn grammar along with other major subjects in the curriculum, like reading, listening, speaking,

and pronunciation in English and other general courses in Vietnamese. Grammar will be taught in 15 meetings of 45-minute periods; each week, students learn three periods. The main material for this subject is Business Grammar & Practice. Teachers, based on the syllabus, make their own lesson plans and can apply any teaching methods which meet the requirement of providing enough grammar knowledge for students. The quality of teaching is assessed through the final multiple-choice exam.

There are concerns about the methods of teaching grammar suggested by teachers who teach this subject at the university. Teachers can choose any methods that suit their class, such as deductive methods, in which the teacher gives formula and students practice through exercises in the textbook, inductive methods, in which the teacher explains grammar knowledge through examples given in the textbook and then does exercises in the book, deductive or inductive methods when a teacher uses a variety of sources to provide theory and just uses exercises in the textbook or other methods which employ learner-concentrated approach. However, there are better methods than one method. Learner-focused methods are encouraged in teaching at this university, so the researcher wants to investigate the effectiveness and influence of these approaches, especially applying technology to learning and teaching. In addition, both the teacher and students are fine with using technology, and the Internet, as well as presentation equipment, is widely supported in all classrooms on the campus, which can be an advantage for this study.

The study follows the timeline and procedure of classes. At the beginning of the course, the teacher introduces the course syllabus and the importance of grammar; she also collects the students' ideas about their difficulties when they learn grammar, as well as their expectations for this subject. Each class will be divided into small groups of 5 members, and each group will be in charge of 2 topics of grammar points. Each group will prepare a presentation about the given grammar focus, which can be presented on the basics of PowerPoint, Prezi, or other presentation applications. The teacher also introduces criteria for presentation, including the content and practice activities, which means that each group should focus on basic points as well as interesting aspects that they learn when searching for information about their given topics. One of the most important criteria is the interaction between the presenters and other class members. After each grammar lesson, the teacher will give a small quiz of multiple-choice grammar questions, which they can do on any digital device to check their understanding. In terms of practice activities during the presentation, each group can be creative to make their own activities such as games, quizzes, asking and answering, or doing exercises. Presentation groups can give incentives to people who participate in their activities, but they are not allowed to give money.

Design of the Study

Qualitative methods are widely used in applied linguistics, especially in research focused on observation and investigating participants' ideas (Wafaa, 2019). This study uses qualitative methods to investigate the effectiveness of using presentation in learning and teaching grammar through some stages of classroom observations and interviews with a teacher and 6 students from two classes. The teacher based on her criteria, including the content of the grammar points, the quality of slides, and the performance of groups (which refers to the presenter's confidence,

interaction with others, pronunciation, and grammatical mistakes) to give feedback and mark the presentations. In the interview sessions, the teacher and 3 students are interviewed and recorded. As recommended by the teacher, in each class, 3 students from the best, the middle, and the worst graded groups are chosen for the interviews. In the class, the teacher used special names for the achievement of groups like "the outstanding," "the great," and "the good group," and their marks were added to their progress results. Before doing observations and interviews, the researcher explained the purpose of the study and got agreement from all participants. All the participants attending interview sessions are coded to ensure the study strictly follow an ethical guideline.

Data collection & analysis

This study collects data from classroom observations and structured interviews. Classes are recorded randomly at the beginning of the course, in the middle, and near the end of the course; the grammar topics for recording are chosen randomly in these classes. In total, there are six recordings during the courses. Two first records are at the beginning of the course when the students present their first presentations. In the middle of the course, two more presentations are observed because, at that time, the students gain some experience and learn from themselves and other groups. Two final observations are conducted when all groups are ready for their second or even third presentations. The study wants to observe the classroom at different stages to see whether there are any changes in the ways the students use presentations to learn grammar, as well as the challenges they encounter during their performances. These recordings aim to investigate the adaptation and improvement or major changes when this learning method is applied; therefore, general criteria of class observation, like effective planning, teaching techniques, and student/teacher relationship, are modified to suit the study purposes. The study focuses on the content of the slides (correct/somewhat correct/incorrect information, simple/enough/extent content), the presenters' performance (confidence/acceptable/shy), the interaction between presenters and others in the class, classroom atmosphere, the teacher's classroom management, and obstacles the groups and teacher may face during the presentations. Each observation lasts about 45 to 50 minutes. The recordings are transcribed and analyzed.

In the last week of the course, the teacher and six randomly chosen students from the classes will go on an interview session that focuses on their attitude about this learning method and their difficulties in using presentation in teaching and learning grammar. The data is also recorded, transcribed, and analyzed. The teacher is asked two questions:

1. What do you think of applying presentation in teaching and learning grammar for English-majored students in which the students are in the role of presenters?

2. What challenges do you face during the class in which this method is applied?

Six students are asked three questions:

1. What do you think of grammar and learning grammar as a separate subject at university?

2. Do you like using presentations in learning grammar? Why or why not?

3. Do you have any difficulties in making presentations in your grammar class? If yes, what are they?

Data collection and analysis are carefully conducted to find the answers to research questions, and since the study suggests implications for teaching and learning grammar in the future.

Results/Findings

Classroom observations

Based on the timeline of observations during the course, the study divides them into stages: Stage 1 in five first weeks, Stage 2 in five middle weeks, and Stage 3 in five last weeks of the course.

In stage one, students got familiar with presentations by PowerPoint and other presentation applications. In the first presentation, the presenters were so shy and nervous that they just wanted to make the presentation as quickly as possible. They mainly read from the screen and showed less interaction with other students; they gave other students a chance to do exercises on the board based on the theory that they had just introduced. Using PowerPoint slides to introduce grammar points attracted the audience's attention because of summarized grammar knowledge and animation effects. At first, there were not many volunteers to go to the board. However, when their friends were engaged in activities, the presentation group expressed more confidence, the atmosphere became more friendly, and other students actively raised their hands to answer and get candies. After the presentation, their teacher gave some feedback about their strengths and weaknesses that they should improve. Then the teacher provided some examples and introduced advanced cases of the grammar point, which drew most students' attention because they had an opportunity to learn new things or checked their understanding of that grammar point. Thanks to the basic theory presentation provided, students could revise their knowledge. In addition, they needed more confidence and found it hard to use English to explain the grammar structures or the answers, so they still seek mother tongue for help. In both classes, the first presentations could have been more successful, but at least they had the new experience of sharing what they knew about a particular grammar point.

Stage two can be considered as a developing stage that witnesses many improvements. The groups were more confident and made more efforts to prepare their presentations. They asked the teacher's assistance for vague grammar points, activities to draw attention, ways to increase interaction with other classmates, and games or applications to check whether their friends understood and could apply the grammar points they were going to present. When the students became presenters, they showed their unlimited creativity. In the first class, they added videos to illustrate the grammar they wanted to talk about, while in the second class, the presenters could assign pair work and group work for their friends. They could also use the Quizizz website, which allowed them to create competitive live game shows. Stage 2 saw a big change in the atmosphere as well as the learning attitude of students. However, a few students were still not confident enough to share their knowledge with friends, and they chose the assistant role instead of the presenter role. In this stage, presenters invested more in their presentation, and the audience paid more attention and were willing to join activities. Particularly, all audiences not only joined the games and quizzes but also tried their best to answer the questions related to the grammar point. The leading board in Quizizz showed the average accuracy of the game

was 85%, although the questions were rather varied from easy to difficult level. It means the presenters and the audience engaged in the lesson.

Stage three becomes the adaptation stage of applying presentation in learning grammar. In both classes, students were more eager to attend activities, and they even asked presenters questions that were not clear. If, in the second stage, the presentation group sometimes asked the teacher for help explaining when their classmates asked them questions, they were now more confident to use English to explain and even gave more examples to illustrate the answers. There were more presenters in each group, and nearly all group members could present in front of the class. There were also more creative activities among groups, like battle games in which players could answer questions or steal points from other members, online exercises, and games from the British Council website, etc. Their PowerPoint was not simple with a basic theory like the first stage, and they did not just read the screen as in previous stages. They learned from other previous groups and made innovations, and created their own masterpiece. The content was upgraded with sections like Fun Fact! Are you sure? Did you know? Challenging corner, etc., in which they provided interesting information about the use of a specific grammar point, they showed extracts from a newspaper and asked others to find grammar mistakes, or they challenged their friends about confused grammatical sentences. In the last stage, when they made their second or third presentations, more surprises were waiting, which made others want to discover every time they came to grammar classes.

Through classroom observation, although different grammar points may affect the quality of presentations, all groups show their development and changes in attitudes towards grammar as well as how well they understand and transfer their knowledge to their classmates enthusiastically and positively through various classroom activities and beautiful, creative slides of presentations.

Interviews

Teacher Interview

The teacher shows a positive attitude in the first question about the teacher's attitude towards letting students use presentation in learning grammar. She shared that she had a semester working with them in other subjects, so she partly understands their English ability and technology abilities. The biggest difference is that they use PowerPoint applications for their presentations and play the role of presenters and instructors. They are required to master the assigned grammar points to share their understanding with classmates and design practice exercises or activities. The teacher appreciates this method because it can help her students improve their grammar knowledge, presentation skills, teamwork spirit, cooperation, and class management. She emphasizes how surprised she was after each presentation because most of the groups performed better than she expected. She shared:

"At first, I was rather worried that using presentation software to present grammar points might be a challenging task for students. However, they have basic knowledge of grammar, and they are also familiar with using PowerPoint, so I believe that they can do well in the role of presenters. The fact that my students can do much better than I expected, and I've even learned a lot from their presentations when they show me endless creativity, great teamwork, and a lot

of effort. Although there were some mistakes in their presentations and not all the groups did their tasks successfully, they impressed me with the way they presented what they understood about grammar points from their perspective and how they helped others revise old knowledge. I am so proud of them."

When being asked about difficulties in applying presentation software in teaching and learning grammar, the teacher mentioned her concerns about the duration of the presentation, the content of the presentations, student's anxiety towards speaking, the attention of other students during the presentation, and the most important was the effectiveness of this method. She said that "I am worried a lot because this is the first time I let students be in the role of presenters and partly an instructor who provides the knowledge and give out practice activities in the classroom." During some first weeks, students showed a lot of difficulties because they were not familiar with presentations at lower levels, especially since not all of the students could use 100 percent of English in a presentation for the first time. Therefore, after each lesson, the teacher had to do many reflection activities to note down what she should do to encourage students to actively search for knowledge and confidently share their understanding with others. She said,

"Obstacles in applying something new like this are unavoidable. I predicted challenges and thought about the effective ways to support my students to overcome their obstacles, whereas other groups may be stressed and even scared of presentations. However, I still encountered unpredictable problems, and I had to be flexible to solve them while supporting the presenters as a facilitator."

She also shared that the learner-centered approach was effective and motivated students more than when the teacher used traditional methods, but to achieve a successful learner-centered lesson, the teacher was required to be good at class management, supportive assistance, and helpful guidance. In addition, the teacher had to be prepared for unexpected situations that might happen when groups made presentations because students were learning, which meant that they were not trained to be an instructor yet and they did not have experience in handling everything during the class activities in the role of presenters. Not all the groups could show good teamwork skills, so some presentations failed to attract other students, and as a result, both presenters and the audience felt bored, and the classroom atmosphere became slow and heavy. In these cases, the teacher had to jump in and give suitable support to the presenting group. Technical problems could also affect the quality of the presentation. For example, one group could not show their warm-up activities due to the limited internet access, which made the group get so frustrated and stressed that they could not make a good representation as expected, although they had spent a week preparing for the presentation. Moreover, feedback after each presentation was a challenge to the teacher because "not only did the teacher have to give comments based on criteria to help students see their need-to-improve aspects but also encourage them to do better." She said, "if I give evaluations on their presentation too mildly, other groups may not invest in their coming presentations; whereas, if I am too strict in evaluating a presentation, some groups may feel pressure due to their English ability and technology ability." In general, the teacher claimed that both teacher and presenters had to prepare carefully, and they were required to work more than when using traditional method. However, the teacher happily said, "the result of using presentation in teaching and grammar in

my classes is fruitful and worthy."

Students Interview

When asked about their attitude towards grammar, 4/6 students admitted that they did not like grammar because it was boring, and they had to learn the structures by heart when they learned English at secondary and high school. One student answered that "I hated learning grammar because high school teachers asked me to learn by heart the structures and do so many exercises in the textbook and also in the workbook," or another student said that "I like English, but learning grammar is my nightmare because I cannot remember the structure like the more plus something long adjectives or short adjective. It's hard to imagine." They also added that students needed to do so many exercises in all types of grammar from the basic to advanced level as preparation for the university entrance exam. Therefore, their first impression of this subject was not good. One student shared that he did not learn grammar at school, and he mainly learned how to use English through games or movies, so his previous teachers always complained about his grammar when he could do well in listening and speaking. He did not have any expectations at first and learned it because it was a compulsory subject. Only one student was very confident because she learned grammar very well at lower school levels. She added, "I like learning grammar, and I always finish all the exercises in the workbook so that I am confident of seeing it again in the university curriculum. However, teaching others about a grammar point is not interesting." In general, most of them showed no interest in grammar at first.

In the second question about their thoughts on using presentation in learning grammar, all of them agreed that this method was interesting but challenging. They admitted that they did not learn grammar in that way before and felt worried about the presentation in their first year at university. Three students said that they gained more confidence after their first presentation, although they made many mistakes. Particularly, she said:

"I am not good at speaking English, especially when I have to explain a grammar point to others in English. However, after reading many different materials about passive voice and practicing presenting it at least 3 times, I feel calmer and can present rather well in front of my class. I was so happy when our teacher gave us good feedback."

Two students frankly said that they did not realize that they could perform well in their first presentation until they heard the teacher's feedback and their classmate's positive comments. One girl claimed that she was scared and could not speak in a normal voice because of her low English-speaking competence; however, her group finished the presentation rather well and received positive comments from the teacher. The boy who had no expectations for grammar showed enthusiasm when he had a chance to share what he understood about a grammar point, which he had never done in his life before. He added, "When I am a presenter, I can choose the best way to share what I know with others because I know how boring grammar lessons that generations of students had to suffer when we were young." Moreover, some of them admitted that their presentations in English improved a lot after the course. According to two interviewees, learning from friends was interesting because "I can check my knowledge of a particular grammar point and even check if my friends present the theory correctly or not," and

they could even compare how better they understood the grammar point. All of them were eager and waiting for their next presentations and showed how better they could perform. One student shared that she wanted more presentations to organize more games and activities for her classmates to practice. In general, all students showed interest in learning grammar by using presentations, and learning grammar was no longer as boring as they thought. Learning grammar at the tertiary level mainly helps students revise their knowledge as well as synthesize aspects of grammar points. Through engaging presentations, students improve their grammar knowledge because to have a good presentation in front of the class, each presenter needs to read and understand the material carefully, and audiences have a chance to review the grammar points through slides and the presenter's explanations as well as do interesting activities to check their knowledge. A positive attitude toward using presentation software in learning grammar plays an important role in motivating students to learn and improve their knowledge.

In response to the question about difficulties that they faced when using presentations to learn grammar, all students shared at least one obstacle. Three out of six found it hard to explain grammatical structure in English or explain particular cases. For example, one presenter did not know how to explain why future perfect continuous should be used instead of future perfect. She had to use Vietnamese to explain and then asked the teacher for help because her classmates were still confused. Another student shared, "I was so embarrassed when I didn't know how to explain in English. The more I tried to explain, the more confusing my friends became. It's so bad." Three of them just read the screen because they were scared when standing in front of many people, and they were also afraid that if they could not perform well, the group's result would be affected. Some of them felt scared when they had technical problems with the internet connection and the video's sound quality in their presentation. For example, one student shared that:

"I just wanted to cry when I could not play the sound. I had spent a whole day making and editing examples in which famous people use the present perfect tense, but until now, I needed to figure out what was wrong with the connection cable. Luckily, at that time, I had a copy of the video on my phone, so my group showed the video on the laptop, and the sound came from my phone. It took us more than 5 minutes to fix our problem. It's a terrible experience."

In addition, the cooperation of other students was also a big challenge for the present group. One student said that no one seemed to listen during his presentation, and no one was willing to answer when asked. At that moment, he did not know what he should do until the teacher asked him to explain what he wanted other students to do. He smiled and shared that he even respected his teachers' understanding and support. Another difficulty was the time limitation because they did not have the experience to manage time for each activity and how many grammar aspects they should mention in fifteen to twenty minutes. One student mentioned, "Keeping track of time is hard, so when anything goes wrong, we will be in passive status and rush to finish other activities. Although I saw my teacher dealing with unpredictable situations, I couldn't do well in my situation." Most of them said that they had to practice a lot before the official presentation in class.

Discussion

Changes that using presentation to learn English grammar brings to English-majored undergraduates.

For the first question about whether using presentation to learn grammar brings any difference, six classroom observations in three different stages of the course led to positive results in attitudes and grammatical knowledge improvements. Thanks to presentation activities, the course witnessed major changes in students' attitudes toward grammar: It can be seen that students expressed their strong preference for the subject. They felt eager for their presentation turn instead of having no expectations. Grammar became one of the most interesting subjects of the semester instead of a boring one. In the first stage, both teacher and students were worried about how this method worked, especially when the teacher changed from traditional classes with a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered one, where the students are viewed as having pivotal roles, and the teacher is just a facilitator. However, after each presentation, students became more confident and active; they tried to improve themselves and showed the desire to do better in the role of presenter. In the role of a presenter, the students actively equip themselves with a deep understanding of grammar points, while in the role of the audience, the students have the opportunity to revise and check their understanding of a particular grammar lesson through various classroom activities. The quizzes after each lesson that the teacher gave her class to check their understanding of specific grammar points showed that students' grammar knowledge improved day by day. That is the evaluation and conclusion of class observations which should be confirmed by future research based on quizzes and test results.

Interviews also confirmed the changes in the attitude of both the teacher and students towards grammar learning and teaching. The teacher became more confident in applying this method in her class and in giving feedback that could help students improve themselves as well as encourage students to do better. In the era of technology, students prefer applying technology in their learning because they can show their creativity and how better they can do in the role of presenters. The fact that they could use not only traditional PowerPoint but also Canvas, Prezi, or other online presentation tools; they could design games and activities on technology-based applications; they could make short videos for intro and outro to draw the attention of classmates; they could even show how deeply they understood about a grammar point by searching information from different trustable sources.

Obstacles in applying presentation to learning and teaching grammar

As a normal rule, when people face something new, they have a tendency to reject it, and during the applicating process, participants come across difficulties and challenges. Besides students who were eager and enthusiastic with this method, there were a few cases in which students with low English ability refused to present in front of the class, or some students did not want to join games or activities that groups organized during their presentation because of their own personality or other reasons. However, after some weeks of getting familiar with this method of learning, they gradually showed their changes, and at least they finished simple things that group leaders assigned and became curious and active in joining classroom activities in the last stage of observation.

When the attitude changed positively, students became confident and found ways to overcome difficulties. Technology problems appeared less frequently in the second and third stages when students got familiar with presentation applications, and they were calm and actively searched for solutions for their problems. Although the teacher sometimes had to assist in explaining or clarifying the information or adjusting the classroom atmosphere, most students built their confidence and flexibility in solving problems. For instance, in the case the online game did not work, and then they decided to write the questions on the board and asked their classmates to go to the board to answer them. In case of bad internet connection causes challenges for students because they cannot use their presentation slides online; they use 4G or 5G, or even they can even confidently present their PowerPoint slides without the Internet. Although dealing with problems took longer, students were not affected negatively and finished their presentations successfully.

Comparison with previous research

Using presentation in learning grammar is a new experience for students to learn and to improve themselves. The classroom observations and interview results agree with previous research on the effectiveness of using technology in teaching and learning grammar. The attitude of both the teacher and students confirms other previous research on applying technology in learning and teaching grammar (Adil & İbrahim, 2020; Nutta,1998; Shagga & Omar, 2012; Sanjanaashree et al., 2014; Zari & Aso, 2016). In general, students who were born and grew up in the technology era can easily apply technology in their learning and achieve learning better when they can work with technology; students in this study are motivated and eager to transfer what they understand about grammar points and share knowledge with their classmates through presentation applications.

In terms of difficulties that the teacher and students face when using presentation in learning and teaching grammar, the results of classroom observation and interviews, using presentation brings fewer concerns than other technology-based approaches. However, like previous research done by Bahami & Gholomi (2020), time control is still a challenge for students and teachers because students have not had enough experience in figuring out how much time they have for each section, and the teacher has the pressure to follow the curriculum for this subject but not put much pressure on student's presentations, which can affect the quality of the presentation as well as demotivated students. Compared with the challenges of previous research (Bahami & Gholomi, 2020; Kent et al., 2016; Loizzo & Ertmer, 2016; Watson et al., 2016; Wiebe et al., 2015; Yusorb, 2018), the study shows fewer challenges, and both the teacher and students can handle these challenges in their classroom.

In general, the study agrees with previous research about the positive changes in the attitude of the teacher and students toward technology-based learning grammar methods. Students show a favorable attitude in using presentations, and they can improve their grammar knowledge as well as other skills when they are in the role of presenters. Difficulties and problems during the implementation of this method are carefully solved day by day by both the teacher and the students.

Conclusion

Technology-based language learning methods are encouraged in educational settings because of their effectiveness, and this study confirms that using presentation software in learning and teaching grammar brings positive results in changing the attitude of students from a 'boring' subject or having no expectation of the subject to having favor for it and being eager to use their creativity to share their understanding with teacher and classmates. Although students are required to work more than they often do in a traditional class, students do not show any hesitates or complaints about their group's presentations, and they are active and ask for help if they have any confusing or unclear information about the grammar point that they are going to present in front of the class. Learning from friends provides students with the confidence to talk and contribute to the lesson; the presenters feel less pressure when they share a grammar point that they learned and carefully searched, and other students feel more comfortable when they answer their friends' questions than when they answer their teacher's ones. The teacher's feedback should be positive to encourage them to do better for the next presentations and help them improve their flaws. Learner-based classrooms give students the chance to learn and improve themselves actively. As a result, the presentation should be widely applied in grammar and other subjects to help them develop their language and soft skills. However, the effectiveness of this method should be further researched through regular quizzes and tests to prove how their grammar knowledge has been improved. Future research should be on how teacher feedback affects the quality and effectiveness of students' presentations. Besides limitations, the study successfully finds the answer to two main research questions and recommends that teachers actively allow students to learn from teachers and friends. They can do well in grammar subjects, so they may be confident to use presentations in other subjects. In addition, teachers can reduce their workload on lesson preparation and improve their professional development when they apply different methods in their teaching career for tertiary-level students.

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Biodata

Ms. Le Thi Ngoc Hien, an English lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Ho Chi Minh City University of Food Industry, has many experiences working with EFL students from the secondary to tertiary level. Besides studying language teaching and learning, she is interested in linguistic aspects to improve the quality of teaching English to EFL students.

Fostering learner autonomy in a blended learning environment: EFL teachers' practices at Hanoi University of Industry

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ABSTRACT

	Learner autonomy (LA) is acquiring prominence in higher education, particularly in English language instruction, due to its favorable effects on the development of language proficiency, particularly in blended learning (BL) environments. This paper presents the findings of an investigation into the strategies adopted by instructors to nurture LA in a BL environment. Class observation and interviews were the study's primary data collection methods. During 15 lessons, three instructors were observed in an effort to determine how they promote learner autonomy. Teachers were interviewed to determine the motivations behind their utilization of such a method to cultivate learner autonomy. The findings of this study indicate that instructors employed a variety of strategies to cultivate learner autonomy, including organizational autonomy support, procedural autonomy support, and cognitive autonomy support. Cognitive autonomy-supporting strategies are the most frequently employed. Improving the quality of BL programs in educational institutions in order to nurture LA is an essential implication of the study for educators, curriculum developers, and educational administrators.
Keywords: Learner autonomy, blended learning, EFL teachers' strategies	

Introduction

One of the key components of educational reform in Vietnam was the development of learner autonomy (LA) with the use of information communication technologies in a technology-enhanced learning environment. (*Decision 2080/QDTTG*, 2017; MOET, 2008b). Therefore, the implementation of BL to support LA is highly recommended in education in Vietnam, especially in higher education (Nguyen, 2019). However, learning in a BL environment requires students to be more autonomous in face-to-face classes and the Learning Management system (LMS). In fact, the employment of BL requires students to switch from a teacher-centered and test-oriented at high school to a learner-centered approach, which is a big challenge for students and teachers in Vietnam (Tran, 2019). In the Vietnamese context, although there are several

studies aiming at investigating teaching practices in fostering LA, there are few studies about the effectiveness of those practices (Nasri et al., 2015). Moreover, most of the research focuses on LA-enhancing practices in traditional learning rather than in the BL environment. Taking that into account, this study aims to investigate the strategies employed by EFL teachers to foster LA in a BL environment at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) to fill this gap.

Literature review

Definition of learner autonomy

There have been various ways to define and interpret learner autonomy, but hardly any definition can describe it precisely due to its complex and multifaceted nature (Little, 2003; Benson, 2009; Teng, 2019). In 1981, Henri Holec first defined autonomy in language education as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3), and this has become the most cited definition in the literature of field (Benson, 2007, 2009). Since then, many attempts have been made to define LA in different ways and aspects, as well as make it more relevant to language teaching and learning. Despite some criticism and inconsistency in terminology, some consensus on LA has also been reached, as Teng (2019, p.31) pointed out:

- Autonomy is not an innate ability but a construct of capacity.

- Autonomy consists of learners' desire to take charge of their own learning.

- Autonomy is subject to change and is not permanent.

- Autonomy can happen both inside and outside the classroom.

- Autonomy involves both social and individual aspects.

- Autonomy can be fostered if one is aware of the learning process.

Fostering learner autonomy in language learning

Depending on the social and cultural context, autonomy is viewed differently. As a result, the techniques for promoting it are diverse. This part summarizes Benson's (2001) six common techniques to foster LA: technology-based, resource-based, curriculum-based, classroom-based, teacher-based, and learner-based approaches.

Technology-based approaches emphasize the role of educational technologies in interaction with students. Although technology has the real potential to improve LA, the effectiveness of technology-based initiatives is highly dependent on the people involved, especially their teachers, who support their students in their learning process. (Nguyen, 2019).

Resource-based approaches focus on building autonomy via experimentation and discovery when learners interact with the materials provided. Although materials are seen as the most important tools in this approach, collaboration with others and teacher assistance when interacting with resources was critical in assisting students in reaping the benefits of materials (Carette et al., 2015).

The curriculum-based approaches emphasize the negotiation of learning content between the teacher and the students. According to Cotterall (2000), fostering LA is one of the most

important goals for language course designers, and language courses having the goal of improving LA should include mechanisms for gradually switching responsibility from the teacher to the learner in areas such as goal-setting, learning strategy selection, and outcome evaluation.

Classroom-based approaches focus on cooperative learning within classroom contexts to enhance LA. Learners can take charge of their learning via collaboration with their peers or teachers. (Benson, 2001).

Learner-based approaches place emphasis on equipping the learner with learning strategies and learning skills to develop LA (Benson, 2001, 2013).

Teacher-based approaches emphasize the role of teachers and teacher education in enhancing LA. These approaches assume that teachers play a fundamental role in enhancing LA because their beliefs, opinions, and professional experience greatly influence LA's growth in language acquisition environments (Benson, 2001; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012).

Reviewing the six methods for nurturing LA reveals that one of the most important elements in cultivating LA is the involvement of the teachers.

Teacher Roles and Practices in Fostering LA

LA can imply a high degree of learner freedom, but it is crucial to be aware that this freedom is "never absolute, always conditional and constrained" (Little, 1991, p.5). Thanasoulas (2000) also conquers that LA does not mean teachers become redundant. Teacher roles in fostering LA are diverse and complicated; however, some roles are emphasized more than others, including facilitator/helper, counselor, and manager of resources (Han, 2014). Tran and Vuong (2022) also emphasized that the most crucial external factor in fostering LA was the instructors.

Stefanou et al. (2004) defined three distinguished features of autonomy support which can help teachers fulfill the three roles mentioned above. Organizational support emphasizes ownership of the environment of students. Procedural autonomy support equips students with ownership of form. Cognitive autonomy support promotes student ownership of learning. The model of LA support by Stefanou et al. (2014) is adopted within the framework of this paper for detailed observation of teachers' practices to foster LA. The details of those supports are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Strategies Associated with the Different Features of Autonomy Support

Organizational Autonomy Support	*Procedural Autonomy Support*	*Cognitive Autonomy Support*
Students are given opportunities to: Choose group members Choose evaluation procedure Take responsibility for due dates for assignments Participate in creating and implementing classroom rules Choose seating arrangement	Students are given opportunities to: Choose materials to use in class projects Choose the way competence will be demonstrated Display work in an individual manner Discuss their wants Handle materials	Students are given opportunities to: Discuss multiple approaches and strategies Find multiple solutions to problems Find multiple solutions to problems Have ample time for decision making Be independent problem solvers with scaffolding Re-evaluate errors Receive informational feedback Formulate personal goals or realign tasks to correspond with interest Debate ideas freely Have less teacher talk time; more teacher listening time Ask questions

Blended learning definition

Research shows that BL is commonly defined as the combination of "face-to-face instruction" and computer-assisted learning or computer-mediated instruction (Neumeier, 2005; Stracke, 2007; Gramham, 2012, 2013). Currently, with the emerging digital technology in teaching and learning, the term BL is more frequently used to refer to the combination of two components which are online and face-to-face learning and teaching (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008; Motteram & Sharma, 2009). This definition emphasizes the roles of web-based technology in BL environment. It indicates the employment of the "online" component is crucial in defining BL. Despite the high consensus on two components of BL, an agreement on the proportion of courses delivered online or face-to-face in BL has not been reached. Picciano (2013) pointed out that the implementation context considerably influences the way BL is defined, as different people in different contexts can have their own interpretation and implementation of BL in different contexts. In the context of this paper, BL environment is defined as the combination of (1) face-to-face classroom component and (2) online learning with the use of web-based technology, with 45% of online learning and 55% of face-to-face learning.

The potential of blended learning to learner autonomy

Marsh (2012) mentioned the use of BL can enhance learners' autonomy. Hoang (2015) also concurred that BL has the potential to facilitate active and reflective learning. In BL, students have more freedom to choose the time and place and approach to study EFL with a wide range of online learning materials and learning tools (Joosten et al., 2013). Teachers also benefit from online assessments and reports since they can monitor students' learning progress regularly and conveniently with more thorough information about each individual. As a result, they can provide necessary support and scaffold students' learning.

Despite those significant benefits, effectively implementing this model is still challenging. For the success of BL, it is required that students should play an active part in learning and take charge of their own learning (Launer, 2010). However, in fact, the autonomy of learners is far lower than expected, and students may be too dependent on teacher-centered learning at high schools (Alebaikan, 2010). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate whether EFL teachers be aware of their roles to have proper practices to scaffold students toward more autonomous learning in the BL environment.

Research Questions

In order to find out what strategies EFL teachers adopt in fostering LA, the research aims to answer the following questions:

What do EFL teachers do to foster learner autonomy in the blended environment?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) is a public university in Vietnam providing multi-level and multi-branch disciplinary educational services. It is one of the first universities in Vietnam to employ BL in English language and education. BL has been implemented at HaUI since 2015, starting with General English courses delivered to non-language major students. The English language program for non-language major students consists of six BL courses; each course carries 5 credits which is equal to 75 teaching periods. 40 periods (1 period = 50 minutes) are carried out in face-to-face class, and the rest 35 periods are conducted online via Learning Management System (LMS). Students are required to study online before joining face-to-face lessons. There is also an online unit test after each lesson for students to revise their knowledge as well as monitor their learning progress. In-class lessons focus mainly on speaking and writing skills.

Ten teachers in the top 30 teachers having the highest student voting rate for good teaching practices in the school year 2019-2020 at HaUI are selected. After the discussion, five teachers agreed to take part in the project, but only three teachers were selected as formal participants based on two criteria. First, the participants reported they had applied some ways to promote LA. This criterion was established to guarantee that it was possible to investigate teachers' strategies and procedures to promote LA. Second, the participants are teaching different English courses and in their different stages of careers. This criterion aimed at diversifying the

background of participants, which can help explore the strategies from different perspectives. The table below presents the information of the three participants (the pseudonyms are used for all three teachers).

Table 2

Summary of class observation participants' characteristics

Teachers' pseudonyms	Gender	Years of teaching experience	English Course	Number of students in the course
Hue	Female	4 years	English for Electrical and Electronics Engineering	30
Minh	Female	6 years	English for Business	28
Huong	Female	15 years	English for Garment Technology and Fashion Design	25

Data collection & analysis

The study employed two main data collection instruments, including class observation and interviews, to find out teachers' strategies to foster LA in BL courses and to identify the reasons for those strategies to enhance students' autonomy.

The observation was used to gather live data about teachers' practices in the classroom setting. The major goal of observation is to learn how LA is applied in the case's actual environment (Yin, 2013). The class observation employed in this study has been adapted from the framework of Stefanou et al. (2004). This framework proposes that autonomy support can be provided in three different ways. Support for *organizational autonomy* helps students to take responsibility for their learning environment. Support for *procedural autonomy* can take the shape of techniques and fosters student control of form and presentation. Support for *cognitive autonomy* includes techniques that let students think independently, investigate concepts, and become independent learners.

Each teacher was observed five times (90 minutes) at the teacher's convenience. However, all of the first observations from the three classes are the first lesson of the course because this lesson is supposed to be the time teachers deliver the rules and course details and get to know their students. There are 15 observations in total throughout the course. Table 3 below summarizes the timeline for the class observation:

Table 3

Summary of timeline of class observation

Week	Length	Minh	Huong	Hue
1	90 minutes	Observation 1	Observation 1	Observation 1
3	90 minutes	Observation 2	Observation 2	
5	90 minutes			Observation 2
7	90 minutes	Observation 3	Observation 3	Observation 3
9	90 minutes	Observation 4	Observation 4	Observation 4
10	90 minutes	Observation 5	Observation 5	Observation 5

Along with class observation field notes, each observation was recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Semi-structured interviews were employed in this study since it can facilitate two-way communication between the researcher and participants in which participants can easily discuss the topic. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 03 teachers. This type of interview has some strong points over the two other common types of interview. The semi-structured interview can take advantage of interview dialogue based on its knowledge-producing potential compared to a structured interview. In comparison with unstructured interviews, researchers have some control over the dialogue, allowing the focus to be kept on matters that are crucial to the study endeavor (Brinkmann, 2014).

The interviews with teachers focused on teachers' strategies to support LA that were found during a classroom observation. Moreover, practices that were carried out more frequently were further probed to find out the beliefs of teachers in performing them. Online interviews via Zoom were employed due to the social distancing policy during the Coronavirus pandemic. All of the interviews were done in Vietnamese and audio recorded before being transcribed and translated into English.

There is a huge amount of literature on qualitative data analysis, and researchers employ a variety of methodologies, including cross-cultural analysis, discourse analysis, grounded theory analysis, discourse analysis, content analysis, and ethnographic analysis (Bernard, 2012; Braun & Clarke, 2006; Merriam, 1998). To make sense of the qualitative data gathered for the current study, thematic analysis, which entails coding and categorization, was used (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Creswell, 2012).

Thematic analysis was chosen because it is an independent qualitative descriptive method that can be used to describe routines and practices as well as to learn about the individual experiences of a group of students. This strategy was chosen for the current study because the research aims to describe the techniques teachers use to promote LA. The theme approach's adaptability allowed the study to concentrate on specific examples, their unique characteristics, and their connections. (Flick, 2013). Data were analyzed using thematic analysis to produce the

report. When preparing the report, enough data was presented to show how related they were. Extracts were included in each theme's analytical narrative explanation of the data. The responses to the research questions were better understood thanks to these excerpts.

Results

The findings of the study demonstrate that teachers used a range of tactics to facilitate LA that addressed all three facets of learner autonomy. The most often employed techniques encourage cognitive autonomy.

Organizational autonomy support

Teachers generally give students all control regarding seating arrangement and choosing group members. Only when students are using the control for the wrong purposes, do the teachers intervene as a classroom management strategy to facilitate learning. Regarding strategies to foster learners' ownership of rules and evaluation procedures, teachers hardly provide students with any opportunities. Names of teachers and their in-class practices of learner developing learner autonomy regarding organizational autonomy support are illustrated in Table 4.

Table 4

Activities to foster organizational autonomy support

Students are given opportunities to	Hue	Minh	Huong
Choose seating arrangements	✓	✓	✓
Choose group members	✓	✓	✓
Set rules		✓	
Select due time/dates for tasks	✓		
Set evaluation procedures			

All three teachers were observed allowing students to choose their own seating in most of the lessons. However, in one lesson, teacher Huong was observed requiring some students to move to change their seats to help them "concentrate on studying." She said, "Sometimes I just feel that some of them will try to sit in a corner or back of the class to avoid my attention. This really gets on my nerve, so I have to force them to move to another place." (Teacher Huong).

All of the teachers were found to provide students with opportunities to choose their own partners or group members to do preparation activities for the next class and group presentation. However, for in-class activities, the teachers usually assign group members. In the interviews, all teachers revealed that the reason for not allowing students to choose their own partners to carry out classroom activities lies in their concerns about class time limitation. Teacher Hue shared, "I really want students to be active and choose the partner or group they like for class activities. But whenever I ask them to move and find different partners rather than classmates sitting next to them, it takes them a lot of time to do it, or they are just not interested in this way of arrangement. So basically, this approach doesn't work." (Teacher Hue). Therefore, assigning groups or pairs for students in the class was time-saving and could help them work with

different classmates, which can help them develop teamwork skills. By contrast, for homework assignments or group presentations, they would let students decide themselves because students asked for it and they were active in doing so.

Teachers give their students few opportunities to set classroom and learning rules and select due time/dates for tasks. Only teacher Minh provided her students with opportunities to set rules in class and allowed students to change the due time for online learning in EOP (LMS for students to learn and exercise before class). She asked students to write their goals, expectations of the course, and the rules they want to have during the course on a piece of paper. For those rules which she found inappropriate, she discussed them more with students, as demonstrated in the following excerpt.

> T: *One student in our class thinks that the teacher should allow students to sleep at the back of the class if they are tired or sleepy. What do you think about this rule?"*
>
> Ss: *I think if you let students sleep, half of the class will do it, haha*
>
> T: *Be serious, please. Okay, so if anyone feels tired or sick, please let me know, and I'll give you permission to be absent but not sleep in the class. Are you okay with that?*
>
> Ss: *Yes, teacher.*

Teacher Minh – Observation #1

In the cases of teachers Hue and Huong, both teachers reported that teachers should be the ones who decide since the students' suggested rules were often inappropriate or ineffective for their learning. Teacher Huong revealed, "I sometimes ask students if there is anything that they want to change about the rules. Students are just silent or recommend some inappropriate ideas, such as if they are hungry, they can eat in class. Therefore, I think I just decide the rules because I know which rules are effective and suitable. It is okay to discuss with students, but I think it is not necessary." (Teacher Huong)

All three teachers were observed providing no opportunities to let students be involved in evaluation procedures. At the beginning of the course, all three teachers just informed students about how many tests they would take during the semester and the scores they needed to pass the course. In the interview, all three teachers shared the same opinion that when it was a safe choice for teachers to follow exactly the regulation of the university, they tended to think that there was no need to discuss this fixed process or they had no right to do it. "I think I have no right to modify or change the evaluation procedure. All of the teachers need to follow fixed procedures. Moreover, students do not know much about evaluation apart from tests and exams, so it will be quite hard for them to discuss it even if I give them a chance to do so." (Teacher Hue)

Procedural autonomy support

Support for procedural autonomy is lacking from the activities of all three teachers. Teacher Hue did not organize any activities for this kind of support. This lack of procedural support, particularly support related to materials, may indicate that teachers were totally in control of

choosing and using materials, one of the characteristics of the teacher-centered approach. Teachers' strong belief and reliance on textbooks somehow inhibit their practices to foster LA. Names of teachers and their in-class practices of learners developing learner autonomy regarding procedural autonomy support are illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5

Activities for procedural autonomy support

Students are given opportunities to	Hue	Minh	Huong
choose materials/ resources			
choose ways of demonstrating competence		✓	✓
display work in an individual manner			
discuss their wants		✓	
handle materials			

Only teacher Huong and teacher Minh were found to provide students with opportunities to choose ways to demonstrate competence. Both teachers offered some freedom for students to choose how they would like to present their ideas. For instance, when students had to draw outfits for different special occasions, the teacher allowed students to choose to draw outfits on paper, on a computer, or on any tools that they were comfortable with. The teacher did not assign any specific tool for students. (Field note - teacher Huong). In other cases, teachers decide the presentation format, short talk, and conversation without discussing it with students. "You are required to present with PowerPoint slides for the presentation projects." (Teacher Hue– Observation #1). Teacher Hue later revealed why she did not provide students opportunities to demonstrate competence in the interview "it is a common practice for me to assign format for students, and I think there is no problem about that. My students never complain about the format that I choose for them."

Only teacher Minh provided students opportunities to discuss their wants in some ways. Teacher Minh asked her students to write their wants or expectations at the beginning of the course or get to know about students' wants about the deadline of some tasks. She said in the interview, "Students suggested a lot of ideas when I asked what they want to do or achieve in the course. I also frequently asked students about their workload at school to check if they wanted to change anything about the due date in class." (Teacher Minh)

No cases related to opportunities to choose materials/ resources, handle materials, and display work in an individual manner were observed. In the interview, two out of three teachers (teacher Minh and teacher Huong) reported that the material and resources were chosen carefully, so it was better to follow them without involving students in material selection. "We conduct thorough research before writing the textbooks for students. We conduct a need analysis with five stakeholders, including students, before designing the textbook, so basically, I think our textbook is suitable for the students we are teaching. Furthermore, I don't think that students know how to choose materials that are suitable for them." (Teacher Minh). The other teacher (teacher Hue) revealed there were too many activities and information in each unit, so she would

like to cut off some information rather than ask students to include the material of their interests.

Cognitive autonomy support

All three teachers paid attention to cognitive autonomy support. They provided many activities to encourage students to discuss, debate, and solve problems. However, in terms of opportunities to formulate students' goals and re-evaluate mistakes, students were given no support. Students did not have chances to reflect on their progress or involve in the designing tasks so those tasks could match their personal goals. Names of teachers and their in-class practices of learners developing learner autonomy regarding cognitive autonomy support are illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Activities for cognitive autonomy support

Students are given opportunities to	**Hue**	**Minh**	**Huong**
discuss multiple approaches or strategies	✓	✓	✓
find multiple solutions to problems	✓	✓	✓
Justify solutions for purpose of sharing expertise		✓	
have ample time for decision making			
be independent problem solvers with scaffolding	✓	✓	✓
re-evaluate errors			
receive informational feedback			
formulate personal goals or realign task to correspond with interest			
debate ideas freely	✓	✓	✓
have less teacher talk time; more teacher listening time			
Ask questions	✓	✓	✓

Encouraging students to discuss multiple approaches or strategies to problems was the most frequently adopted strategy by all three teachers. They asked students to think of ways and strategies to discuss tasks in class. They frequently encouraged students to be active in the progress of learning. For instance, one part of the task is about giving a presentation. The teacher shows a video about a bad presentation. Then she asks students to point out the problems and encourages them to find a way to improve it. "Do you have other ways to open a presentation more impressively?"; "How many ways can you think of to conclude a presentation" (Field note - Teacher Hue). In the interview, all teachers emphasized the importance of making students think of their own approaches and strategies before analyzing the sample. Teacher Hue stated, "If I just provide them the sample or the key, students may be dependent on it, and they can deal with similar tasks in the future."

In many cases in the class, all three teachers provided opportunities to debate freely and ask questions. All three teachers did a great job of making students feel comfortable asking and

giving their opinions in class. Two interesting cases in class of teacher Hue and teacher Minh were observed when students even pointed out teachers' mistakes in a constructive way.

> *Ss: Ms. Huong, I think that you may make a spelling mistake. It is "presser foot," not "pressure foot." And I suppose number 19 is "presser foot clamp screw," not "needle clamp screw."*

> *T: Oh, let me see, you're right. It is "presser," not "pressure". And about number 19, other students, what do you think? Is it a "Presser foot clamp screw" or a "needle clamp screw"?*

> *Ss: "presser foot clamp screw" because it holds the presser foot, not the needle.*

> *T: You're correct. Thank you for pointing out my mistakes. Next time, who can point out not only the teacher's mistakes but other students' mistakes will be given bonus points.*

> *Teacher Huong – Observation#4*

> *S: Ms. Hue, "scratch" should be "scratch," and "fast charging" is a feature, not a component. It should be "fast battery charger:*

> *T: Thank you, Nam, for correcting me. It's very useful information. Okay, so now let's move on to another pro of iPhone 7.*

> *Teacher Hue - Observation#3*

All three teachers revealed the same strategies in building such kind of atmosphere in the interview. At the beginning of the course, teachers showed their friendliness by letting students know they would not criticize students' mistakes or make fun of them. They also instructed students on how to raise questions in polite and meaningful ways. Three teachers used bonus points to encourage students to participate in the lessons actively. They all believed that using bonus points was a useful way to motivate students to debate and ask questions.

All three teachers were found to use some strategies to scaffold students to handle the tasks. All three teachers usually guided students before each task and checked if they understood before asking them to handle the activity themselves. They usually give examples, ask students to brainstorm ideas, and locate key information to help students in more demanding tasks such as making conversation or free talk. "Now, look at the prompt in the textbook; please underline key information in conversation and think of the structure you will use to talk about that information. You can look back on grammar presentation because there are some useful structures there." (Teacher Minh - Observation#4). This suggests that teachers are flexible in the way they support students. They guided students based on the level of difficulty of the tasks. They knew how to scaffold students to deal with different types of tasks.

The time teachers talk was equal to the time students talk. The time for teachers to instruct students was supposed to be only a quarter of lesson time, and the rest of the time was allocated to practice and evaluation. However, in two-thirds of cases, teachers needed to talk and explain for a long time because students responded little. In a class, teacher Minh, for the free talk activity about the type of bank account suitable for students, the teacher brainstormed many types of bank accounts and their pros and cons to make sure students had enough ideas for their

free talk. She did ask three times if students understood the requirement and knew what to do. However, when some students worked in groups, they started to ask other students what their group was supposed to do, and they seemed to struggle to do the task. After 5 minutes, knowing that students were too slow in fulfilling the tasks, the teacher stopped and explained the task again. (Field note – Teacher Minh). Teachers explained in the interview that students' lack of attention could lengthen the time teachers talk time. Teacher Minh said, "I tried to keep instruction and guidelines short and simple and spend time for students practicing, but it did not work. My students sometimes ignore what I say, so I have to explain several times." This suggests to reduce teacher talk time and increase teacher listening time requires not only teachers' effort in motivating students to talk but also other techniques to engage in the lessons.

All three teachers were observed not employing any strategies to help the student build their personal goals or guide them to adjust the task to their preference. In the interview, teachers explained that "I think students need to achieve the objectives of the lesson, and that's enough. Goals for learning is something in the long-term that students have to set for themselves" (Teacher Huong); "I'm not sure if I should teach students how to set goals because it's not in the curriculum. Maybe, students can learn about it outside the classroom." (Teacher Minh). Teachers' answers indicated that teachers tended to think students should be responsible for setting their goals, and they are passive in making the tasks suitable for their interests.

Support related to re-evaluating errors and receiving informational feedback was hardly provided. All three teachers focus on correcting the mistakes of students. They often pointed out errors related to spelling, grammatical structures, word choice, and pronunciation. "Thank Lan for your talk. I have some comments for you. There are some words that you mispronounce…. Try to say that again. Repeat after me. There are some grammar mistakes related to subject and verb agreement, like she has not she have." (Teacher Minh-Observation#4). All three teachers reported in the interview that they would like their students to re-evaluate their errors, but it would take a lot of time, and most of the students could not recognize the mistakes without the help of teachers. "I think students should take time to re-evaluate their mistakes at home, not in class, because the time for the lesson is limited. It takes a lot of time if I ask them to do it in class. Some students with low proficiency cannot recognize mistakes without the help of friends or teachers." (Teacher Hue). The responses of three teachers suggest that they did not believe in students' ability to correct their own errors, and they thought that giving students the correction would be less time-consuming and more effective. The way teachers commented also focused on the errors rather than providing strategies to avoid those mistakes in the future.

Class observation data also indicated one interesting point all three teachers skipped students' self-assessment activity at the end of each lesson. Teachers did not devote time to this activity, although it was part of a lesson. They then explained that "I know that this part is good, but I prioritize time for other main activities in class which help students develop their language proficiency." (Teacher Minh); "Actually, both teachers and students do not care about this part. It is like an optional part. If students like to do it, so they do it, and if they don't, it's okay." (Teacher Hue). This lack of support for self-reflection may suggest that teachers only focus on activities with knowledge content rather than concerned about how student evaluate their

learning and how they feel about their learning progress.

Discussion

Data from classroom observations and interviews generally revealed that teachers used different teaching strategies to support LA, covering all three aspects of LA support: organizational autonomy support, procedure autonomy support, and cognitive autonomy support. All three participants seemed to focus most on supporting students cognitively and least on supporting students to make choices regarding the procedure. In particular, teachers provide cognitive autonomy support, which encourages learner ownership of ideas, thinking, and learning in a variety of ways. Teachers encourage students to discuss multiple approaches or strategies and find multiple solutions to problems by letting them brainstorm ideas before each task instead of providing samples right away. After each task, teachers also ask students to suggest other ways to handle the tasks. Teachers also help students become independent problem solvers with scaffolding by asking questions to guide students to deal with the task themselves and providing some guiding activities (brainstorming, sentence building, rearranging the sentences to make a sample, etc.). Giving constructive feedback to students regarding their word choice and grammatical mistakes is also employed to help students realize mistakes and more independently avoid them in the future. The most significant cognitive support is promoting debating ideas freely and asking questions. Teachers employ several strategies to make the learning atmosphere friendly and comfortable. Teachers make it clear at the beginning of the course that they will not criticize or make fun of students' mistakes, so there is no need to worry about voicing their opinions. Teachers also encourage students to point out teachers mistakes by giving them bonus points.

This finding concurs with the results of several research including Intraboonsom (2020); Nguyen (2019); Tapinta (2016); Borg and Al-Busaidi, (2012), which found that cognitive strategies were one of the most frequent opportunities provided. This finding highlights some interesting differences from the study of Le (2011), which emphasized that many teachers do not want to encourage dialogic learning and information sharing. Thus, they give their students limited time to express their thoughts or ask questions. Le and Nguyen (2022) also pointed out that students did not have opportunities to discuss with their teachers their ways of learning English autonomously, and they expect their teachers to give them chances to work in groups and discuss how they can regulate their learning. The findings of this study revealed a gradual change in the classroom discourse where the relationship between teachers and students becomes more open and facilitative to LA. Students may even question a teacher's response or perspective, which is seen to be a challenge to the instructor's authority and may cause the teacher to "lose face" (Ngo, 2015; Nguyen & Griffin, 2010; Nguyen, 2011). This shift in power is a positive trend in moving from the teacher-centered approach to the learner-centered approach. Teachers did support students in voicing their opinions rather than maintaining their supreme power in the classroom.

To encourage organizational autonomy support, which focuses on learner ownership of the learning environment, all three teachers let students choose their seating arrangements with

some control. One teacher involves students in setting classroom rules as a way to promote LA. She also lets students select due dates for online learning when necessary. This finding concurs with the research of Nguyen (2019), as his research also pointed out that regarding organizational support, choosing group members, choosing due dates for tasks and assignments, and creating rules is the main practice while choosing evaluation procedures is often ignored.

Regarding procedural autonomy support, which focuses on encouraging learner ownership of form and learning output, teachers let students choose ways of demonstrating competence, such as how they will present (using PowerPoint slides, drawing pictures, etc.). Students also have the chance to discuss their expectations of the course to make them feel they have some power in the learning process. Three teachers also sometimes suggest additional learning resources (reference books, learning websites, etc.) as a way to enhance LA. This finding contradicts Nguyen (2019) since, in his research, opportunities to make a choice regarding forms or procedures were frequently observed.

Conclusion

The findings of the study demonstrate that teachers used a variety of instructional strategies to enhance organizational autonomy, procedural autonomy, and cognitive autonomy in their classrooms. The most often employed techniques encourage cognitive autonomy. Regarding the effectiveness of those strategies, cognitive strategies are proven to be helpful in helping students be more confident to voice their opinions and be independent problem solvers for learning tasks.

The first limitation of this study lies in choosing participants. The researcher cannot conduct a questionnaire for all the teachers in the faculty. All three participants were selected based on questionnaire results assessing teachers each semester from the university rather than based on questionnaires conducted by researchers. Therefore, it is recommended that future researchers conduct quantitative research in Phase 1 before moving to qualitative research in Phase 2. Moreover, there are only three teachers from three different majors taking part in the research. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to the whole teachers at the university. Another limitation of the study is that although it is a detailed investigation of teachers' strategies, students from those classes should be interviewed to prove the effectiveness of those strategies. In addition, teachers' perceptions and beliefs in LA significantly impact the strategies and practices of the teachers to foster it. Therefore, to further investigate strategies, the findings of this study could be complemented by investigations into teachers' beliefs and perceptions of LA to have a deeper understanding of the matter.

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Biodata

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VLU EFL Students' Perceptions Toward the Use of Collaborative Writing

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ABSTRACT

	Collaborative writing has a good influence on both students' writing skills and their perceptions of the strategy itself. However, the existing studies did not examine the more personal and subjective views of the participants. Moreover, the previous studies were limited to exploring the solutions to the problems that EFL English majors faced during their learning process. The purpose of the study is to investigate the perceptions of the English-majored juniors at Van Lang University towards the collaborative writing technique. To get optimal results, the third-year English majors at Van Lang University who participated in the Writing 5 course and experienced the collaborative writing method completed the questionnaire and answered the interview questions. The result of the study indicates that the collaborative writing strategy has a positive impact on students' writing outcomes. Also, this study's findings show a high percentage of students gain great satisfaction from the strategy. Therefore, it is believed that students' writing skills can be enhanced by using collaborative writing techniques as an effective learning tool.
Keywords: perceptions, collaborative writing, benefits, drawbacks	

Introduction

More recently, collaborative learning has been widespread in many academic settings around the globe. Currently, the emphasis on teaching and learning languages utilizing pair-work or group-work to help students practice the language together has grown essential in language classrooms. In fact, many popular learning strategies can be employed by instructors with the hope of assisting their students in successfully accomplishing writing tasks, and collaborative or cooperative writing is one of the strategies. Barkley et al. (2005) stated that the collaborative writing strategy requires students to collaborate in pairs or in triads to produce formal papers together. Likewise, Storch (2019) described collaborative writing as a process in which two or more writers collaborate to generate a single text. According to McDonough et al. (2015),

students working in a group can share their work fairly, and each member has to assume responsibility for their contributions to reach a higher standard of individual writing. This can be seen as advantageous for students' writing production and for helping them learn from one another as they must brainstorm ideas, draft an outline, and give peer feedback (Pham, 2021).

Specifically, a collaborative writing strategy was employed for English-majored juniors at Van Lang University who learned the Writing 5 course. The textbook used to train the students in the Writing 5 course was "Academic Writing – A Handbook for International Students – Third Edition" by Stephen Bailey (2011), Routledge publisher. The whole course lasted for 10 weeks, and the course took place once a week for a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes. They had an opportunity to experience the strategy and created many writing assignments together. In addition, they spent 10 weeks working and learning to complete the course, which accounted for 2 credits. During the process of learning, different students with the same levels of writing abilities might have varied opinions about the strategy, and a majority of students might find this strategy effective and appropriate and vice versa. That is why this paper is conducted with the prominent purpose, i.e., examining the perceptions of third-year English majors at Van Lang University towards the collaborative writing strategy used in the Writing 5 course.

Literature Review

Definition of collaborative writing

American Heritage (1969) and Merriam-Webster (2013) defined collaboration as "working jointly with others or together particularly in an intellectual activity." One of the earliest definitions offered by Allen (1987) is that collaborators produce a shared document by participating in significant interactions and sharing decision-making and accountability for it. Dale (1994), however, centered on the dialogic nature of group writing which emphasizes the context of the writing scenario as well as the connections of students' interactions. It was described by Rice and Huguley (1994) that collaborative writing was any task, namely idea generating, researching, planning, organizing, drafting, revising, and editing, that resulted in a finalized document with the cooperation of multiple people to create a written paper. Similarly, that collaborative writing is referred to as a single text is the result of a collaboration of two or more writers (Storch, 2019). Likewise, according to Lowry et al. (2004), collaborative writing is a social process as it involves a group of people working together, concentrating on a common goal, discussing a common topic, and producing a common piece of writing.

The teachers' roles in collaborative learning

Teachers or instructors frequently use the collaborative learning strategy in academic writing classes to encourage students to pool their ideas, and develop an outline to aid students in conducting their writing. In addition, teachers or instructors applied peer feedback for writing revision to enable students to benefit from one another's experiences and increase the quality of their writing (Harmer, 2007; Hyland, 2003; Nation, 2009; Pham et al., 2020; Pham & Nguyen, 2020; Pham, 2021). According to Pham (2021), some academic writing teachers or instructors prompt their students to write essays together to take advantage of collaborative learning and produce better writing.

The students' roles in collaborative learning

Veramuthu and Shah (2020) claimed that in order to write collaboratively, each person in the group must contribute ideas and effort at each stage of the process. Collaboration starts at every first phase of writing, including pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Each individual is in charge of one component of the project to guarantee that it finishes more quickly and with better outcomes.

Process-based approach in collaborative writing

In the setting of an EFL classroom, it is crucial to improve English language learners' writing abilities. In addition to listening, speaking, and reading, writing is one of the skills that is taught and evaluated. In an English writing class, EFL students are introduced to a variety of formal and informal writing tasks which are articles, descriptive, narrative, argumentative, letters, emails, etc. These writing tasks are all formatted according to examinations. Thus, it is a fact that students should be proficient in their writing skills so as to be able to write all the different writing genres. As far as the benefits of collaborative writing toward writing fluency are concerned, Le (2021) emphasized that collaborative writing could be a framework for lecturers to motivate students both inside and outside academic institutions. Also, Tran (2021) indicated that regarding learning a new language, it is an obligation to collaborate and interact with one another instead of one-way communication for the sake of learners' acquisition.

Although there has been discussion about the problems with English language writing over the years, this challenging skill can be mastered with proper techniques. Students in a typical EFL classroom have varying levels of literacy, so collaborative writing techniques should be encouraged in the EFL curriculum as it satisfies the demands of the students. To be specific, students enable to exchange ideas, knowledge, and skills thanks to collaborative writing, according to Baria & Jafari (2013) and Zaky (2018). Furthermore, Zaky (2018) also emphasized that group formation, as well as task segmentation among group members, is integrated into collaborative writing. According to Vygotsky (1978), both students and teachers play active roles in class via collaborative writing practice. Peer interaction allows students to assist and guide one another while learning. Weissberg (2006) asserted that a collaborative task might be more beneficial than an individual one. In order to collaborate effectively, students have to take on several responsibilities so that they may embrace the roles of mentors, co-authors, and critical observers.

Incorporating collaboration into the process writing approach, according to Widodo (2013), fosters a positive and supportive learning environment. Students typically reap and gain the benefits of collaboration while working together in each step of the process writing approach. Hasan & Akhand (2010) confirmed that the importance of a process-based approach in EFL writing cannot be overstated. This approach places a focus on the essay-writing process, which helps students control their own thoughts and have more tremendous opportunities to express their ideas in written form.

The process-based approach consists of many stages of writing, and they involve brainstorming, discussion, and rewriting. Not surprisingly, collaboration can be integrated at every stage. For brainstorming, students can share their ideas in groups. They can engage in negotiation and

reach a decision. Furthermore, students can share any information they have with their groups. Especially, members of a group can give peer feedback to one another, and they can assess the strengths and weaknesses of their work from this stage. According to Hirashima et al. (2011), the process-based writing approach encourages peer collaboration and group work at most of the stages, so it is considered effective.

Previous studies

The implementation of collaborative writing, which demonstrated the advantages in the teaching and learning process, has been studied by several researchers, and other investigations are relevant to the perceptions of students towards the use of collaborative writing (e.g., Storch, 2005; Shehadeh, 2011; Dobao, 2012; Fong, 2012; Biria & Jafari, 2013; Ghufron & Hawa, 2015; Jalili & Shahrokhi, 2017; Khodabakhshzadeh & Samadi, 2017).

According to the research in the United Arab Emirates by Shehadeh (2011), the purpose of the study is to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative writing and students' perceptions towards the application of it. The study taking place over 16 weeks, used the quasi-experimental method from 38 first-year students. 18 students belonging to the experimental group were asked to do their tasks in pairs, while the other 20 students who were in the control group carried out their tasks individually. The study found that collaborative writing had a great impact on the students' writing performances, and most of the students had a positive attitude toward the strategy as well as enjoyed it. Moreover, the strategy contributed considerably to the students' learning results in terms of content, organization, and vocabulary.

Dabao and Blum (2013) conducted a study to discover 55 Spanish EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions towards collaborative writing in small groups of two or more students. Particularly, 28 of them completed the writing assignments in couples, while 27 others did it in four-member groups. The findings revealed that the students working in pairs have favorable opinions of collaborative writing due to the fact that it has helped them participate actively. Nevertheless, the sharing of information and ideas through collaborative writing enables students to work in groups to broaden their perspectives. Additionally, the students noted that this was an excellent opportunity to improve their language skills, such as their knowledge of grammatical and lexical aspects of language.

More recently, in the study titled "Effectiveness of Collaborative Writing among Secondary School Students in an ESL Classroom," Veramuthu and Shah (2020) conducted to study with the aim of figuring out students' perceptions of enhancing writing skills utilizing collaborative writing. 32 secondary school participants from Klang, Selangor, were involved in this study. In order to collect the survey research data, a questionnaire was distributed to the students to assess the students' attitudes toward collaborative writing. The findings reported that when the students composed their essays collaboratively, they expressed positive attitudes toward the strategy. Therefore, language teachers can apply this approach to help students improve their language learning and teaching.

Research gap

As can be seen from the relevant studies above, in general, collaborative writing has a good influence on both students' writing skills and their perceptions of the strategy itself. However,

the existing studies did not examine the more personal and subjective views of the participants. Moreover, the previous studies were limited to exploring the solutions to the problems that EFL English majors faced during their learning process. Although there is numerous research about students' perceptions towards the implementation of collaborative writing, the researcher of this study would like to bridge the gap in expanding the respondents of the study in the context of learning Writing five course and to know whether there are any other possible results at the Faculty of Foreign Languages of Van Lang University. Based on these reasons, therefore, this current study aims to investigate third-year English majors' perceptions towards the use of collaborative writing. Also, the study is to find out some potential solutions to the difficulties English-majored juniors encountered during their learning process, and both the questionnaire and the interview were used to understand more about the student's views on the strategy.

Research Questions

The two research questions below are intended to be addressed in order to achieve the purpose of the study:

Research question 1: *What are the students' perceptions towards the use of the collaborative writing strategy?*

Research question 2: *What can be done to facilitate students' better learning in the Writing 5 course employing the collaborative writing strategy?*

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2021 – 2022. The study took place on campus 1, Van Lang University, which is located at 45 Nguyen Khac Nhu Street, Co Giang Ward, District 1, Ho Chi Minh City, with 50 VLU third-year English majors who took Writing 5 courses as a sample.

The main target of this study is to find out the perceptions of third-year English majors toward the use of collaborative writing methods. Therefore, fifty VLU third-year English-majored students who attended the Writing 5 course were obviously the research participants. Particularly, 50 English-majored juniors participated in the questionnaire survey, and 10 out of these students were randomly chosen to answer the interview. Their ages range from 20 to 22 years old, regardless of gender. Before taking part in this study, the students had taken the 4 previous writing courses as compulsories of the curriculum from which they learned how to write academic paragraphs and essays; consequently, their writing skills are supposed to be proficient.

Design of the Study

Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to conduct this study. To be more specific, the data were gathered by analyzing the questionnaire that was distributed to VLU 50 third-year English majors during the 2021 – 2022 school year. Then, 10 participants have randomly opted for the interview, which served as a means of collecting qualitative data.

Data collection & analysis

The data collection and analysis procedures were conducted for approximately two months and achieved considerable results. Questionnaires were designed via an online website named Google Forms. By using this, data were able to be gathered conveniently and effectively. After three weeks, the researcher could collect information from 50/50 participants. When it came to the interview, it took nearly 7 days to finish interviewing 10 targeted students. For the sake of the interviewees, the interview took place online with the help of Microsoft Teams and Zalo Call. The researcher spent about 10 minutes asking and taking notes of what the participants shared. After gathering both the descriptive and qualitative data successfully, the researcher would tabulate them into statistical figures and interpret their meaning. Then, the opinions would be categorized into subgroups to be interpreted deeply.

The questionnaire

Based on the five-point Likert scale, the response section of the questionnaire was designed due to five degrees of affirmation from the lowest degree, "strongly disagree" to the highest degree, "strongly agree" (1 = Strongly disagree; 2 = Disagree; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Agree; 5 = Strongly agree). Hence, the 24-item questionnaire was to figure out each sample's perception of the collaborative writing strategy utilized in the Writing 5 course. Particularly, the questionnaire was divided into two sections. The first section referred to the individual's attitudes toward the benefits of using collaborative writing in facilitating their writing ability. The second section related to the downside of collaborative writing use in the process of improving their writing learning process and outcomes.

The researchers used KMO and Bartlett's Test on the questionnaire data to determine the data's validity. In Table 1, the KMO value is .934 (>0.5), and the significant level of Bartlett's test is .000, which was regarded as valid for the research.

Table 1. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy		.934
Barlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	2906.849
	df	105
	Sig.	.000

The interview

As far as the interview was concerned, 10 out of 50 participants were randomly selected and invited for an interview after they completed the questionnaire. Particularly, the interview contained two questions: The first question was to find out the difficulties that the students might face while learning writing via collaborative technique, and the second question was to explore some potential solutions to help the students overcome the challenges during the learning process of Writing 5 course.

The students were asked to answer two following questions:

1. What were the difficulties that you usually faced while learning the Writing 5 course with a collaborative strategy?

2. How did you overcome those difficulties?

Results/Findings

Research question 1: What are the students' perceptions towards the use of the collaborative writing strategy?

This study included 50 respondents in total. A 24-item questionnaire was created to gather descriptive data. The findings were analyzed and presented in the form of descriptive statistics and graphs. The following sections aim at addressing the first research question:

Students' perceptions of the benefits of collaborative writing use

As indicated in Table 1, students generally tend to have positive attitudes towards collaborative writing activities, which is first clearly seen in Items 1 and 2. Regarding Item 1, most students (78%) perceived that it was a worthwhile experience for them when writing collaboratively. In contrast, it was considered unhelpful by only 3% of the students, and there were about 16% of the respondents displayed uncertain decisions on whether the collaborative writing method was effective for them or not. Similarly, in Item 2, the number of students who liked to work alone rather than working collaboratively accounted for just 6%; however, 84% of the participants agreed that they preferred working in groups to working alone after implementing collaborative writing.

In response to Item 3, a majority of English-majored juniors agreed that collaborative writing helped them better exchange their knowledge, information, and experience among group members (74%). Only 16% of the students disagreed with the facilitation of the sharing of knowledge, information, and experience due to collaborative writing, while the remaining 10% were unsure.

As evidenced in Item 4, 68% of the students acknowledged that they had more opportunities to work in a more pleasant environment. Some respondents (14%) were still unsure of their competency, while 18% of the others thought they did not work in a relaxed learning atmosphere.

Regarding peer feedback in collaboration (Item 5), 74% of the participants reported that feedback from their group members in collaborative writing was useful and assisted them in improving their writing skills. For 14% of the students, giving or receiving feedback was not viewed as an effective learning strategy. 12% of respondents were unsure, indicating that they did not have a clear opinion about the issue stated.

Table 1.

EFL students' perceptions of the benefits of collaborative writing use

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
1	*Collaborative writing was a worthwhile experience to me.*	2%	4%	16%	36%	42%
2	*I preferred working in groups to working alone after I had written collaboratively.*	2%	4%	10%	38%	46%
3	*Collaborative writing facilitated better exchange of knowledge, information, and experience among group members.*	6%	10%	10%	40%	34%
4	*Working in groups gave me the opportunity to work in a more relaxing atmosphere.*	8%	10%	14%	36%	32%
5	*I got useful feedback from collaborative writing.*	6%	8%	12%	44%	30%
6	*I was able to concentrate more on group efforts than individual ones, thanks to collaborative writing.*	2%	10%	8%	42%	38%
7	*Working in groups gave me a greater sense of responsibility for both me and the group.*	4%	4%	10%	44%	26%
8	*I actively took part in the learning process while working collaboratively.*	2%	2%	14%	40%	42%
9	*I felt more confident to collaborate in writing with other students during the process of completing group projects.*	4%	8%	10%	42%	36%
10	*I had many chances to express my opinions in the group.*	4%	6%	14%	44%	32%
11	*Working with other group members helped me complete more work.*	2%	12%	14%	42%	30%

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

More than 10% of the students expressed dissatisfaction with the statement regarding the concentration of learning writing through collaborative writing (Item 6), noting that it was more difficult for them to pay attention to group efforts than individual ones. A quarter of the students, or 8%, also showed ambiguous opinions on this matter. Nevertheless, more than 80% of the respondents claimed that they were able to concentrate on group efforts well because of collaborative writing.

According to Item 7, a sense of responsibility received a remarkable agreement rate (up to 82%). Surprisingly, the number of participants who disagreed and were not sure about the statement was 8% and 10%, respectively.

Item 8 mentioned the active participation of the students in the learning process. Only 4% of respondents said they were unwilling to actively participate in writing sessions, compared to 82% of students who did so. The others were still determining their competence (14%).

With respect to students' confidence in collaboration (Item 9), 78% of the students believed that they felt more confident to collaborate in writing with other students during the process of completing group projects. Meanwhile, only 12% of the students disagreed that collaborative writing gave them more confidence in group work, and the undecided rate occupied 10% to show students' uncertain evaluation of the problem stated.

As shown in Item 10, the percentage ratio of students who had many chances to express their ideas in their groups made up 76%. This described the students' satisfaction level when they could say what they thought in groups. 10% of the respondents expressed their disagreement, whereas some were not sure (14%).

It is obviously seen in Item 11, 72% of the students agreed that cooperating with their group members enabled them to finish more work, but 14% of them thought the reverse. The remaining students (14%) expressed unclear opinions towards this item.
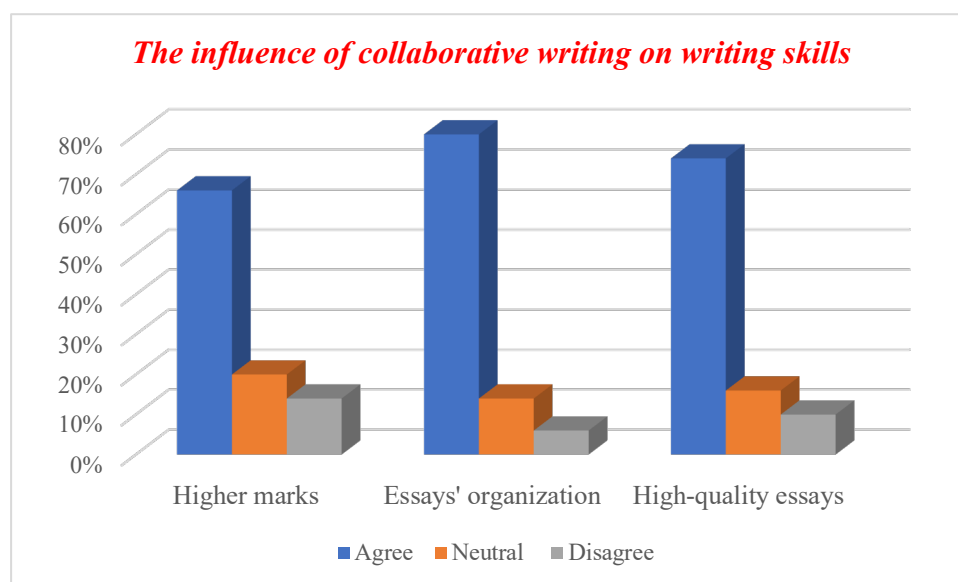
Figure 1. Students' perceptions toward the influence of collaborative writing on writing skills

From Figure 1, a great number of respondents displayed positive views on the possibility of getting higher marks when working collaboratively (66%). For 14% of the students, achieving better grades through collaborative writing was not a significant benefit, while some were still unaware of this problem (20%).

The second listed feature was new ways of organizing paragraphs and essays, which gained 80% agreement. This suggested that working in groups substantially benefits the students' paragraphs and essay organization. In contrast, only 6% of the participants did not favor the advantages of collaboration regarding the structuring and organization of essays, whilst the others could not decide on this matter (14%).

Producing high-quality essays, more than 74% of the students affirmed that they were able to

compose more high-quality paragraphs and essays thanks to group work. Still, 10% of the respondents claimed they could not generate excellent essays through group projects, and the remaining students did not have obvious opinions about the issue (16%).
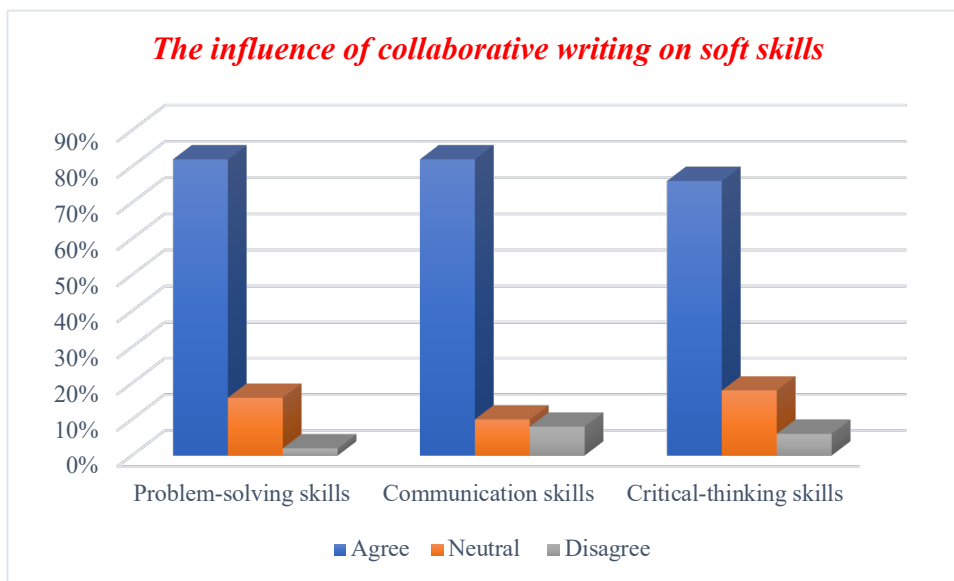
Figure 2. Students' perceptions toward the influence of collaborative writing on soft skills

As can be seen from Figure 2, collaborative writing has a positive influence on students' soft skills. Specifically, the tendency to problem-solving and communication skills went even remarkably. 82% of the students agreed that both communication and problem-solving skills were important. On the other hand, only 2% and 8% of the participants, respectively, disagreed on the benefits of problem-solving and communication skills when applying collaborative writing. There were 16% and 10%, respectively, of respondents who were unsure of the advantages of problem-solving and communication abilities in working collaboratively.

When it comes to critical-thinking skills, 76% of the students thought that working in groups improved their ability to think critically. The undecided rate was 18% for the students who were hesitant to make their choices. However, only 6% of the participants showed their dissatisfaction with critical-thinking benefits in collaboration.

Students' perceptions of the drawbacks of collaborative writing use

Table 2 illustrates how students perceived the level of difficulty they encountered during the learning process. To be more specific, in Item 18, 68% of the students thought that it was time-consuming to work in groups as they constantly explained things to other group members. However, working collaboratively was not a waste of time for 18% of the students. Next, 14% of the respondents could not decide on this drawback.

Table 2.

Students' perceptions of the drawbacks of collaborative writing use

No.	Items	SD	D	N	A	SA
18	*I wasted lots of time to work in groups because I constantly explained things to others.*	4%	14%	14%	38%	30%
19	*Working in groups made it challenging to actively engage members in tasks.*	4%	8%	18%	50%	20%
20	*I sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express my ideas with other group members.*	6%	10%	12%	48%	24%
21	*Every group member contributed unequally to the project during working in groups.*	12%	4%	14%	40%	30%
22	*I spent more time planning while I was writing collaboratively than I did when writing alone.*	8%	8%	10%	42%	32%
23	*I spent more time checking spelling, punctuation, and grammar while I was writing collaboratively than I did when writing alone.*	6%	10%	16%	30%	38%
24	*I spent more time revising while I was writing collaboratively than I did when writing alone.*	6%	6%	12%	38%	38%

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

The challenge of students' active engagement in tasks was shown in Item 19. It was evident that the highest adoption rate belonged to the agreement column, which was difficult for the students to engage actively in tasks (70%). Only 12% of the students disagreed with the difficulty of students' active participation in writing classes when using collaborative writing, while 18% of the others were uncertain.

As demonstrated in Item 20, 72% of the students sometimes disagreed about what to say or how to express their ideas with other group members, while 16% of the respondents believed the opposite. Still, the remaining students (12%) gave ambiguous answers.

During working collaboratively, according to Item 21, it was believed that there was an unequal contribution to the group projects among members (70%). Respectively, 16% and 14% of the students disagreed with the statement and expressed uncertainty about it.

In response to Item 22, spending more time planning in collaboration received a considerable agreement rate (74%). While 16% of the students claimed they spent less time planning while they were writing collaboratively than they did when writing alone, the others were not sure about this disadvantage (10%).

For Item 23, spending more time checking spelling, punctuation, and grammar in group work gained 68% agreement. In contrast, checking spelling, punctuation, and grammar during collaborative writing was not an obstacle for 16% of the students. Next, several students revealed unclear opinions on this matter (16%).

Concerning Item 24, 76% of the respondents reported that they spent more time revising while writing collaboratively than when writing alone. While 12% of the students disagreed with the statement, 12% of the remaining respondents were still unclear about their points of view.

Research question 2: What can be done to facilitate students' better learning in the Writing 5 course employing the collaborative writing strategy?

In order to answer research question 2: "*What can be done to facilitate students' better learning in the Writing 5 course employing the collaborative writing strategy?"* this study was conducted with semi-structured interviews with 10 participants. Then, the data were presented and discussed in the form of encoded keywords based on the students' perspectives.

Interview question 1: What difficulties did you usually face while learning Writing 5 course with collaborative strategy?

Collaborative writing has grown in popularity among VLU's English-majored students because of its advantages and convenience; however, based on the student's perspective, they experienced certain challenges during the learning process. After collecting answers from the interviewees, it was determined that there existed some particular categories of difficulties in terms of (1) unequal contributions, (2) student conflicts, (3) time management, (4) students' motivation and learning autonomy, and (5) the lack of vocabulary and speaking skills for discussing writing topics. The following extracts and analyses represented these obstacles:

Unequal contributions

> *"Some members did not do the same amount of work as others, but they got equal grades like all members. I was occasionally the one who helped to finish tasks for my friends."* **(Student 2, interview extract)**

> *"I think in many groups, some students were hard-working, but some students weren't. The biggest problem was that all group members had the same scores."* **(Student 5, interview extract)**

When it comes to uneven contributions in writing collaboration among group members, two interviewees agreed that it was unfair when active students in groups took responsibility for more work, such as generating ideas, editing, revising, giving more peer feedback, etc. However, finally, all group members received the same marks. Also, unequal contributions occurred when highly active students cooperated with sedentary ones, but they gained equal grades, which caused discomfort and affected cooperative team spirit.

Students' conflicts

> *"We didn't really understand one another when coming up with ideas for essays. We frequently had small quarrels."* **(Student 1, interview extract)**

> *"Our group members sometimes had difficulty agreeing on decisions about the shared writing. Each member had their own ideas, they devoted their time to the writing task, and they all wanted their ideas to be chosen."* **(Student 2, interview extract)**

> *"In some cases, we also had conflicts with our teammates because one member wanted the other to follow their lead."* **(Student 6, interview extract)**

> *"Sometimes we disagreed with opinions and views when working in groups; it affected the mood of the whole team."* **(Student 7, interview extract)**

"I had a hard time studying Writing Course 5 with my partner when many people had many different ideas, and it was very difficult to reach a consensus." **(Student 10, interview extract)**

Regarding students' conflicts when working collaboratively, half of the interviewees reported that they had to deal with teammates' disagreements, which discouraged them to some extent. Additionally, continued conflicts, even minor ones, negatively impacted how they completed their assigned work and the final outcomes. It is clear that disagreement among group members seems to be unavoidable as there are a variety of opinions on only one topic. Especially when a group of students are put together to produce a piece of project that is significant to them, conflicts are prone to emerge.

Time management

"Some members did not finish their parts on time, so we sometimes submitted our assignments late." **(Student 2, interview extract)**

"The process of thinking ideas together took a lot of time because we didn't know much about some writing topics." **(Student 5, interview extract)**

"To have final products, it wasted a lot of time giving peer feedback. I hesitated to give peer comments because I didn't know whether my comments were right or not." **(Student 9, interview extract)**

In terms of time management in group work, two students claimed that collaborative writing was time-consuming. They spent a great deal of time brainstorming ideas since they did not have a deep insight into the topics given. Also, it is considered a waste of time to give peer feedback as they were not able to assess their comments and hesitated to give them to their teammates. Moreover, one student thought that some group members were incapable of controlling their time, so they sometimes submitted their projects later than expected. Consequently, time management, in any case, affects students' attitudes toward collaborative writing use and students' writing results.

Students' motivation and learning autonomy

"Some members were lazy and didn't give ideas to the team." **(Student 1, interview extract)**

"Being lazy was the reason why some students did not complete their tasks well." **(Student 6, interview extract)**

"I was shy and reluctant to work with others because they're strange to me." **(Student 8, interview extract)**

With respect to students' motivation and learning autonomy, two students said that some group members were lazy to express their opinions. These students do not prioritize collaborative tasks, and they do not commit themselves to full participation. They refuse to invest the time and effort needed for group projects. In addition, the other student confirmed that working with other group members was challenging because she was unfamiliar with them.

The lack of vocabulary and speaking skills for discussing writing topics

> *"I was not really good at speaking, so it was hard for me to show my ideas and discuss in my group."* **(Student 3, interview extract)**

> *"I found it difficult to discuss because my vocabulary was not enough to describe things. I didn't feel confident at all."* **(Student 4, interview extract)**

> *"My vocabulary was still limited, and my grammar was not perfect. This made me not ready to have a discussion in my group."* **(Student 7, interview extract)**

> *"I struggled with using lexical forms to express my ideas when discussing topics."* **(Student 8, interview extract)**

As far as the lack of vocabulary and speaking skills for discussing writing topics was concerned, four students stated that having poor speaking abilities prevented them from discussing and developing ideas for writing topics. Furthermore, the lack of a diverse bank of vocabulary to describe things and express their viewpoints was a major barrier to discussions. Additionally, there is one student who is not excellent at English grammatical points and encountered the same difficulty. These students provided their personal challenges in terms of vocabulary and speaking skills with their own experience in collaborative writing.

Interview question 2: How did you overcome those difficulties?

The researcher discovered several potential solutions to the difficulties faced by the English-majored juniors while they studied Writing 5 courses via collaborative writing strategy. Specifically, the participants shared some practical ways to overcome the challenges during the learning process, including (1) setting a timekeeper to remind group members of progress, (2) creating votes to decide general opinions, (3) enriching vocabulary and practicing speaking skills for effective group discussions, and (4) giving constructive feedback and building a respectful learning environment. The solutions to the difficulties were demonstrated by the extracts and analyses that follow:

Setting a timekeeper to remind group members of progress

> *"We should ask a person in our groups to automatically notify members to finish their tasks and increase the ability they would submit on time."* **(Student 2, interview extract)**

> *"The team leader should vote a group member to remind all members of doing their own tasks on time."* **(Student 5, interview extract)**

> *"Urging and reminding should be usually done by a person in the group to motivate the whole group to do their best."* **(Student 6, interview extract)**

Regarding the timely reminder of group members' progress by setting a timekeeper in collaboration, three students stated that a group member should be elected by the group leader or by the whole group to remind all the members to complete their individual tasks on schedule. It is considered important to the group since an appropriate reminder can both motivate students to fulfill their duties and promote their sense of self-discipline successfully.

Creating votes to decide general opinions

> *"We created polls to choose the answer that most people agreed with. This way could help avoid conflicts"* **(Student 1, interview extract)**

> *"After listening to many ideas and considering others' aspects, we would create a vote in our group. In that way, we could choose the options without any bias"* **(Student 2, interview extract)**

> *"We each gave an opinion and then voted and went for the best ideas to write our essays. This was the suitable way to have a more comfortable atmosphere."* **(Student 10, interview extract)**

When it comes to voting opinions to reach a consensus, three students agreed that creating votes for choosing the best options among many other ones could help reduce the conflicts and tensions that were likely to occur in group work. Therefore, creating votes is an effective solution to finalize general ideas and produce a common writing piece.

Enriching vocabulary and practicing speaking skills for effective group discussions

> *"I had to take part in some speaking clubs to improve my speaking skill to help me discuss better in my group."* **(Student 3, interview extract)**

> *"I tried to improve my speaking skills and ways of communicating by learning more vocabulary on English learning websites. This made me more confident when discussing in my group."* **(Student 4, interview extract)**

> *"I noted all the new words, key phrases, and the latest information on the Internet in the notebook, so I could both learn them all the time and effectively use them for any later discussion."* **(Student 8, interview extract)**

> *"I tried to practice speaking a lot by taking notes of some useful vocabulary and phrases about writing topics for better group discussions."* **(Student 9, interview extract)**

As far as vocabulary enrichment and speaking skills improvement for effective group discussions in collaborative writing were concerned, one student claimed that in order to engage in more productive group discussions, he participated in a few speaking clubs, which helped enhance his speaking abilities with his group members. Additionally, the other students reported that they enriched their vocabulary for more successful discussions in group work by means of taking notes of new words and key phrases about the assigned writing topics on the Internet, and they could learn them at any time. Also, when their speaking abilities were improved, they gained self-confidence in group discussions.

Giving constructive feedback and building a respectful learning environment

> *"I think when a student gave an opinion, he or she should have constructive comments, and the whole group would peacefully discuss ideas together to come to the best conclusion."* **(Student 7, interview extract)**

> *"I think when giving comments on something in groups, we should comment on the strengths first, and then the weaknesses. We also should limit impolite words and*

actions.'' **(Student 8, interview extract)**

"Students should talk with their team members openly and respectfully, seek to understand different perspectives." **(Student 10, interview extract)**

In terms of giving constructive peer feedback and building a respectful learning environment in collaborative writing, three students said it was essential to provide constructive criticism and refrain from rude language and behaviors. Moreover, mutual respect among group members was the key to collaborative writing, as members of a group should respectfully communicate with one another to find the best choice that works for every individual.

Discussion

The current study investigated the perceptions of the English-majored juniors at Van Lang University towards the use of collaborative writing strategy as well as exploring some potential solutions to the difficulties that the students encountered during the learning process. The results revealed that the students' perspectives on collaborative writing employment were positive regarding writing performance, writing outcomes, and soft skills. Moreover, a majority of students responded favorably to collaborative writing activities and found this strategy effective and appropriate. To be more specific, 74% of the respondents of this research realized that collaborative writing was a worthwhile experience for them, and the highest agreement rating (84%) belonged to group-work preference that a great number of students preferred working in groups to working alone after they had written collaboratively. Also, the highest rating (84%) in this study illustrated that collaborative writing could increase students' enthusiasm for writing skills. In fact, these findings were supported by the results of Veramuthu and Shah (2020). Similarly, collaborative writing had a great impact on the students' writing performances (Shehadeh, 2011).

With respect to knowledge and experience exchange in collaborative writing, the research showed that collaborative writing facilitated better exchange of knowledge, information, and experience among group members. The result was also similar to the finding of Laal (2012) and Dabao and Blum (2013). Specifically, Laal (2012) claimed that providing a learning space for knowledge and information transmission was the key feature of collaboration. According to Dabao and Blum (2013), the sharing of information and ideas through collaborative writing enabled students to work in groups to broaden their perspectives.

Regarding the completed workload in collaborative writing, this study indicated that working with other group members helped students complete more work, which was compatible with the finding of the study carried out by Veramuthu and Shah (2020). According to Veramuthu and Shah (2020), it was agreed by many students that more work was done in groups.

Regarding peer feedback in collaborative writing, the finding demonstrated that group projects helped to receive useful feedback, which greatly improved writing skills and raised awareness among students to recognize writing problems (Barnawi, 2010).

Concerning the opportunity to express ideas in groups, the students benefited greatly from collaborative activities because there were numerous chances for them to express their ideas in

groups. This finding was supported by Rokhaniyah (2016), who said that students were offered chances to express their relevant opinions based on evidence and reason to support their viewpoints.

When it comes to participation in collaborative writing, the finding indicated that 82% of the students actively took part in the learning process while working collaboratively. This positive result agreed with the study of Alhabeedi (2015). When students actively engaged in writing classes and utilized collaborative tasks, the learning appeared to be effective.

As far as confidence in collaborative writing was concerned, the finding showed that a great number of students felt more confident to collaborate in writing with other students during the process of completing group projects. This finding agreed with the finding of Talib and Cheung (2017), which stated that the outcome of working in groups encouraged students and boosted their confidence in learning. Furthermore, the data of this current study was consistent with the result of Veramuthu and Shah (2020). To be more specific, students worked in a more relaxing atmosphere while writing collaboratively.

Regarding students' perspectives on the influence of collaborative writing on writing skills, the study revealed that 80% of the respondents agreed that working in groups helped them gain new ways to organize their paragraphs and essays, as supported by Veramuthu and Shah (2020). Additionally, knowing the organization of essays in collaboration was one of the stages of process-based learning, which was useful for generating a common writing product Veramuthu and Shah (2020). Next, 66% of the students acknowledged that working in groups helped them get higher marks, which was supported by the study of Adolphus & Omeodu (2016). Specifically, they affirmed that students tended to have better writing performance with collaborative writing support. Getting higher marks had the least rating in the study might be explained by one reason which was a gap between passive members and active ones in a group. Unproductive students received the same marks compared to productive ones, regardless of their unequal contributions (Al Ajmi & Ali, 2014).

In terms of soft skills, the result showed that collaborative writing positively influenced students' problem-solving, communication, and critical-thinking skills. First of all, 82% of the students agreed that working in groups was a useful way of learning and improving their problem-solving skills. This finding was compatible with the study of Laal (2012) and Gohkale (1995). According to Laal (2012), collaborative writing offers responses to social issues and the ability to manage disagreement. Similarly, Gohkale (1995) placed special emphasis on the growth of collaborative learning, one of which was to develop students' problem-solving abilities. Secondly, the finding showed that collaboration fostered their communication skills. This result was consistent with the study of Tamimi & Attamimi (2014) which speaking ability could be improved to the maximum extent through collaborative writing. Furthermore, Aliyu (2007) claimed that the use of collaborative learning as an instructional approach developed social skills. Thirdly, the current research found that working in groups improved students' critical thinking skills, which obtained higher thinking order. Ali (2018) stated that collaborative writing gave students a place for constructive debates, which indicated their higher level of thinking. Also, the study of Mandusic & Blaskovic (2015) aligned with the finding collaborative tactics helped to reinforce critical thinking skills. This approach was observed as advantageous

as students could cultivate these soft skills through discussion, explanations of concepts, and evaluation (Veramuthu & Shah, 2020).

In response to students' perceptions of the drawbacks of collaborative writing, the results showed that despite the various advantages of collaborative writing, this study explored several concerns that the students in the EFL context experienced. First, in contrast to Jalili & Shahrokhi (2017), who suggested that it was not time-consuming in collaboration because receiving feedback from team members was helpful in planning, the data from this study revealed that a majority of students spent more time planning while they were writing collaboratively than they did when writing alone. Second, unequal contributions among group members occurred during the learning process. This finding was compatible with the study conducted by Ajmi & Ali (2014). They stated that passive members in the group depended on active ones for task completion, which caused unfairness in group work. Third, the finding illustrated that students faced the challenge of teammates' disagreement, so they lost their motivation to participate in collaborative writing activities, which was supported by Talib & Cheung (2017). They explained that due to continued conflicts among group members, some students might not be encouraged to get involved in group work.

Conclusion

In conclusion, depending on the findings from the questionnaire and interview questions, the study explored EFL students' perceptions towards the use of collaborative writing in Writing 5 course and suggested some solutions to the difficulties that third-year English majors encountered during the learning process. On the whole, students had positive perspectives on the strategy and found it a worthwhile learning writing method. Students who preferred working in groups to working alone after they had written collaboratively gained the highest rating. This implied that working in groups offered good experience and positive learning outcomes. Moreover, the influence of collaborative writing use on writing skills and soft skills had positive results, which indicated that collaborative writing assisted students in developing themselves in many different aspects. Apart from the advantages of collaborative writing, the questionnaire data revealed some typical drawbacks regarding time, engagement, disagreement, and contributions, which could be overcome through teachers' right instructions in accordance with students' learning styles.

In response to the second research question, the difficulties were attributed to students' contributions, time management, student conflicts, as well as students' motivation and learning autonomy. Among these obstacles, students' conflicts were seen to be the most problematic hardship that was right at students' concerns. It was due to the fact that many students working in a group had various opinions, which led to students' disagreement. Moreover, some potential solutions were shared from students' experience, including (1) unequal contributions, (2) student conflicts, (3) time management, (4) students' motivation and learning autonomy, and (5) the lack of vocabulary and speaking skills for discussing writing topics. These solutions can be a good reference for both students and lecturers to deal with the difficulties that students face while learning writing courses that employ collaborative writing.

Limitations

All things considered, shortcomings found in this thesis are unavoidable. For adequate argument, the thesis should have been strengthened by a larger size of participants, funds for deeper investigation, the researcher's sufficient practical experience, a specialized design for the questionnaire, and a better design for interview questions. The researcher is willing to collect any feedback, criticisms, comments, and judgments to accomplish the thesis. Furthermore, these assessments intend to reinforce the researcher's ability to execute other studies flawlessly in the upcoming years.

Acknowledgments

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Biodata

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Benefits and challenges of using LMS in blended learning: Views from EFL teachers and students at a Vietnamese public university

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Learning Management System (LMS), EFL teachers, EFL students, blended learning

Blended learning combines conventional classroom activities and online learning using a variety of educational technology tools, Learning Management System (LMS) included. The purpose of this paper is to examine the perceptions of EFL teachers and students about the use of LMS in blended courses. A mixed research method was adopted to collect data from 14 EFL teachers and 130 EFL students at a public university in central Vietnam through a web-based questionnaire and follow-up semi-structured interviews. The findings show that LMS offers EFL teachers and students a variety of benefits, including effective course organization and management, diverse teaching methods, flexible learning and teaching activities, and enhanced engagement and autonomy among students. However, the use of LMS in blended learning is perceived to be challenging because of technical issues such as unstable Internet connection and lack of needed devices, limited technical experience and skills, and a lack of e-learning pedagogy. Therefore, some recommendations were also proposed to improve the effectiveness of using LMS in blended learning.

Introduction

Blended learning, which is defined as the combination of traditional classrooms and virtual learning environments, has become a popular trend in recent years thanks to the advent of educational technology. A wide range of tools will be required to create an online learning platform that can support conventional lessons. Among the necessary tools for online learning activities, Dawley (2007) stated that a learning management system, often known as LMS, is a versatile tool that integrates all the functions teachers and students need to carry out effective teaching and learning activities. LMS is now a popular tool used widely in many institutions, especially at the tertiary level around the world in general (Aldiab et al., 2019; Lewis, 2016; Mtebe & Kissaka, 2015) and in Vietnam in particular (Khoa et al., 2020). In fact, LMS is

becoming an indispensable part of the teaching and learning process, especially in the digital era. In the context of blended learning, the role of LMS is even more important because it is seen as a link to connect virtual and physical classroom activities as well as a means to promote the interaction between teachers and students.

In response to the common trend that has taken place at many universities in the world and in Vietnam, the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University (HUFLIS), has implemented a Moodle-based LMS for nearly 10 years to innovate the teaching and learning methods. However, it was not until 2020 that the use of a newly-built LMS, which can be accessed at http://lms.huflis.edu.vn/, was systematically and thoroughly implemented across the entire institution to meet the need for blended learning as well as online learning as an emergent response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study context, the LMS is used as a common platform where teachers from all faculties of the institution can create online learning activities as well as share learning materials so that students can easily and conveniently access them. Learning activities organized on the LMS are used as a supplementary part of the curriculum, supporting face-to-face classroom activities. Although LMS is a universal and familiar concept in education, the use of LMS in teaching and learning has still been a novel experience with the majority of teachers and students at this institution in general and EFL teachers and students in particular. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study to investigate the EFL teachers' and students' perspectives on the use of LMS as part of the blended learning paradigm. This paper aims to explore the perceptions of EFL teachers and students in this institution of using LMS in blended learning. Specifically, the study objectives are twofold: 1) discovering how EFL teachers and students perceive the advantages and disadvantages of integrating LMS in EFL blended classrooms, and 2) collecting some suggestions that they think should be considered to improve the effectiveness of using LMS in the future.

Literature Review

Learning Management System

Learning Management System, shortly called LMS, has also been known by some other names such as Virtual Learning Environment - VLE or Course Management System - CMS (Kasim & Khalid, 2016; Piña, 2013). According to Rhode et al. (2017) and Kasim and Khalid (2016), LMS is defined as software that helps to manage and keep track of teaching and learning activities by allowing teachers and students to share learning materials and facilitate testing and assessment as well as enhance mutual communication between teachers and students via an online platform. Susanto et al. (2018) defined LMS as application software that allows students, content creators, lecturers, and administrators to access online learning content.

LMS can vary in its design and interface depending on whether it is a commercial product like Blackboard and Canvas or whether it is built upon a free open domain such as Moodle and Sakai and can be used in many different ways based on the needs of users. However, according to Dawley (2007), all LMSs are similar in that they provide users with tools to implement four main basic functions: 1) design and share learning content, 2) promote interaction between teachers and students, 3) assess students' progress, and 4) manage course content and students'

learning activities.

LMS provides teachers and students with a variety of functions that enable them to manage their teaching and learning activities flexibly, conveniently, and effectively on one single platform (Bradley, 2021). As it is an online application, LMS assists the teaching and learning process to take place with flexibility anywhere and at any time (Santiana et al., 2021). More than just a grade delivery service, Green and Chewning (2020) emphasizes that if appropriately used, LMS can be "a vehicle for critical pedagogy and praxis through technology" (p. 423). Kalinga (2010) said that LMS plays a significant role in online learning, while Kabassi et al. (2016) particularly emphasize the importance of LMS in blended learning. In the same vein, Reid and Reid (2019) believed that "learning management systems is a game-changer for traditional teaching and learning at adult and higher education institutions" (p.1).

LMS has been widely used in tertiary institutions worldwide because of its various benefits (Aldiab et al., 2019). Some of the most popularly used LMSs in universities around the world include Blackboard, Canvas, Sakai, eCollege, Moodle, etc. Among these LMSs, Moodle is a widely-chosen LMS that has been used in many institutions in Vietnam because of its user-friendliness, ease of use, and good technical support (Khoa et al., 2020). In this study, the term LMS is used to refer to a specific learning management system called http://lms.huflis.edu.vn/ (see Figure 1), which is built on Moodle platform and is being used at the University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University (HUFLIS), located in central Vietnam, where the research was conducted.

Figure 1

The illustration of the LMS used by the EFL teachers and students in the present study
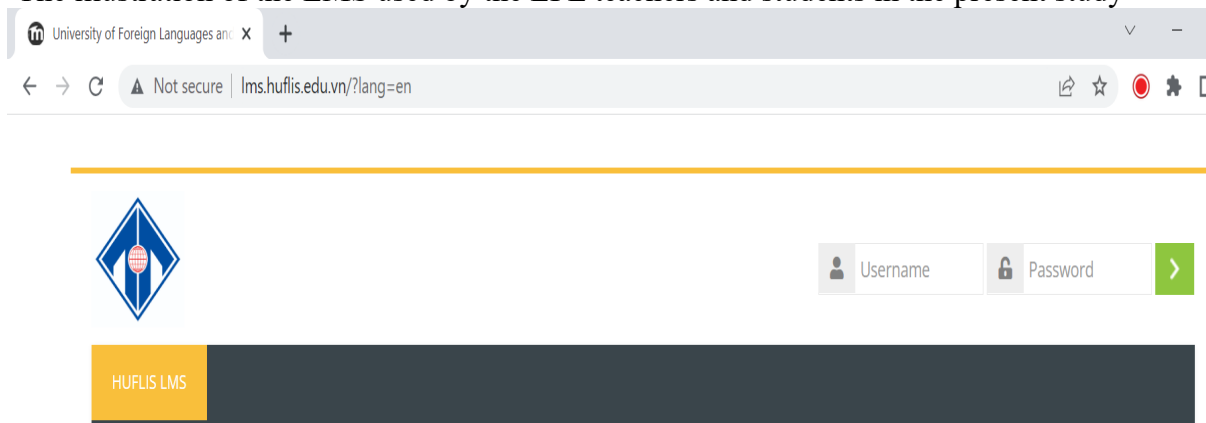
Learning Management System and Technology Acceptance Model

This study focuses on exploring teachers' and students' perceptions of using LMS, which is often referred to as one of the state-of-the-art applications in education. As teachers and students are the primary users of this technological platform, it is believed that how they perceive it can greatly influence their adoption. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a widely recognized theoretical framework that explores users' acceptance and adoption of technology. It was developed by Davis (1989) and has since been widely used in various fields, including education. Therefore, this study employed the TAM as its theoretical framework to explore teachers' and students' perceptions of using LMS.

The TAM posits that two key factors influence users' acceptance of technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use. Perceived usefulness refers to the extent to which individuals believe that using a particular technology will enhance their performance or productivity in achieving specific goals. When users perceive technology as useful, they are more likely to adopt and utilize it. The second factor of the TAM is perceived ease of use, which relates to the perception of how easy or effortless it is to use technology. When users perceive technology as easy to use, they are more likely to have a positive attitude toward it and be willing to adopt it.

In the context of blended learning, it can be inferred from the TAM that if teachers and students perceive the LMS as a useful tool for facilitating their teaching and learning experiences, they will tend to have a positive attitude and enthusiastic adoption of LMS in their practice. Likewise, it can be understood that teachers' and students' perceptions of the ease of using the LMS can also influence the way they employ this tool as part of blended learning. Regarding the study objectives, the perceived usefulness of LMS can broadly refer to its benefits, while the perceived ease of use can relate to its challenges. The following sections present the benefits and challenges of using LMS from the perspectives of different scholars.

Benefits of Using a Learning Management System

There are some noticeable benefits that LMS brings to teachers, students as well as administrators. First of all, Liu et al. (2019) believe that multifunctionality is one undeniable merit of using LMS as it provides teachers and students with all the tools they need for their teaching and learning activities just on one single platform. This convenience means that instead of combining different tools to design lessons, transmit the lessons to students, create tests, track students' learning activities, and interact with students, teachers now just need to access LMS to perform all the above tasks. Similarly, this all-in-one technical tool is everything that students need for their online learning.

Secondly, Kasim and Khalid (2016) said that most LMSs are designed to be user-friendly so that even people who have basic technical skills can learn to use LMS successfully with some initial guides. In addition, users can also manipulate LMS easily because of its simply-designed interface. LMS platforms often provide intuitive and visually appealing interfaces. The layout and organization of the platform are designed to be clear and straightforward, enabling users to locate and access the necessary tools and resources quickly. Icons, menus, and navigation paths are often designed to be intuitive, reducing the learning curve for users and allowing them to interact with the system seamlessly. Moreover, teachers can easily create and organize learning materials, such as documents, presentations, videos, and assessments, using simple and familiar editing tools on LMS. Uploading and sharing content is often as simple as drag-and-drop or a few clicks, allowing teachers to deliver their instructional materials to students efficiently.

Thirdly, authors like Cavus and Alhih (2014) and Choi (2019) mentioned interactivity as one of the advantages that LMS has over other teaching and learning tools because it enables interaction between teachers and students, students and students through communicative functions like Forums, Wiki and so on. As Garrison (2011) emphasized, online learning should not be just a one-way process in which learning materials are merely transmitted to students by

teachers, but it should be interactive. Therefore, the interaction-facilitating feature of LMS is very significant for both teachers and students.

Fourthly, according to Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018) and Santiana et al. (2021), flexibility is also an important benefit that LMS offers both teachers and students. LMS is especially useful for blended learning because teachers and students can have easy access to learning resources everywhere and at any time. Specifically, suppose on-campus learning activities are interrupted by natural disasters or sudden disease outbreaks such as the Covid-19 pandemic. In that case, students can still maintain their learning process by accessing designed learning materials and participating in learning activities on LMS. Besides, students can choose to revise the lessons shared on LMS as many times as they wish at their convenience, regardless of time and space, which is very useful for their learning pace and autonomy. Pham (2023) indicated that the combination of face-to-face and LMS learning activities enables students to become more autonomous as they have more chances to choose their time and place of learning as well as access a variety of learning materials at their own pace.

Fifthly, Aldiab et al. (2019) and Snoussi (2019) mentioned that another important benefit of using LMS is accessibility. Users can easily access LMS on a wide range of technological devices, such as laptops, desktops, and smartphones or tablets, through different web browsers or mobile applications. This makes LMS accessible to most users. Finally, as Piña (2013) and Khan et al. (2019) commented, LMS features contribute to the security of the courses. In fact, LMS allows administrators to assign roles to users, so it is effective and easy to manage the users' activities on LMS. Accordingly, only assigned teachers and enrolled students can have access to courses on LMS. Moreover, teachers can ensure the security of their courses by providing students with course ID or enrolment codes, which helps them avoid undesirable course participants. In fact, these aforementioned merits of using LMS make it a top educational tool for modern classrooms.

Challenges of Using a Learning Management System

Despite the undeniable advantages of using Learning Management Systems (LMS), it is also important to acknowledge and thoroughly examine the challenges that LMS users often face. Research conducted by Sayfouri (2016) and Bhalalusesa et al. (2013) highlights one of the most common drawbacks reported by LMS users, which is related to internet connectivity. The reliance on a slow or unstable internet connection can disrupt the use of LMS and significantly impact the teaching and learning process. As Uong, Nguyen, and Nguyen (2022) claimed, the Internet connection is often one of the most popular challenges that teachers encounter when carrying out online learning activities.

In addition to connectivity issues, studies by Al-Handhali et al. (2020) and Darvin et al. (2021) shed light on another challenge associated with LMS usage, namely the simply-designed interface of most LMS platforms. This simplistic design often leads to a monotonous and unattractive user experience, which can result in boredom among users. Consequently, maintaining user engagement becomes more challenging when utilizing LMS.

Furthermore, Bhalalusesa et al. (2013) point out that teachers and students often feel that they lack adequate guidance and instructions on how to effectively navigate and utilize LMS. This

absence of comprehensive guidance creates difficulties for users during their LMS application, hindering their ability to leverage the full potential of the system. Moreover, it is worth noting that using technological advancements, particularly LMS, requires users to possess a certain level of knowledge and skills (Al-Handhali et al., 2020). Many teachers and students admit that technology is not their forte, making it challenging for them to navigate and troubleshoot technical issues that may arise due to their limited technical knowledge and skills. Insufficient technical literacy and a lack of robust technical support, as highlighted by Sackstein et al. (2019), are common barriers that impede the effective utilization of LMS.

Lastly, Al-Handhali et al. (2020) emphasize the need for teachers to make proper adjustments in transitioning from a traditional learning environment to a virtual one. However, several teachers find it challenging to design and implement teaching activities on LMS in a manner that effectively supports students in achieving their desired learning outcomes. Consequently, teachers must strive to harmoniously combine technological and pedagogical elements to optimize the learning experience within the virtual context.

To fully grasp the challenges associated with LMS usage, it is crucial to consider these aforementioned factors, including internet connectivity, interface design, guidance and support, technological knowledge and skills, technical literacy, and pedagogical adaptation. By acknowledging and addressing these challenges, educators and learners can work towards maximizing the benefits offered by LMS while mitigating the potential obstacles that may arise.

Previous studies

Recently, a wide range of research has been conducted to acquire insight into the benefits and challenges of using LMS of different kinds from the viewpoints of both teachers and students in higher education in global contexts. For example, Zakaria et al. (2020) investigated the perspectives of undergraduates about the merits and demerits of using Google Classroom, a free access LMS offered by Google. The data were collected from a survey and semi-structured interviews with the participation of 103 students (60 females and 43 males) from a public university in Malaysia. The findings revealed that students perceived four major benefits that Google Classroom offered, including paperless communication, ease of access, interactions within a web-based community, and systematic class management. These students, however, also admitted that they met a range of challenges when using this type of LMS, such as difficulties in comprehending the lessons, late teachers' feedback, unreliable Internet connections, lack of interpersonal interaction, and lack of support. In addition, Biney (2020) and Michael and Yaa (2020) also investigated learners' perspectives on the use of Sakai LMS in Ghana. The findings from Michael and Yaa (2020) suggest that the use of Sakai LMS, especially its collaboration and communication tools, can enhance interaction between students and content, teachers and students, and among students and their overall learning. Meanwhile, Biney (2020) found from in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 50 adult learners that the majority of the learners faced such difficulties as lack of computer access, poor network, as well as power fluctuations when they started learning with the Sakai LMS.

In terms of teachers' and students' perceptions of LMS from the TAM perspectives, a number of studies have been reported in the literature. For instance, Alharbi and Drew (2014) adopted

the TAM to investigate the factors affecting teachers' attitudes toward the use of LMS in a public university in Saudi Arabia. A Likert-scale survey was used to collect data from 59 faculty members from different university colleges and departments to test whether teachers' perceived usefulness and ease of use of LMS affect their attitudes and intention to use LMS. The study findings validate the relationship between perceived ease of use, perceived usefulness, attitude towards usage, and overall impact on behavioral intention to use LMS in the study context. Also using TAM as a theoretical framework, Essel and Wilson (2017) investigated students' perceived usefulness as well as the perceived ease of use of Moodle in a specific university in Ghana. Data collected from 229 students through a questionnaire revealed that students' perceived usefulness of Moodle and perceived challenges in using Moodle had a significant contribution to their rate of Moodle use. Another study conducted in Brunie by Hamid, Salleh, and Laxman (2020) explored and explained the factors influencing students' acceptance of Learning Management Systems (LMS) as well as explained the effectiveness of using LMS in teaching and learning in a business school. This study used means of a survey questionnaire to collect responses from 98 students. It is revealed that the Subjective Norm and System Design significantly influence the students' LMS acceptance. The findings also show that content delivery on LMS helped to engage students and established viable interaction, which facilitated their understanding and better knowledge of their study.

In the EFL field, a number of studies have been conducted to investigate how teachers and students perceive the integration of LMS in English language education. For example, a study by Prasetya (2021) aimed at finding out the perceptions of EFL Indonesian teachers about the benefits and challenges when they integrated their lessons on Moodle LMS during the Covid-19 pandemic. The results from a survey with the participation of 54 English lecturers indicated that most lecturers had a positive perception of LMS. These participants mentioned a variety of benefits that they received when using LMS, including improving their quality of teaching and enhancing students' language abilities and self-learning competence. However, the study also showed that lecturers encountered many obstacles in terms of learning style and culture, e-learning pedagogy, technological problems, and time management when LMS is integrated into their teaching practice. Meanwhile, Elsayed (2022) conducted a qualitative study to explore the benefits and challenges of using Blackboard Collaborate as a learning tool from the perspectives of EFL students during the COVID-19 pandemic in Saudi Arabia. The data were collected from focus group interviews with 15 students. The findings showed that using Blackboard Collaborate helps the students enhance online cooperative learning, flexible learning, access to a wide range of information for academic purposes, and the ability to use technology effectively. However, the findings showed that the challenges faced by these students include insufficient technical knowledge and training, limited and poor internet connection, inability to upload and download large-size files, and problems with logging in passwords.

In Vietnam, many researchers have also studied the use of LMS from both teachers' and students' views, especially during emergent distance teaching and learning because of the Covid-19 impacts. Studies by Nguyen (2021), Cao (2021), and Le and Tran (2022) showed that both teachers and students at tertiary institutions across the country appreciated the benefits that LMS offers and showed a high level of satisfaction in using LMS. For example, Nguyen (2021) explored the influential factors on students' satisfaction with learning management systems,

especially Blackboard and Edusoft. The study employed a quantitative questionnaire to collect data from 300 students at a public university in South Vietnam. The findings revealed that several factors of LMS could decide students' satisfaction, including announcement system, instruction information, interaction, and technology quality. The study also implied that these factors were also areas that need to be taken into consideration for improvements to make students more satisfied with LMS use. Meanwhile, in Le and Tran's study (2022), the use of Zalo, a popular social networking site in Vietnam, as an LMS in a Business Analysis course conducted at a practical college was examined. The findings from data collected from 111 students through an online survey show that students are generally satisfied with the use of Zalo as an LMS. However, loads of distractions from many Zalo groups and a low level of interaction among students in Zalo are reported to be some of the limitations which can affect the effectiveness of using this social platform as an LMS. In her study, Cao (2021) found that Moodle LMS is one of the most popular technological tools that language teachers at public university use in blended learning.

The aforementioned studies in both global and national contexts imply that the integration of LMS in education in general and in English language education, in particular, brings both advantages and disadvantages to the teaching and learning process.

However, the above previous studies pay more attention to the perceptions of teachers and students of other disciplines about the use of LMS, so little is known about the perspectives of those who are involved in the EFL field in the higher education context. Moreover, it can be seen that these previous studies only reported the perspectives of either teachers or students about the pros and cons of using LMS, and none of those studies attempted to investigate what teachers and students recommend to improve the quality of LMS adoption, especially in the EFL context in Vietnamese higher education.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the answers to the following research questions are sought:

1. What benefits and challenges do EFL teachers and students at HUFLIS have when using LMS in blended learning?

2. What do EFL teachers and students at HUFLIS recommend to improve the use of LMS in blended learning?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was conducted at the Faculty of English, University of Foreign Languages and International Studies, Hue University, where the researcher is working.

Participants in the study included 14 EFL teachers and 130 EFL students, who were chosen using a convenient sampling technique. Among these participants, five teachers and 12 students were willing to participate in semi-structured interviews after the survey to discuss their responses to the survey items further. The teachers and students all have experienced using

LMS in their teaching and learning practice, especially during online learning due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. The demographic information of these participants is summarized below:

Table 1

Demographics of the participants

Teachers (N=14)				
Gender	Male		Female	
	2		12	
Teaching experience	Under 5 years	5-10 years	10-15 years	Over 15 years
	3	2	2	7
Teaching expertise	Language skills	Linguistics	Translation - Interpretation	Teaching methodology
	5	3	4	2
Students (N=130)				
Gender	Male		Female	
	14		116	
Years of study	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
	0	54	56	20
Majors	English language teaching Linguistics		English language	
	09		121	

Design of the Study

This study was conducted by adopting the mixed research method to collect data; as Dornyie (2007) stated, the combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches can help yield "an enriched understanding by illustrating, clarifying, or elaborating on certain aspects" (p.164). Accordingly, the data of this study were collected through a survey which was then followed by semi-structured interviews.

The instruments employed to collect data from the participants are two questionnaires, one for teachers and another for students, and a set of interview questions. The questionnaires include two parts: Part 1 aims at collecting general information about the surveyees, such as gender, years of teaching, and years of study, as summarized in Table 1 above; Part 2 consists of both close-ended and open-ended questions to investigate teachers and students' perceptions of LMS's advantages and disadvantages as well as their suggestions to improve the use of LMS. Initially, the first versions of the questionnaires were drafted based on the literature review and the research objectives and then piloted with the participation of three colleagues of the researcher and five students in her own classes. Meanwhile, the interview questions were closely designed in relevance to the questionnaire content so that the interviewees could share more information about their responses.

Data Collection & Analysis

The data collection procedure was carried out at the end of the Academic year 2020-2021, when the institution's LMS had been put into use in the previous semester as an immediate response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The survey was conducted both offline with printed questionnaires and online via web-based questionnaires at the participants' convenience. Meanwhile, follow-up semi-structured interviews were organized both offline around the campus and online via Zoom to get more insightful sharings from the teachers and students who had agreed to participate in the interviews. The participants' identities were assured to be kept confidential and anonymous.

The quantitative data collected from close-ended items in the questionnaires were calculated and presented in charts, whereas qualitative data collected from open-ended items and interview answers were synthesized and grouped using the thematic analysis technique to provide more in-depth support for quantitative findings. The thematic analysis was chosen to analyze the qualitative data as it is believed to be the most popular analysis method used in social science research (Dornyie, 2007)

Results/Findings

Benefits that EFL teachers and students perceived from the use of LMS in blended learning

EFL teachers and students participating in the survey were asked to express their perspectives about the benefits that LMS brings them in blended learning. They were required to choose from the list of some suggested advantages of LMS, which have been collected and reported from the literature review as well as share their opinions on the other benefits of LMS that have not been included in the list. The statistics of teachers' and students' responses to the multiple-choice items are presented in the following figure.

Figure 3

Teachers' and students' perspectives on the benefits of using LMS
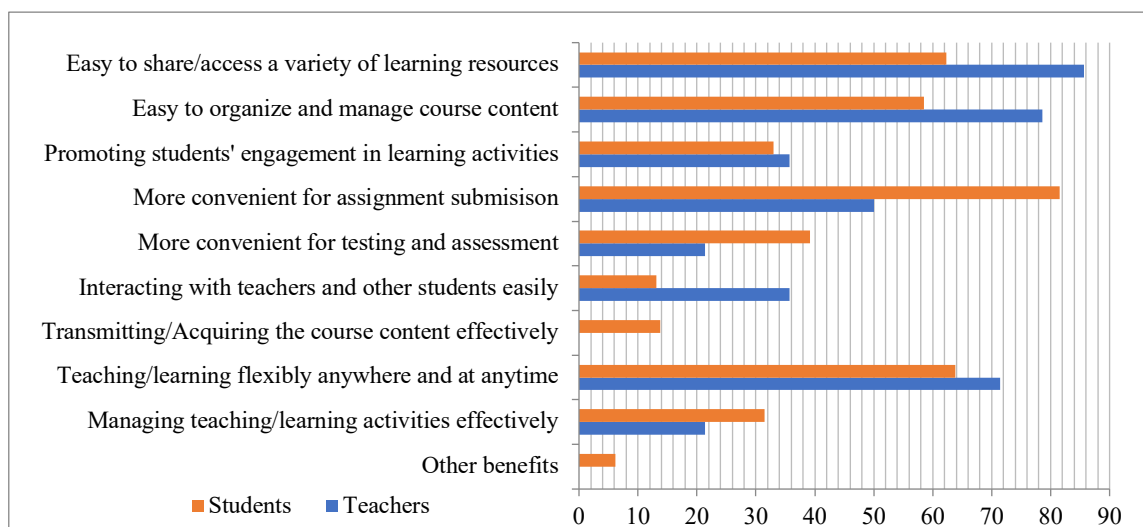
It can be seen from Figure 3 that the majority of survey participants highly appreciated the role

of LMS in blended learning because it is beneficial for them in certain ways. Particularly, the most widely-admitted benefits by both teachers and students are that LMS makes it easy to share or access learning materials (86% of teachers and 62% of students agree with this) and easy to organize and manage course content (78% of teachers and 58% students agree with this). Additionally, 71% of teachers and 64% of students agreed that teaching and learning on LMS is flexible compared to face-to-face classrooms. Besides, about 50% of teachers and over 80% of students said that using LMS is convenient for assignment submission. Although there is a slight difference in teachers' and students' preferences for each of these four advantages, it is noticeable that these features of LMS still outweigh other aspects mentioned in the list. Some other advantages of LMS, such as promoting students' engagement, better keeping track of students' learning activities, or convenience for testing and assessment, are also appreciated by teachers and students, but with much lower percentages.

In addition, some teachers and students in the survey also reported other advantages that they thought the integration of LMS brought to their teaching and learning process. Main themes were identified based on the semantic analysis of their answers, supported by some specific extracts from their responses in the survey. The summary of these responses is presented in the following table.

Table 2

Other benefits of using LMS shared by teachers and students in the survey

No.	Themes	Extracts from teachers' and students' responses
1	Various teaching activities	There are a wider variety of teaching activities in LMS than in a traditional classroom (T8).
2	Self-paced learning	I can revise the lessons many times (S19, S32). LMS helps me to save useful learning materials after each lesson so that I can revise them again later (S39, S44, SV87).
3	Better course management	I know when the deadlines are (S89). Course content can be organized more systematically (T6).
4	Time-saving	I can save time for traveling to the campus (S116, S32).
5	Learners' engagement	On LMS, students can be more flexible in presenting their viewpoints (S116).

As can be seen from Table 2, teachers and students mentioned some other benefits that using LMS support brought to their teaching and learning, including providing diverse teaching activities, supporting students' self-paced learning and engagement in learning, helping them manage course content effectively, and saving them time for traveling between their home and campus.

It can be seen from the above findings regarding the surveyed teachers' and students' perceptions of the benefits of LMS that both EFL teachers and students in the study highly appreciated the support of LMS towards their teaching and learning activities, especially in the organization and management of course content. In fact, one of the teachers revealed in the

follow-up interview that '*Since I used the LMS, I have organized my teaching materials in a clearer way, which helps me effectively manage my teaching content, especially when I have to be in charge of many courses at a time*' (T1). Similarly, a student said that '*My teacher shared many useful documents and links on LMS, so whenever I need to look at them, I only need to log in to my LMS account. It is very convenient for me*' (S8). This shows that LMS provides teachers and students a place where all the course content can be shared, organized, and accessed easily. Moreover, one teacher noted that '*there are a wider variety of teaching activities in LMS than in a traditional classroom*' (T8), which means that using LMS can change conventional teaching methods.

Based on teachers' and students' perceptions, flexibility is another merit of LMS in education. To specify, one teacher appreciated that '*Unlike traditional learning which has to take place at a certain classroom and on a fixed date and time, learning on LMS is much more flexible for me and my students because we can access the platform whenever and wherever we find it convenient*' (T3). Likewise, one of the students shared that '*I work part-time in a coffee shop, so my after-class schedule is quite busy. However, thanks to the LMS, I can still manage time to complete all of my assignments and revise the lessons when I have free time, even if it's at midnight* (S2).

In addition, LMS is also appreciated by both teachers and students as it helps to boost students' engagement and autonomy in learning activities. As shared by students in the open-ended questions, LMS allows them to revise the lessons as many times as they wish, which facilitates their self-paced learning. Moreover, the anxiety-free learning environment and asynchronous communication on LMS enable many reserve students to be more confident in sharing their viewpoints and become more engaged in the learning process, which is quite challenging in traditional classrooms.

Challenges that teachers and students met when using LMS in online learning

Before finding out what specific problems teachers and students had in using LMS, the researcher would like to see how many teachers and students among the participants often found it challenging to use LMS. The finding to this question is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4

The number of teachers and students who found it challenging to use LMS
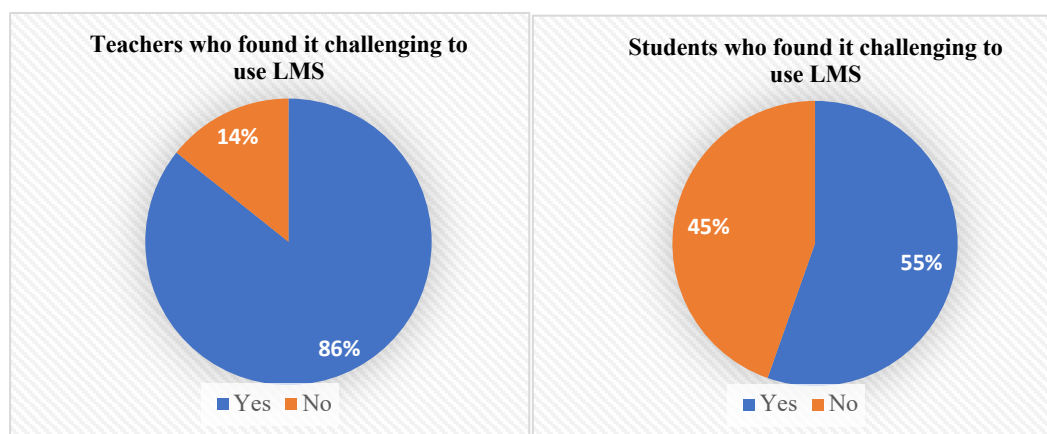
As Figure 4 reveals, the majority of teachers (86%) and over half of the students (55%) who partook in the survey admitted that they had difficulties using LMS. To better understand the difficulties that teachers and students encountered in their reality of using LMS, they were asked to indicate what problems they met based on the list of disadvantages that have been shown in previous studies. Additionally, they had a chance to share more about other difficulties they had that were not available on the list.

Figure 5

Challenges that teachers and students often face when using LMS
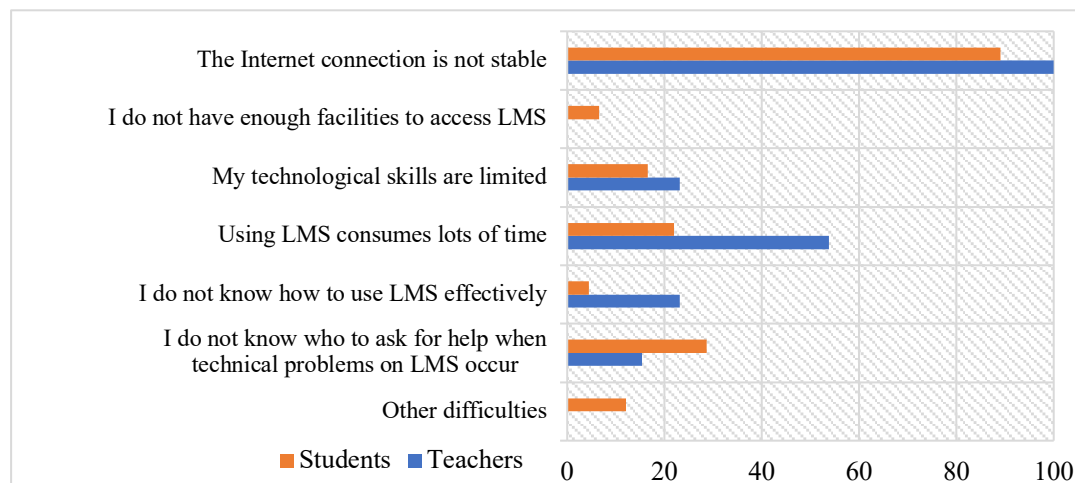

Figure 5 presents the summary of teachers' and students' responses about the popular problems that they had when using LMS. It can be easily seen that one of the most prevalent problems that both teachers and students faced and caused most of the inconvenience for them when using LMS is the unstable Internet connection because 100% of teachers and nearly 90% of students complained about this. Another big disadvantage that 54% of teachers were concerned about when using LMS is that it takes them a great amount of time to design and organize course content on LMS; therefore, they thought that the use of LMS is time-consuming. Moreover, there were about 20% of teachers admitted that their technical skills are limited and that they do not know all of the LMS functions; therefore, they found it challenging when using LMS.

From students' perspectives, besides the aforementioned common problems such as unstable Internet connection and time consumption, some other difficulties are more popularly met by students than teachers. Particularly, roughly 30% of students said that they lacked sufficient technical support when using LMS because they had no idea about whom to contact for help when they had problems. In addition, a small number of students (around 7%) shared that they lacked the necessary facilities, such as laptops, desktops, or smartphones, to access LMS in blended learning. Although this figure is humble, it reflects the fact that not every student has enough conditions for blended learning.

The table below also mentions some other challenges that teachers and students shared in the survey question. Again, based on their answers, some common themes were identified and exemplified by specific comments.

Table 3

Other challenges of using LMS shared by teachers and students in the survey

No.	Themes	Extracts from teachers' and students' responses
1	Unused functions	Many functions of LMS have not been discovered (T5).
2	Lack of effectiveness	It is more difficult to transmit the lesson content on LMS than in traditional classes (T13). Learning on LMS is difficult to understand the lesson content (S127).
3	LMS interface organization	I cannot find my courses on LMS (S117). There are too many courses on LMS, which makes me confused (S71). The interface of LMS is difficult to use (S102). The organization of courses on LMS is messy and easy to be mistaken (S88). The webpage format is messy, so it takes a lot of time to find the courses to enroll in (S90).
4	LMS unstable system	I have been kicked out of the courses regularly (S48). I do not know why I am unenrolled in the courses (S18). I am often kicked out of the system when taking tests (S31). I cannot access the course content (S94). The enrolled courses often disappear (S43). The webpage is out of work; I have lost all of my courses and have to wait for 2 days to submit my assignments (S100).
5	Cost of using LMS	Students who do not have wifi at home have to pay to use the Internet at the coffee shop (S127). It is costly to pay for Internet service on smartphones. (S80)
6	Effects on health	Looking at the screen for a long time makes my eyes hurt (S78).
7	Lack of interpersonal interaction	There is a lack of interaction because many teachers only upload lessons on LMS without any explanations. (S5).

As can be seen from Table 3, some teachers and students also listed other difficulties that they often faced when using LMS during blended learning, such as the lack of interaction and effectiveness, the limitations of LMS in terms of its unorganized interface and instability as well as the negative effects of using the LMS on their budget and health.

In terms of the challenges faced by these EFL teachers and students when using LMS, it can be recognized that technical issues such as unstable Internet connectivity and limited Internet access are often the most frequently-met problem for LMS users. The inconvenience caused by the low Internet connection might prevent both teachers and students from effective use of LMS in their teaching and learning activities. For example, a student complained that '*I was often kicked out of my courses on LMS, and sometimes automatically logged out when the tests were in progress' (S11)*. Meanwhile, one of the teachers participating in the interview shared that '*in*

addition to the great workload that I needed to do to create weekly lessons for several courses on LMS, the instability of the network and slow processing speed of the LMS server also took me a huge amount of time to wait for the complete manipulation each time' (T1).

Students' lack of facilities and Internet access is also a practical problem that must be considered. As shared by one student, '*My parents couldn't afford to buy me a laptop, so I have to depend on the available computer in our university library for accessing learning materials on LMS, which is quite inconvenient*' (S6). In addition, the lack of technical support and inadequate technical skills were also perceived as great obstacles that hinder teachers and students when they integrate LMS in their lessons. To exemplify, one student said that '*I had problems when accessing the LMS, but I didn't know whom to ask for help; I once asked my teacher, but she seemed to be confused as well*' (S5).

On top of these technical problems, teachers and students seemed more concerned about the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities on LMS. For example, a teacher shared that '*It is more difficult to transmit the lesson content on LMS than in traditional classes*' (T13), while a student also admitted that '*learning on LMS is difficult to understand the lesson content*' (S127). Actually, the mismatch between technological integration and e-learning pedagogy has always been of great concern that teachers encounter when they change from traditional teaching methods to online teaching activities. In the context of this study, most teachers at the institution were unprepared to use LMS, but because of the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak, they were urged to use LMS to implement online teaching in addition to traditional lessons on the campus. Therefore, they had not had sufficient previous experience and skills in designing and implementing learning activities on LMS.

EFL teachers and students' recommendations to improve the quality of using LMS

In the survey, the EFL teachers and students were asked to share some suggestions that they think should be taken into account to improve the effectiveness of using LMS in blended learning. There were a total of 62 suggestions from the teachers and students through the survey's open-ended questions and follow-up interviews. These suggestions were synthesized and categorized into groups into themes and sub-themes based on their similarity in semantic meanings. Overall, the suggestions made by EFL teachers and students tend to be relevant to the difficulties that they often had, as discussed in the previous part. The summary of their suggestions is presented as follows:

Table 4

Teachers' and students' recommendations to improve the quality of using LMS

No.	Themes	Sub-themes	No. of responses
1	Technological infrastructure	Improve the Internet connection and server	19
2	LMS quality and functions	Improve the LMS stability	15
		Redesign and reorganize the LMS interface	9
		Add a notification feature on LMS	6
		Make use of the video-conferencing function on LMS	3
3	Teachers' responsibility	Improve the teachers' use of LMS	6
		Provide more teachers' support	4
4	Administrators and IT staff's responsibility	Provide more technical support	6
		Provide more training, workshops, and seminars	4

As can be noticed from Table 4, one of the top suggestions that most EFL teachers and students proposed is the improvement of technological infrastructure. Specifically, they mentioned the necessity to upgrade the Internet connection and server to avoid the interruption of LMS use, especially during the peak time in the university's planned schedules. As one teacher mentioned in the interview, '*the fact that LMS was overloaded and out of work not only affects the online teaching and learning process but also wastes a huge amount of time for both teachers and students (T5)*. As a result, the improvement in the Internet connection and LMS server is one of the greatest concerns of many EFL teachers and students to make sure that teaching and learning activities can be smoothly implemented.

The second aspect which needs improving is the quality of the LMS itself. There is a need to adjust the interface of the current LMS to make it more user-friendly and clearly organized so that both teachers and students can easily manipulate the LMS. More specifically, in terms of the interface design, it is suggested that '*the font size should be bigger and that each course should have a unique profile image for students to recognize it easily*' (S7). Furthermore, '*there should be a function that allows students to change from this semester to another one so that we can better keep track of their current and previous courses*' (S10). Another suggestion regarding the LMS features that some EFL teachers and students mentioned is that it should have a notification reminder so that students can quickly update the course announcement, especially the assignment deadlines, to avoid late submissions. As a student commented, '*LMS is a separate website that is not linked with other student management websites, so students often miss the announcements and deadlines because they do not receive any notifications. Therefore, it would be better to link LMS with popular communication tools such as email or social media like Facebook* (S6). Adding a notification reminder on LMS is hoped to make it more instantly updated so that they can keep up with the latest news or announcement from teachers. Moreover, one teacher said that '*the current LMS lacks interaction, so I have to use other video conferencing tools such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Cisco Webex to conduct*

synchronous lessons' (T4). In fact, Moodle LMS also embeds a video-conferencing function which is called BigBlueButton; however, not many teachers and students are informed and instructed to use this application. Therefore, it is necessary to make use of all available functions on LMS and provide more guidance for teachers and students so that they can have better experience teaching and learning on LMS.

Thirdly, in terms of the teachers' responsibility, students also recommended that teachers should invest more time and make more efforts to use LMS more effectively. It can be undeniable that because of a lack of guidance and enthusiasm, many teachers still have a reluctant attitude toward the use of LMS, so they do not really make effective use of this tool in their teaching practice. Some students thought that learning activities on LMS are not effective because '*some of their teachers only upload course content and create discussion forums on LMS without spending time replying to students' posts on forums*' (S9). Therefore, students expect that teachers should spend more time engaging in LMS activities with students, not only providing learning resources so that students will not feel a lack of social presence when learning on LMS. In addition, students also expected to receive more support from their teachers to help them overcome problems related to the use of LMS, such as late submissions due to Internet corruption.

Last but not least, university administrators should provide more technical training and seminars for EFL teachers to help them improve their use of LMS, especially in the context of blended learning. As a teacher shared, '*more seminars should be held so that we can have a chance to exchange experience in using LMS in particular and in blended learning in general. In addition, there should be more workshops on how to use LMS for teachers and students to explore its functions adequately and effectively*'(T3). Moreover, students also expected to receive more technical support from the IT staff. For example, a student suggested including a support chatbox on the LMS interface so that they can immediately ask technical staff for help when they need it.

Discussion

Generally, it can be seen from the findings that the majority of EFL teachers and students in the survey showed a positive attitude toward the use of LMS as a teaching and learning tool in the blended learning environment. The teachers' and students' perceptions of using Learning Management Systems (LMS) in blended learning indicate both benefits and challenges. The positive aspects of LMS usage were observed in terms of its support for organizing and managing course content, which both teachers and students highly appreciated. This finding aligns with the multifunctionality of LMS discussed by Liu et al. (2019) and Zakaria et al. (2020), as it allows for various teaching and learning activities to take place conveniently on a single platform, facilitating effective management of the teaching and learning process. Additionally, the flexibility of LMS, as perceived by teachers and students, resonates with the merits of LMS highlighted by Santiana et al. (2021). Holmes and Prieto-Rodriguez (2018) and Elsayed (2022) also emphasize the benefits of flexible learning enabled by LMS, which was acknowledged by the majority of students in the study. Students appreciated the opportunity to

revise lessons at their own pace, facilitating self-paced learning. Moreover, the anxiety-free learning environment and asynchronous communication on LMS allowed reserved students to gain confidence in sharing their viewpoints and become more engaged in the learning process, which can be challenging in traditional classrooms. Prasetya (2021) further supports the notion that LMS enhances students' autonomy, making it an effective educational tool.

On the other hand, the study also identified several challenges faced by EFL teachers and students when using LMS, predominantly related to technical issues. Unstable Internet connectivity and limited access were the most frequently encountered problems reported by LMS users, in line with the findings of Bhalalusesa et al. (2013), Sayfouri (2016), Zakaria et al. (2020), and Biney (2020). These technical challenges hindered the effective use of LMS in teaching and learning activities. Furthermore, the lack of facilities and Internet access among students posed practical difficulties that need to be considered. Inadequate technical support and insufficient technical skills were also identified as significant obstacles for teachers and students integrating LMS into their lessons. The studies by Bhalalusesa et al. (2013), Suzanne et al. (2019), Al-Handhali et al. (2020), and Elsayed (2022) also highlight technical problems as commonly faced challenges in LMS usage. In addition to technical issues, teachers and students expressed concerns about the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities on LMS. The mismatch between technological integration and e-learning pedagogy has been a longstanding concern for teachers transitioning from traditional teaching methods to online teaching activities, as noted by Al-Handhali et al. (2020) and Prasetya (2021). In the context of this study, most teachers at the institution were unprepared to use LMS but were compelled to adopt it due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, they lacked sufficient previous experience and skills in designing and implementing learning activities on LMS, which further contributed to the challenges faced.

While the study highlights the benefits of LMS in terms of content organization, flexibility, student engagement, and autonomy, it also emphasizes the technical challenges faced by both teachers and students, as well as concerns about the effectiveness of teaching and learning activities. These findings align with the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which suggests that user acceptance and adoption of technology are influenced by factors such as perceived usefulness and ease of use. In the case of LMS, the benefits identified in the study support the perceived usefulness, while the challenges and concerns highlight the importance of addressing usability issues and providing adequate technical support to enhance user acceptance and adoption of LMS in blended learning environments.

Conclusion

The findings of the study have shown that LMS is perceived to be necessary for blended learning by both EFL teachers and students because it facilitates their teaching and learning activities. Although this could be a novel experience for both EFL teachers and students, most of them share a common consensus that LMS offers them a variety of benefits, such as facilitating effective course organization and management, diversifying teaching methods, providing more flexibility for learning and teaching activities, and promoting students'

engagement and autonomy. However, it is also understandable that the use of LMS might be troublesome and challenging for many EFL teachers and students because of some popular technical issues, their limited technical experience and skills, and a lack of e-learning pedagogy. Therefore, to improve the effectiveness of using LMS in blended learning in the future, some measures should be taken into consideration to support both teachers and students. To be specific, it is necessary to have a frequent survey tool to collect EFL teachers' and students' feedback about the current LMS so that timely support and adjustment can be given. The university's administrative board should also consider upgrading the Internet connection and the LMS server to avoid system overload and errors. It is also recommended that some practical functions, such as notification reminders via email or video conferencing, be added to LMS and introduced to the users. There should also be more workshops, either organized online or on-site, to instruct students on how to use LMS effectively and how to deal with popular technical problems. To assist teachers, it is also recommended that more professional development seminars should be held frequently so that they can exchange experiences on how to use LMS, design online lessons, and share effective online teaching methods. These kinds of seminars will be useful in making teachers more confident with the use of LMS in online learning as well as blended learning.

The present study has some limitations that can affect the generalization of its findings. Firstly, in the study context, the number of EFL teachers and students who participated in the data collection was still humble. Besides, the data were collected from a specific educational setting; therefore, the results can be only applicable to the study context and are unable to represent the perspectives of the whole community of EFL teachers and students in Vietnam. Secondly, in addition to the research instruments, including surveys and interviews, more data could have been collected through the report of teachers' and students' use of LMS to have a more comprehensive foundation in understanding their actual adoption of LMS.

For further research on a similar topic, there can be comparisons between teachers' and students' levels of engagement with LMS and their satisfaction. Future studies can also investigate the effects of using LMS on particular aspects of EFL classrooms, such as English skill development or learner autonomy.

Acknowledgments

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Biodata

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The English Majored Students' Perceptions of Using Flipgrid in Online Speaking Classrooms

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Abstract

In this day and age, as COVID-19 has led many schools to study online, technology plays an important role in facilitating classrooms. Speaking seems to be one of the most difficult skills to study online, as this needs direct communication among students. There has been much research on using technological applications to assist students in online learning. However, studies exploring university students' perceptions of online platforms such as Flipgrid are quite scarce. This mixed-method study aimed to explore that aspect by using questionnaires and interviews to investigate students' perspectives after a course using Flipgrid in online speaking classrooms. The participants were first-year students who studied online speaking modules in Foreign Language Department at Van Lang University. The result showed that students believed that Flipgrid created a sharing environment for them to learn from their friends and lower their anxiety as this did not bring too much pressure they have when they needed to present in front of face-to-face classrooms. The findings also revealed that there were some discrepancies in the perceptions between high and low-level students in terms of improving their pronunciation. High achievers tend to value this benefit more than their lower counterparts.

Introduction

Speaking has always been considered to be the most challenging skill for language learners as it demands a lot of sub-skills (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Furthermore, speaking is also related to students' anxiety in classrooms, as students are under pressure to perform in front of their peers (Woodrow, 2006). This brings many challenges to students, especially students at the tertiary level in Vietnam, as they have been learning English for many years focusing on grammar and vocabulary with little emphasis on speaking skills.

This difficulty is even intensified when students learn to speak online, where they just have access to their computers without talking in person with their lecturers or their peers. Students have reported that they feel isolated when online classes lack personal connections (Kaufmann & Vallade, 2020). Furthermore, a growing number of studies have stated that students need a

sense of community to learn effectively in both online and face-to-face classrooms (Eyler, 2018; Holbeck & Hartman, 2018). Vygotsky (1978) also claimed that learning a language can be conducted successfully when social factors are met, which means the learners have an environment to build their knowledge and practice in a community. Language acquisition is a result of participating and performing. This becomes harder in distant learning as students and teachers do not have in-person contact with each other. This disadvantage of online classrooms has led many educators to find out platforms and solutions to compensate for these lacking factors.

Technology can bring many benefits to online teaching and learning in terms of improving learners' academic achievement when utilized appropriately and effectively (Sharma et al., 2011). In an online course, students can feel isolated, and the use of video can cut that transactional distance and strengthen connections between students (Delmas & Moore, 2019). Flipgrid is one of the applications that can be used to facilitate speaking practice for students, and it can even give each student equal chances to express their thoughts (Mango, 2019). Thanks to the fact that students can have time to prepare for their talk and then post their videos on this platform, Flipgrid has become very supportive of online classes (Edwards & Lane, 2021; Petersen et al., 2020). However, in the Vietnamese context, there has been a lack of studies about Flipgrid, especially in online classrooms. For those reasons, this research aims to investigate students' perceptions of this platform so that educators can know how to maximize students' participation in class; according to Weaver (2005), learners' participation is influenced by their perceptions and experiences in classrooms.

The use of ICTs in teaching speaking skills

Speaking is an essential part of learning foreign languages and has always been a set of skills that requires many sub-skills and abilities from students. Students usually feel under pressure when they need to perform speaking tasks in class. (Al Nakhalah, 2016). Therefore, it is vital to investigate different effective teaching methods and tools to facilitate student speaking activities. In the modern era, when technology has advanced significantly, it is also crucial to use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to improve students' speaking skills. ICTs make learning more creative and engaging as technological tools are usually up-to-date and can provide students with the latest knowledge. Various studies have been conducted to examine the extent to which ICTs have improved students' speaking proficiency, such as the research of Drigas and Charami (2014) and Idayani and Sailun (2017), which explored the effectiveness of using different technological applications. The findings found that the use of ICTs made students feel more motivated and facilitated interaction among students. This stems from the fact that thanks to ICTs, students have chances to be exposed to the language they study, especially in online classrooms, where students might need extra access to the language and interaction to learn a foreign language effectively. Furthermore, ICTs play a vital role in providing the factor of social presence, which will be discussed below.

Social presence in an online classroom

Some scholars have defined social presence. According to Short, Williams, and Christie (1976), social presence is related to how much students feel that their classmates in instructors are jointly involved in communicative interaction. It is more about feeling and awareness, especially in an online learning environment. "Social presence in cyberspace takes on more of a complexion of reciprocal awareness by others of an individual and the individual's awareness of others . . . to create a mutual sense of interaction that is essential to the feeling that others are there'' (Cutler, 1995, p. 18). According to Tu and McIssac, "social presence is the degree of feeling, perception, and reaction to being connected by Computer-Mediated Communication

(2002, p. 140). Based on these definitions, it can be inferred that online classrooms bring about challenges to students in terms of having a social presence, as students cannot see and interact directly with each other. That is why many researchers have investigated the use of asynchronous video-based discussions in online classes, aiming to provide students with a social presence as much as possible.

While a synchronous learning environment can provide learners with instant interactions with their instructors and their peers, an asynchronous learning network can provide learners with chances to practice and interact outside classrooms, which is beneficial for their studying (Hiltz & Goldman, 2004). In most online learning contexts today, asynchronous video-based discussions like forums or discussion boards are widely used to facilitate communication between teachers and students. These platforms can allow students to interact with teachers and their peers in a friendly and convenient way, as they can express their thoughts any time they want. (Lowenthal, West, Archambault, & Borup, 2020). Among a lot of platforms and applications that can provide asynchronous channels for distance learning, Flipgrid is becoming common during the online-teaching eras due to its easy access and use and its practicality as well.
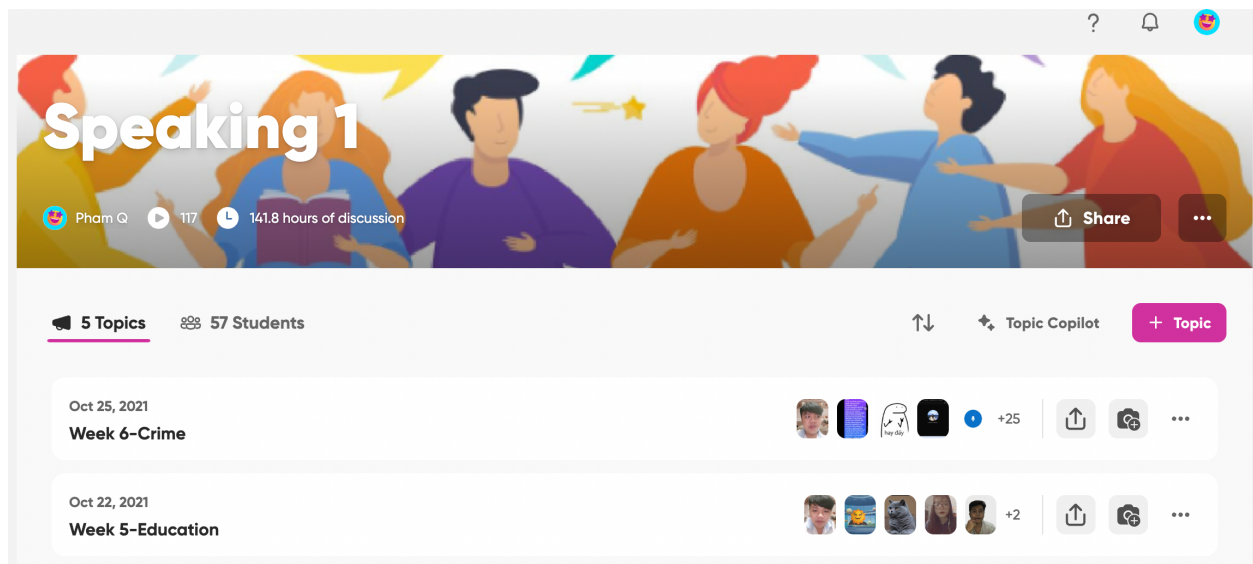
Flipgrid

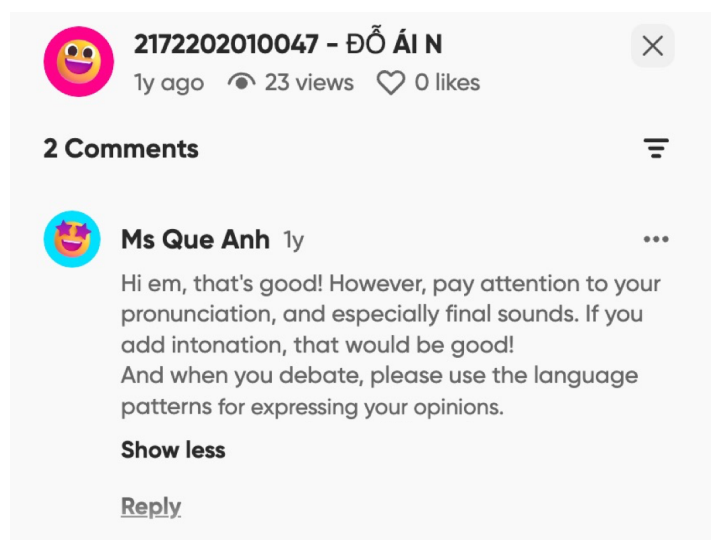**Figure 1** *Flipgrid's website interface*

Figure 2 *Flipgrid's comment section*

Flipgrid is a website allowing students to post their videos to discuss the topics issued by teachers. It can be considered as a social media platform where students and teachers can communicate with each other. According to Tim Green and Jody Green (2018), this kind of platform enables teachers to follow a learner-centered approach to teaching, as students can freely share their thoughts and need to proactively think about the topics and express their ideas in front of the "virtual class", which can compensate for the lack of interaction in online classes, allowing students to listen and learn from their peers, hence retrieving the knowledge themselves. The study of Delmas and Moore (2019) investigated the utilization of Flipgrid in undergraduate and graduate classes. The findings showed that students could experience a strong feeling of community and connection, which is very beneficial to their learning process. Furthermore, Flipgrid is also user-friendly and very accessible to students. It is also appealing to those who seek an interactive and colorful platform when studying online (Stoszkowski, 2018).

Students' Perceptions of Flipgrid

There is some research carried out to explore the utilization and the effects of Flipgrid in facilitating online classes. Tuyet and Khang (2020) conducted a study to investigate whether Flipgrid helps to ease learners' anxiety while speaking English and how they perceived this platform as an educational tool. The study focused on high school learners using a quasi-experimental method and mixed method, and the result showed that this platform truly decreased the feelings of anxiety among students when they spoke English, and they held a positive attitude towards Flipgrid in terms of receiving instant feedback and having a friendly environment to express their thoughts. Likewise, Holbeck and Hartman (2018) reviewed Flipgrid as an effective tool for communication between students and teachers in secondary classrooms.

Regarding the perceptions of students about the effects of Flipgrid on students' speaking skills, there are several studies conducted to examine this field. The research conducted by Keiper, White, Carlson, and Lupinek (2021) examined Flipgrid's effectiveness in business classrooms, using both Likert-scale questions and open-ended questions. The findings show that students find Flipgrid very helpful in terms of creating an interactive place for students to practice their speaking skills. Similarly, McLain (2018) also surveyed students' perceptions of Flipgrid in business English writing classes. The author opined that even in the writing classroom,

encouraging students to speak is still necessary as it can help students to remember lessons longer. The findings showed that most students found Flipgrid user-friendly and their speaking time was extended, and their confidence in speaking was reinforced.

Although those studies examined students' perceptions, university students' perspectives have not been investigated adequately in the research field. In most studies, high school students and adults are examined significantly. Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap by investigating university students' perceptions of Flipgrid, and it also wants to investigate the differences in perceptions of high-and low-performing students about this platform. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are students' perceptions of using Flipgrid in online speaking classrooms?

2. What are the similarities and differences between high- and low-performing students' perceptions of using Flipgrid in online speaking classrooms?

Research Method

The study was conducted using mixed methods, which means the data were collected in both quantitative and qualitative approaches. While a quantitative approach allows the researcher to have a quite larger number of samples, which strengthens the reliability and generalization of the research, qualitative research is used to get an understanding of social phenomena from some individuals' perspectives and to put the issues in particular social contexts (Bergman, 2008). Therefore, not only does the mixed-methods research reduce the drawbacks of each approach, but it also bolsters the findings' validity (Robson, 2011). Specifically, using different methods combines quantitative and qualitative in the form of triangulation to provide richer and more comprehensive data (Neuman, 2014).

To answer the first question about students' perceptions of using Flipgrid in online speaking classes, a questionnaire and interviews were both used to investigate students' perspectives of Flipgrid. The questionnaire was adapted from the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) (Davis, 1989; Davis et al., 1989). This model was popular in terms of examining attitudes and beliefs towards one specific aspect. According to this model, when exploring the perspective and acceptance of people towards one technological tool, two elements need to be investigated. The first one is perceived usefulness (PU), and the second is perceived ease of use (PEU). These elements are influenced by numerous variables such as level of education (Burton-Jones, Hubona, 2005) and societal factors (Shen et al., 2006). A variety of studies have used this model to investigate people's perceptions towards different technological applications, some of which was the study of Alfadda and Mahdi (2021), who examined students' use of Zoom, or the study to examine users' acceptance of mobile library application (Rafique at al., 2020), mobile learning technologies (Mugo et al., 2017). Therefore, the TAM model was used in this research to examine students' perspectives towards using Flipgrid in speaking class. The questions were designed based on the four elements of people's satisfaction toward a technology, Perceived of Usefulness (Questions 1,2,3), Perceived Ease of use (Questions 6,7), User Satisfaction (Questions 4,5,8), Attribute of Usability (Questions 9,10,11)

Five Likert-scale questions were used to ask students to confirm their level of agreement (1- Strongly disagree and 5- Strongly agree) to each item. For the second question, which investigates differences in perspectives of high-and low-performing students about Flipgrid, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 3 high performers and 3 low performers. The criteria for choosing these students were based on teachers' assessments of their assignments throughout the course and their average scores from the midterm test of this speaking module.

The time to conduct the questionnaire and interview was at the end of the course. Those who achieved scores above 8.0 were high-level students, and those who gained below 5.0 were low-level students. The interview questions were designed to investigate their insights about Flipgrid, specifically about their preferences in terms of feedback and activities on this platform, some challenges they met during the time posting the video, and open-ended questions are used to investigate further opinions about Flipgrid and their suggestions in using Flipgrid in online classes. The questions for the interview were based on the items given in the questionnaires, which means they were asked to give the reasons for the answers they gave to each question in the survey. There were 10 questions in the interview, but additional questions can be asked to obtain more information from the participants' answers.

The participants were 50 first-year students who majored in English at Van Lang University (25 low and 25 high-level students). The module examined was Speaking 1. Flipgrid was used as a platform where students posted their videos responding to several discussion questions related to specific topics. Each week, they needed to post one video, and they had six days to complete one video weekly. A lecturer and a teaching assistant frequently checked the assignment and gave feedback in a comment section below each video. In the first week, the lecturer posted one video to guide students on how to use the website and point out all benefits students would get if they used this platform. To further encourage students to do this assignment, a reward system was applied for those who posted their videos the earliest and put much effort into answering the questions.

Data analysis

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The research was conducted in the classroom of first-year students at one university. The participants were from two classes studying the speaking module. This module focuses on helping students to improve their fluency and pronunciation about some academic topics like education, and crime. They had never used Flipgrid before, so their experience with this platform was new. The speaking module lasted 10 weeks. The homework every week required students to answer three to five questions about designated topics by posting individual videos on Flipgrid. They could use their phones or their computers to self-record themselves, and they could use any filters or applications to make them look nice and more confident to publish their videos for the whole class.

Design of the Study

The study was conducted over 10 weeks. In the middle of the course (week 6), students participated in the mid-term test so that their scores could be used as the criteria to identify high and low-level students. After week 10, students were given the questionnaires to fill in, and six students were chosen to participate in the interview. The consent form was also integrated into the survey to make sure they agreed with the anonymous data being used for the study.

Data collection & analysis

The response to the questionnaire was collected within a week. Fifty students responded to the questionnaire. Microsoft Excel analyzed this quantitative data to determine the mean scores each time. The interview was conducted online using Skype, and the call was recorded to save the data for analysis. Regarding the interview data, it was used to support and explain the results

of the questionnaires. The qualitative analysis was conducted by synthesizing and analyzing the obtained data through the interview (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2018)

Findings

Students' Perceptions of Using Flipgird in Online Classes

50 students responded to the questionnaire, and all 6 students participated in the interview. The quantitative data collected expressed the overall picture of students' perceptions of using Flipgrid, and the qualitative data expressed their insights about using Flipgrid.

Table 1

Student Perceptions of Flipgrid (1-5 point scale; N=50)

	Items	To what extent do you agree?					Mean	SD
		1- strongly disagree	2- disagree	3- uncertain	4- agree	5- strongly agree		
1	Flipgird helped to develop my fluency	2%	8%	14%	34%	40%	4,02	1,04
2	Flipgrid gave me a tool to correct my pronunciation	4%	4%	18%	40%	30%	3,94	1,02
3	Flipgrid helped me to be more motivated to practice speaking to make good videos	2%	8%	26%	36%	24%	3,78	1,00
4	Flipgrid lowered my anxiety when expressing ideas in English to others	0%	2%	18%	52%	24%	4,04	0,86
5	Flipgrid made me more motivated to post videos as I can see my friends' videos there.	2%	2%	24%	40%	28%	3,96	0,90
6	Flipgrid created a sharing environment in online classes	2%	2%	16%	48%	28%	4,22	0,74
7	Flipgrid is easy to use	4%	4%	22%	36%	30%	3,86	1,03
8	Flipgrid's interface is eye-catchy and attractive	2%	12%	32%	46%	36%	3,54	1,11
9	The feedback on Flipgrid is helpful for me	0%	2%	16%	42%	38%	4,20	0,78
10	I prefer video feedback to written feedback	4%	4%	10%	36%	44%	4,14	1,03
11	Teachers' guideline videos on Flipgrid made me more motivated to post my videos	2%	10%	18%	34%	34%	3,90	1,05

Most students recognize the usefulness of the platform via items 1 and 2, in which approximately 70% of them agreed that Flipgrid has helped them to improve their fluency and

pronunciation. This concurs with the study of Damayanti and Citraningrum (2021), whose findings also stated that Fligrid has successfully improved students' performance in terms of speaking skills. Regarding item 3, which expresses the motivational factor when students used this platform, around 60% agreed that Flipgrid made them more motivated to practice speaking so that they could make good videos. Regarding the Ease of use (Items 7 and 8), most students also agreed that this platform was easy to navigate and it also looked very attractive. This was in line with the study of Esparrago et al. (2022), whose research also found that students regarded Flipgrid as a user-friendly application to practice speaking skills.

The questionnaire data show that Flipgrid created a sharing environment in class (Item 6). The average response was 4,22 on a 1-5 scale, with 76% confirming that they either agree or strongly agree that it did. In the interview, students emphasized the importance of a sharing environment in an online class.

> *"If I just individually submitted my recording to teachers, I didn't have a chance to learn from my friends as some questions were too hard for me to answer, but when the whole class needed to share their answers, I could know their perspectives and opinions about the topics, hence having more ideas to speak" (P1)*

Furthermore, they also reported that Flipgrid helped lower their anxiety when they needed to express their thoughts in front of the class (Item 4), with 76% expressing their agreement that it did. They explained that Flipgrid provided them with time to prepare for ideas so that they felt more comfortable expressing their thoughts on a platform.

> *"If I study online, I think I cannot express my ideas in front of the class as I'm scared of public speaking, and for 12 years, I have been studying grammar, not speaking like this, so I'm not confident in my speaking skills. Flipgird helped me to feel less stressed as I have time to prepare for my answer, and recording a video seems less difficult than speaking in front of the whole class". (P2)*

They also stated that when they saw their friends' videos on Flipgrid, they became more motivated to post their own videos (Item 5), which they could not feel if they submitted their videos individually.

> *"At first, I felt a bit shy to showcase my video to the whole class, but when I saw some first videos posted by friends, I felt more motivated to upload my own video" (P1)*

In terms of feedback, the results from the questionnaire show that most students believed that the feedback from teachers was very important for them to improve and more motivated to post their next videos (Item 9), with the average response being 4,20 on 1-5 scale, and 80% confirming that they either agree or strongly agree that the feedback on Flipgrid was helpful for them. In the interview, they also state the importance of feedback.

> *"Teachers and teaching assistants should have prompt feedback for the video as it is very supportive and helpful for me to correct my mistakes, so I can improve more in the next videos. (P3)*

Regarding the form of feedback, most students preferred video feedback over written feedback (Item 10), with the mean score being 4,14 on a 1-5 scale.

> *"I wish I could receive feedback in the form of videos as this can be more interactive and friendly. I would rather listen to my teachers giving examples on how to speak better rather than just reading some written feedback in the comment section" (P2)*

Similarities and Differences in High and Low performing Students' Perceptions of Using Flipgrid in Online classes.

Similarities in High and Low performing Students' Perceptions of Using Flipgrid in Online Classes.
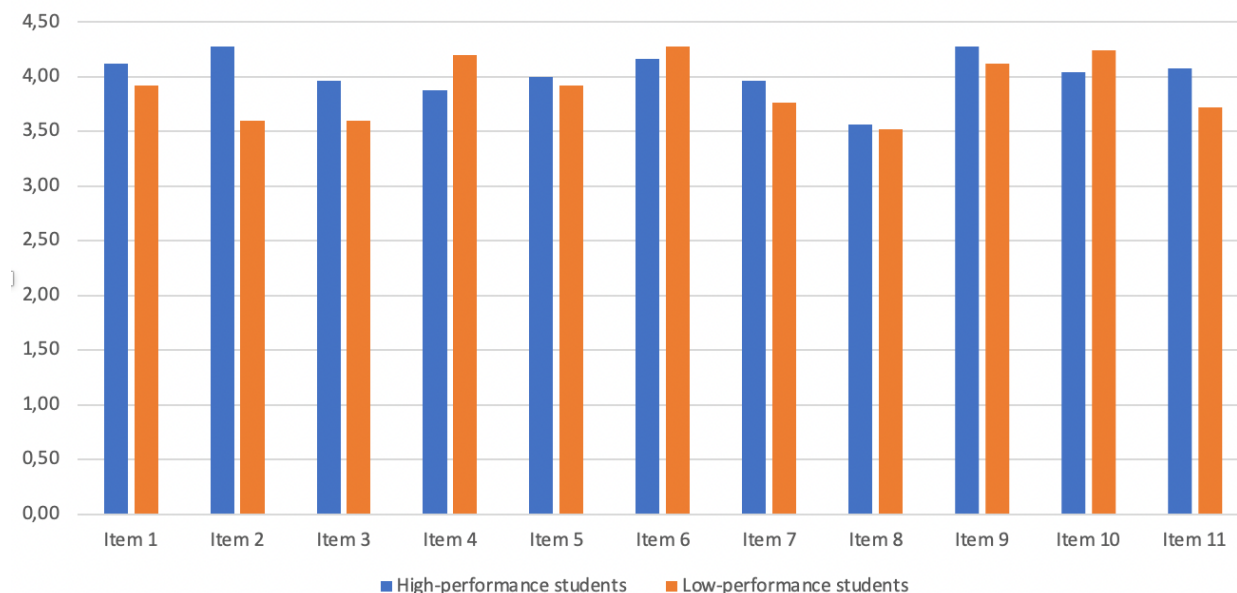

Chart 1: The Means Scores of High and How-performance Students' answers

Looking at the chart, it can be seen that regardless any levels, students have quite the same thoughts about items 5,6 and 8, which means they all think that Flipgrid made them more motivated to post their videos as they can see their friends' videos there; it also created a sharing environment in online classes and its interface is eye-catchy and attractive. The similarities in their perspectives about Flipgrid suggest that the social and design factors play an important role in encouraging students to use the tools and improve their English skills.

Differences in High and Low performing Students' Perceptions of Using Flipgrid in Online classes.

Besides investigating students' perceptions of Flipgrid in general, the questionnaires also aimed to reveal the differences between high and low students' views about this platform. The chart above shows that their general perceptions of how Flipgrid can support them in speaking skills were quite similar. However, there was a slight difference in item 2, which demonstrates that high-achievers tended to recognize the benefits in terms of correcting the pronunciation of this tool more than low-achievers. The explanation for this can be the fact that students with high scores usually seek more opportunities to improve their skills, which comes from their intrinsic motivation when it comes to learning English (Woodrow, 2017). This was also expressed in item 4, where high-performance students got more motivated to post videos and improve their speaking than their lower-performance counterparts. On the other hand, some items were agreed upon by more low-level students. Specifically, they tended to feel less anxious when speaking. Through the interview, they also reviewed that they did not feel other students judging them when they just posted the videos instead of speaking in class. This aligns with the finding in the research of Hanifa (2018), who found that students were really afraid of being judged by their peers in class, which causes high levels of nervousness and anxiety.

The interviews were conducted to identify if there were any discrepancies in the perceptions between high-and low-performing students about Flipgrid. Although they had quite the same perceptions of using Flipgrid, there were some differences in high and low performers about using Flipgrid in online classes. High performers expressed their excitement in making videos to answer questions issued by lecturers.

> *"I think the tasks are quite simple for me as I just need to record myself speaking about the topics. I don't have any difficulties making those videos."*

> *"I just need about half an hour to record one video, so it's kind of easy for me."*

However, several low-performance students mentioned some difficulties in using Flipgrid for speaking class:

> *"I feel under pressure when I cannot perform as well as other friends in class, which makes me too shy to post my videos."*

> *"Sometimes it is hard to record a whole video to discuss unfamiliar topics like crime or violence, as I do not have any ideas in my mind."*

The difficulties students had can be a recommendation for teachers to support students in terms of preparation and help to recognize that this is just for practice, not to be judged or assessed.

Discussion

Interaction plays a vital role in making online learning effective, so online teachers have been trying to find a lot of ways, specifically online tools to facilitate interaction during online courses. However, to make these tools truly efficient, students' perceptions should be examined so that teachers can gain more insights to use these tools productively. This research aimed to explore that, and the findings are mostly in line with many studies exploring the same field, which are discussed below.

Generally, students expressed that they are more motivated to learn to speak as Flipgrid creates an environment for them to interact with their teachers and classmates. This aligns with the findings of Zhan and Mei (2013), who stated that the influence of social presence on student satisfaction is strong in the online learning environment. Similarly, according to Guo et al. (2019) and Moore (2014), engaging and interactive discussions are associated with student satisfaction and studying progress in online learning programs. This is due to the fact that when students cannot meet their teachers and friends face-to-face, they easily feel isolated and therefore need more channels to feel a sense of belonging and social presence. Flipgrid, in this case, has brought about the environment to improve social presence, as students and instructors can communicate with each other in an interactive way. As for a non-threatening environment, Flipgrid has been proven successful in providing students with opportunities to prepare and practice their speech before speaking. According to Sun (2009), when learning in a non-threatening environment, students will have the courage to take risks and try hard for their performance. With respect to the effect of Flipgrid on students' academic performance, most students realized that their fluency was improved. This is in line with the empirical research of Shin and Yunus (2021), who conducted research to investigate the effectiveness of Flipgrid in terms of improving students' speaking skills.

Regarding feedback on Flipgrid, this factor plays an integral part in making this platform helpful for students. Students always mentioned the necessity of receiving individual feedback during the interview. This is in line with the study of Poulos and Mahony (2008), which stated that it was beneficial to give individual feedback for students to improve their speaking skills. In this case, when each student got hold of their performance and how they could improve thanks to teachers' feedback, they were more encouraged to do the next video. With respect to the forms of feedback, students preferred feedback by videos rather than by texts, which corroborates with the study of Borup, West, and Graham (2012), who stated that inserting videos in an online environment can be helpful to strengthen emotional connection and help students feel their instructor is a real person and can be more open to their instructors in terms of asking for support when necessary. Likewise, Moore and Filling (2012) conducted a study about providing video feedback for students, the result showed that students thought video feedback helped them more than written feedback, and several students reported that video feedback could resemble face-to-face communication as they could feel a personal connection with their teachers. Furthermore, Abrahamson (2010) found that giving students feedback by video fostered the effectiveness of feedback provided to students.

Besides mentioning the importance of feedback, students also expressed their need to have group work activities on Flipgird, which means students can have a team discussion about a topic. They could respond to others by posting videos in the comment sections. The use of group work in online classes can provide students with a sense of social presence (Scollins-Mantha, 2008). According to Tu and McIsaac (2002), when students can have conversations among themselves, they feel more engaged in the class and be more proactive during the learning process. This aspect was also mentioned in the study of Pham (2022), which emphasized the importance of making use of group work and collaborative tasks to teach English effectively in online classrooms. Furthermore, they also stated that the teacher's guidance about the steps to do their videos or answer the questions was highly supportive as they could fully understand how to complete their assignment and therefore became more motivated to do their tasks at home. This was consistent with the research of Trinh (2023), who found that teachers needed to prepare and instruct carefully for their students to be more familiar with their online learning.

As for the similarities, students of both levels agreed that Flipgrid was user-friendly, and they found that the platform's interface was attractive. As for the difference between the perceptions of high- and low-level students in the perceptions about using Flipgrid in online classrooms, the findings concur with the study of Rachmawati (2013), which found that students with higher levels tended to use more strategies to improve their skills than those with a lower level. Furthermore, the higher-level students tended to try harder in their learning progress. In this study, there were more high achievers than the lower counterparts who recognized that they could make use of the application to enhance their pronunciation and fluency. This indicated that teachers should be more proactive in explaining the benefits that technological tools can bring to students, as not all of them have the same perspective regarding the benefits of these tools. Teachers should also offer some compliments to the students who have improved and recognize their effort, which can contribute significantly to the effectiveness of students using technology for learning. Another difference in their perspective was that those with low-level still felt a bit under pressure when they needed to post the videos on the platform where everyone in the class could see them. This could be an implication for teachers when designing tasks on this platform. They could use ask students to do assignments in teams to reduce the anxiety level of students and to facilitate assistance and support among students.

Conclusion

This research examined students' perspectives on using Flipgrid in a speaking classroom. According to a large volume of research, speaking is one of the most difficult skills for students as it requires them to produce their language output. Furthermore, speaking in online classes is very challenging for students as well because they cannot feel social engagement in class. Therefore, Flipgrid can play an important role in compensating for those disadvantages in many ways. The finding of this study indicates that, according to students, Flipgrid can create a social environment for students to express their thoughts and has positive effects on improving students' speaking skills. Another interesting point is that although both high and low achievers had a quite similar view of the ease of use and attractive interface of Flipgrid, they had quite different views in terms of the benefits of correcting pronunciation and improving the fluency of this platform. This stems from the difference in their use of learning strategies and motivation, which can be a great insight for teachers in using ICTs in teaching speaking skills.

The limitation of the research is that due to the time limit, the samples were not very large for quantitative analysis (just 50 students). Furthermore, since the questionnaires used in the present research just focus on students' perceptions, it is valuable to conduct observations in class or experiment to examine how this platform can actually impact students' performance in class. Future research can also measure and compare students' performance from different pedagogical contexts to investigate if this platform influences students differently.

This research implies that when teaching speaking online, teachers should find a way to facilitate students' performance and try to foster social engagement, as this can motivate students to speak and share their thoughts in class. The tools themselves cannot be used successfully without much preparation, encouragement, and facilitation from instructors. In this research, students have reported that they need much scaffolding, sampling, and feedback from teachers to be motivated to make videos constantly. However, future research should be conducted to explore a bigger number of students and to examine the effectiveness of Flipgrid in terms of improving students' fluency and pronunciation. This can offer a more detailed picture of using Flipgrid in online speaking classes. Furthermore, more research should be done to investigate whether there are any other ways to utilize this platform to maximize students' engagement.

Acknowledgments

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Biodata

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APPENDIX 1: Questionnaire for students

Name of Researcher: Que Anh Pham

This survey investigates your perceptions of using Flipgrid in online speaking classrooms. Participation in this research is voluntary. All reporting will be anonymous, and your response will be treated confidentially and will be used for only research purposes.

If you are happy to continue, please tick the box below to confirm that you consent to any personal data you provide being used in the way described. Thank you very much.

☐ I give my consent for my responses to this questionnaire to be used as described in the privacy statement

For each item, please tick into the box to answer this question:

-To what extent do you agree with the statement?

	Items	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Uncertain	4 Agree	5 Strongly disagree
1	Flipgrid helped to develop my fluency					
2	Flipgrid gave me a tool to correct my pronunciation					
3	Flipgrid helped me to be more motivated to practice speaking to make good videos					
4	Flipgrid lowered my anxiety when expressing ideas in English to others					
5	Flipgrid made me more motivated to post videos as I can see my friends' videos there.					
6	Flipgrid created a sharing environment in online classes					
7	Flipgrid is easy to use					
8	Flipgrid's interface is eye-catchy and attractive					
9	The feedback on Flipgrid is helpful for me					
10	I prefer video feedback to written feedback					
11	Teachers' videos on Flipgrid made me more motivated to post my videos					

APPENDIX 2: Interview Questions

1. What do you like about using Flipgrid in online speaking classes?

2. What do you dislike about using Flipgrid in online speaking classes?

3. What are some challenges you meet when posting videos on Flipgrid?

4. How does using Flipgrid affect your fluency?

5. How does Flipgrid affect your anxiety when speaking?

6. How does seeing your friends' videos affect your motivation to post your videos?

7. How do your friends' videos help you in terms of thinking about the ideas?

8. What do you think about feedback on Flipgrid?

9. What are some activities you think should be conducted on Flipgrid?

10. What can teachers do to help you learn better on Flipgrid?

Students' Perceptions on Using Rubrics as a Peer and Self-Assessment Tool in EFL Speaking Courses

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ABSTRACT

	This study explores how rubrics can be used as a tool for students to self-assess and peer-assess their speaking performance in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes by examining the perceptions of freshmen English language teaching majors (N=96). Data was collected using a survey questionnaire consisting of 38 questions organized into six clusters, covering the quality of rubrics, their usefulness in assignment preparation, peer and self-assessment, language learning, quality of feedback, and challenges in utilizing them. After completing a listening and speaking module that included practice in using rubrics for peer and self-evaluation of speaking performances, students were asked to rate their perceptions on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "totally disagree" to "totally agree". Consistent with previous research in the same area, the findings suggest that students perceive rubrics to be of high quality and useful. However, the study also highlights the challenges that students face while using rubrics for peer and self-assessment, which is in contrast to the conclusions drawn by some other researchers.
Keywords: Self-ssessment; peer assessment, rubrics, speaking performance	

Introduction

The transformation from traditional teaching methods into learner-centered ones creates many changes and reforms in education. The fundamental role of teachers as knowledge givers is no longer valid. Putting learners at the center of education means their roles in the learning process are more highly expected than ever before. Instead of being passive knowledge receivers, they are expected to actively discover and participate in various active studying activities such as discussing, problem-solving, creating, and even assessing their own performance (Brame, 2016). They also need to manage and decide all aspects of their learning process to fit their own demands and requirements of the innovation (Luu, 2022).

Such changes have led to innovation in every element of education, and assessment is no exception. New concepts such as "assessment for learning" and "learning-oriented assessment"

have been introduced and are more widely discussed and practiced. The teachers are no longer the only assessors who grade and evaluate learners' performances. Learners are actively involved in the assessing process, which aims to support and improve their learning. They are assigned to assess their own performance (self-assessment) and review their partners' performance as well (peer assessment). In other words, they have taken on a new role – as assessors in the class.

Regarding self-assessment, numerous studies (Thomas et al., 2011; Fathi & Youself, 2017; Ndoye, 2017; Phan & Phuong, 2017; Kusrini, 2018) were conducted to reveal its influence on student learning. The results of the studies were mostly indicated through investigations on learner participants' perceptions. However, the final outcome of effective assessment "is to improve students' learning and teachers' teaching" (Hill et al., 2017). To achieve this aim, learners should be actively involved in the assessment process. In other words, the job of teachers is to facilitate learners to engage in assessment (Hill et al., 2017). This teaching approach is infused with formative assessment, in which self- and peer-assessment is dominant in engaging learners in the assessment process.

One of the tools popularly used to encourage students to get involved in the assessment procedure with the purpose of improving their learning process and outcomes is rubrics. Rubrics have been used in education for a long time as a tool to grade students' performance (Chowdhury, 2018) and then as a kind of teacher feedback to the learners (Winterscheid, 2016). In recent decades, they have been increasingly used as instructional tools, particularly in English language learning and teaching (Stiggins, 2001; Andrade & Saddler, 2004). However, in any cases of using rubrics, most of the studies (Andrade, 2000; Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013; Silva, 2014; Hill et al., 2017; Anh et al., 2022) have examined the effect of rubrics in different EFL contexts. Most of them confirm the positive impact of using the tool on both language evaluation and student learning outcomes.

A literature review of rubric application in language teaching illustrates that the tool is mostly used in classes that focus on productive skills such as speaking and writing, which are usually more difficult for teachers to assess fairly and accurately and challenging for learners to master (Truong & Le, 2022). In the Vietnamese context of English language teaching, rubrics have commonly been used as a scoring tool by teachers but have not commonly been used as a self-assessment tool. According to Anh, Dong, and Trang (2022), not much research has been conducted to see how learners self-assess their speaking performance based on a set of criteria. Thus, the study on learners' perceptions of rubric-based self- and peer-assessment, this self-assessment tool, and the effect of the rubrics in improving.

Literature review

Peer and self-assessment

Self-assessment is the process by which learners evaluate their own knowledge and skills (Bailey, 1998) or assess their own performances (Bourke & Mentis, 2011). According to Anh, Dong, and Trang (2022, p. 191), self-assessment is an effective tool for students to reflect on their own work. Numerous studies (Thomas et al., 2011; Heidarian, 2016; Fathi & Youself,

2017; Ndoye, 2017; Kusrini, 2018) have been conducted to reveal the impact of self-assessment on students' learning. The findings from these studies highlight the benefits of self-assessment, including promoting active participation in classroom activities (Boud, 1995), improving the ability to evaluate one's own performance accurately and monitor one's own learning (Boud, 1989), enhancing independence (Ratminingsih et al., 2018); developing self-confidence and critical thinking skills (Logan, 2009), and creating a learning environment that engages students and improves their learning responsibility (Yorke & Longden, 2004; Ratminingsih et al., 2018). Moreover, self-assessment reinforces self-regulated learning, as confirmed by O'donovan (2003), Winne (2003), Kearney (2003), and Cheng & Warren (2005), and is 'an effective instructional technique and a useful evaluation instrument' (Heidarian, 2016) in EFL learning contexts. Due to these advantages, self-assessment has become increasingly popular in various language teaching contexts.

Peer assessment involves students judging each other's work, either by giving formative reviews or summative scores (Bostock, 2009). Peer assessment is used in this study to provide feedback to learners, which is believed to have a positive effect on group work and the learning process. According to Kusrini, peer assessment encourages students to monitor each other, helps them become better at self-monitoring, and enhances autonomy, learning reflection, and independence from the teacher. Tetcher (2010) also recommends applying peer assessment in the classroom because it promotes student learning. However, to ensure the focus of the feedback, peer assessment should be employed with rubrics that illustrate the requirements of the tasks in detail and instruct students on how to prepare and assess their learning products.

Overall, self-assessment and peer assessment play a vital role in both teaching and learning. Rubrics can aid in the effective implementation of these assessment methods.

Using rubrics in peer and self-assessment

Rubrics have been defined by a number of scholars. According to Mertler (2001), rubrics are guides for marking learners' assignments by establishing a set of particular performance criteria. Scoring rubrics provide a detailed description of expectations for learners' performance in each category, with the aim that they can use this informative feedback from rubrics to improve their upcoming work (Mat & Par, 2022). Brualdi (1998), Airasian (2000, 2001), and Perlman (2002) suggested that scoring rubrics help assess learners' progress accurately and objectively in determining their learning. It is the role of rubric scoring systems in enhancing authentic assessment that has made them popular in different educational contexts.

In an effort to emphasize the powerful instructive elements of rubrics, Andrade (2000) confirmed that rubrics can be utilized as teaching tools to support student learning and improve their critical thinking skills. In other words, rubrics can be employed not only by teachers to evaluate or give detailed feedback to students but also by the students themselves to self-assess their own performance. The term "rubrics" used in this study is understood as the instructive ones, which are not only used as the guiding tool to assess students' assignments but also as their learning instructions.

The literature consulted illustrates two types of rubrics: holistic and analytic. Nitko (2001) explained that the holistic rubric allows the teacher to evaluate and score students' products

overall and not to judge each component element separately. Therefore, the implementation of holistic rubrics is probably appropriate in cases where the purpose of assessment is summative. In contrast, an analytic rubric requires the teacher to assess separate parts of the student's work, then add each individual score to achieve the total score or the overall evaluation (Saxton, Belanger & Becker, 2012; Moskal, 2000; Mertler, 2001). It means that analytic rubrics can produce a high degree of precise feedback with details about student strengths and weaknesses. This makes it possible to create a specific profile of the students and help both the teachers and the learners realize which area of teaching and learning should be improved. An analytic rubric, therefore, is suitable to apply in formative assessment where there is a need to assess student work in detail and to give students specific feedback on their performance (Mertler, 2001). The rubrics used in this study aim to provide learners with an instructional aid to self- and peer-reflect on their performance and improve it further for their final product and must belong to the analytic type of rubric.

At the same time, the term ' effective rubrics' has been widely discussed by a number of scholars. William et al. (2017) reviewed the literature on rubrics and asked for advice from assessment experts to build a form of effective rubrics, which includes six groups: purposes of rubrics, marking criteria, performance descriptors, feedback narrative, rubric development, and rubrics application. The six categories illustrate 37 characteristics of effective rubrics, which since then have become not only a guide for educators to design and develop rubrics but also a tool for researchers to assess the effectiveness of the rubrics.

The roles of rubrics in language assessment have been discussed by many researchers. According to Stiggins (2001), rubrics help learners clearly know the learning outcome, and as a result, they are better able to achieve it. Wolf and Stevens (2007) stated that the assessment process would be conducted more accurately and fairly with the use of rubrics. The reason is that the teachers would be more consistent in their evaluations. Particularly when the rubrics were used among different raters, the consistency across them would likely be higher because they were all based on the same specific criteria. In the relationship between rubrics and self-assessment, it is stated that when the learners were provided with rubrics in hand, they could better critique their own performances (Hafner & Hafner, 2004). A study by Wang (2016) on university students' perceptions of using rubrics for self-assessment in their writing classes also revealed positive results. The students responded that rubrics helped them enhance their self-reflection and self-regulation, and as a result, their writing performance was improved. In 2019, Kim trained 11th-grade students in Korea to self-assess their essays by referring to a rubric. The participants kept positive attitudes toward using rubrics and found that self-assessing by rubrics was an effective learning strategy in their essay writing.

Rubrics are a powerful tool for assessment in learning. When used in peer assessment, rubrics can provide students with descriptive feedback that facilitates self-assessment and peer feedback among learners (Liu & Carless, 2007). With formative feedback from rubrics, students can identify areas where they need improvement, further develop their work, and facilitate self-monitoring (Andrade et al., 2010; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013; Brookhart & Chen, 2015).

While rubrics have been widely used in writing classes, there has been relatively little research on their effectiveness in speaking courses. García-Ros (2011) studied the use of rubrics in a

presentation skills course at a university and found that rubrics were useful for self-assessment and learning in several ways. Students reported that rubrics helped clarify assessment criteria, assisted in planning assignments, and enabled easy evaluation of their own work. Additionally, they confirmed the validity of peer and self-assessment, and teacher assessment when rubrics were used.

Given the benefits illustrated in the literature and the gaps in research, it is important to investigate the use of rubrics for peer and self-assessment in speaking classes. This study aims to fill this gap and contribute to the existing literature by investigating students' perceptions of the quality and effectiveness of rubrics used in speaking classes. In addition, it examines the challenges they have while peer- and self-assessing speaking performances with rubrics.

Research Questions

The study aims to find the answer to two following research questions:

1. What are students' perceptions on the quality and usefulness of rubrics used in speaking peer and self-assessment?
2. What difficulties do the students face while using rubrics in speaking peer and self-assessment?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study's participants are 96 first-year students (21 male and 73 female) who are majoring in English language teaching at Hong Duc University. The university's Bachelor's program lasts for four years, and students are required to complete six compulsory courses in English Listening and Speaking Skills. The courses are named 1 to 6 and correspond to levels A2, B1, B2, B2+, and C1, respectively, according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) scale. Students must pass Course 1, which is equivalent to A2 level in Listening and Speaking skills, before enrolling in Course 2, which targets a learning outcome of B1 level. However, based on the results of their final examination in English speaking and listening skills administered by the university administration, a number of students exceeded the A2 level. Table 1 illustrates their current level of English proficiency.

Table 1.

Participants' English competence level

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A2	58	60.4	60.4	60.4
	B1	25	26.0	26.0	86.5
	B2	13	13.5	13.5	100.0
	Total	96	100.0	100.0	

According to Table 1, the major number of the students (58 of 96) are at A2 level, 25 are at B1 level, and 13 of them are at B2 level.

The students studied in three different groups but followed the same syllabuses. According to the syllabus for the Listening and Speaking 2 Course, there are four rubrics suggested to use for speaking activities. They are rubrics for describing a photograph, role-playing a situation, discussing solutions, and giving a presentation. All the rubrics in the syllabus were designed by a group of lecturers in the faculty of foreign languages at Hong Duc University and then censored and moderated by the Head of division and the Dean of faculty.

The procedure of implementing rubrics for self- and peer assessment was instructed in the syllabus as follows. The students were clarified about the rubrics before assigning tasks. They were also guided to use the rubrics as a reference to prepare for and then self-assess their performance. To make valuable self-assessments, they are required to record their rehearsals to look back and use the rubrics to self-reflect. Then students based their self-reflection to improve their performance before making the second record for peer assessment. Students then use the rubric feedback from their peers to refine their assignment and submit it to the teachers or to perform their products in front of the class for teacher evaluation.

Design of the Study

This study employs the practices of both qualitative and quantitative research with the dominance of the quantitative approach, which is commonly used in language assessment and evaluation for its ability to validate research findings (Chapelle et al., 2008). In other words, it is a two-step sequential process explanatory design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), in which the quantitative phase was conducted first and has greater weight. The quantitative research instrument is a five-point Likert scale questionnaire, and the data collected was transferred into SPSS (version 26.00) for statistical analysis. The results will be visualized using frequency tables extracted and edited from SPSS to check for trends and outliers. The qualitative approach was followed to get a deeper understanding of the findings from the first phase. The instrument for the second phase is the interview-guided questions which were designed in the discipline of providing the interviewees with plenty of 'room for variations, additions or clarifications' (Tsagari & Vogt, 2017)

Data collection & analysis

In terms of the quantitative approach, at the end of the semester, 96 first-year students majoring in English language teaching at Hong Duc University were asked to complete a five-point Likert scale survey questionnaire, which includes 38 items divided into six sections. The questionnaire was adapted and developed from the form of 37 characteristics of effective rubrics introduced by William et al. (2017). The first section includes 5 items that ask students about the quality of the rubrics they used, followed by 7 questions about the usefulness of rubrics in their speaking assignments. Sections 3 and 4 contain 6 and 7 questions, respectively, on students' perceptions of the usefulness of rubrics in peer and self-assessment and in the learning process. The next 5 questions in section 5 ask about the quality of feedback students received from rubrics, and the last section, consisting of 8 questions, focuses on the challenges students might face when using rubrics. The full questionnaire can be found in the appendix

section. The three teachers who ran the English Listening and Speaking 2 courses were contacted to obtain permission to access their classes during a 10-minute break to inform students about the research project and research ethics. Student participation in the research was voluntary, and they could withdraw from it at any time. The students who agreed to participate were given a paper-based questionnaire and instructions to provide their responses. The collected feedback was then transferred to SPSS for data analysis.

In the perspectives of the qualitative approach, because interviews provide great depth and draw a vivid and clear picture (Cohen et al., 2011), semi-structured interviews with 10 participants were conducted to better understand their responses to the questionnaire and their perceptions of using rubrics in peer and self-assessment. The guiding questions for the interviews will focus on asking the participants to give an explanation for their choices in the questionnaire. The whole interview procedure was conducted in Vietnamese so that the participants could freely express their ideas without any language obstacles. The interviews were recorded with the participants' permission. They all were translated and transcribed verbatim and later coded by themes for data analysis.

Results

Students' perceptions on the quality of rubrics

The participant's responses to the questions about the quality of the rubrics (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.821) they used are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Students' perceptions on the quality of rubrics

		The rubrics are easy to use.	The language in the rubrics is clear and understandable.	The criteria in the rubrics are appropriate and logical.	The descriptors in the rubrics clearly clarify the level of performance.	The format of the rubrics is user-friendly.
N	Valid	96	96	96	96	96
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.13	4.32	3.92	3.92	4.06
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00

As can be seen from Table 2, most students highly evaluate the qualities of rubrics used in their course (mean from 3.92 to 4.13). The rubrics are said to be easy to use and have clear and understandable language. The criteria and descriptors in the rubrics are designed appropriately in a user-friendly format.

Analysis from interviews revealed that the students highly evaluated the quality of rubrics because of several reasons. First of all, among 10 randomly selected participants (namely from S1 to S10), eight students (except S1 and S9) reported that the language used in the rubrics is

short, simple, and mostly under their level of English proficiency. However, there are two reasons all ten of them agreed with. The first one is that their teachers always explained clearly each criterion and description in the rubrics. If they had any struggles in using those rubrics, they were free to ask their teachers for clarification. Secondly, they had plenty of time to study the rubrics before implementing them in assessing their own and peers' performances.

Students' perceptions on the usefulness of rubrics

The usefulness of rubrics (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.79) is examined in four aspects: assignment preparation, peer and self-assessment, learning process, and the quality of rubric feedback. The general results of their feedback are presented in Table 3. It can be said that rubrics have an effective contribution to students' preparation for their tasks (mean: 3.84), their practice of peer and self-assessment (mean: 3.96), and their learning process (mean:3.97).

Table 3.

Students' perceptions on the usefulness of rubrics

		The usefulness of rubrics in preparation for assignments	The usefulness of rubrics in peer and self-assessment	The usefulness of rubrics in the learning process
N	Valid	96	96	96
	Missing	0	0	0
Mean		3.84	3.96	3.97
Median		3.86	4.00	4.00

When the students were asked about in what ways rubrics became useful in their learning process, their responses in the interviews were very similar to the answers from the questionnaire. However, they added many specific reasons why rubrics are helpful in their learning process. First of all, many students (S1, S3, S4, S7, S8, S9) stated that the requirements of the speaking tasks were stated in the rubrics in detail and clearer than the given questions. Thus, they helped them have a detailed structure for their performances. Secondly, they could keep their focus on the main points and go in the correct direction with the rubrics as references. This way, rubrics acted as 'guiding paper' (S1, S2), 'planning maker' (S3) or 'framework' (S8, S9) for the students to prepare their assignments. Additionally, when they completed their tasks, rubrics were 'effective tools' (S3,S5, S6, S10) for them to look back, self-evaluate their own work and peer assess their partners' assignments. In this stage, rubrics were like standards for them to compare and assess their speaking performances. Lastly, the process of having the performance assessed many times ensures they revise it carefully and increase their responsibility and motivation for improving their work in particular and their learning process in general.

Students' perceptions on the quality of feedback from rubrics

Students also have positive opinions on the quality of feedback (Cronbach's Alpha of 0.845) they received from rubric-based peers and self-assessments. Table 4 demonstrates that the two question items that receive the most agreement from the participants are 'the rubric - feedback helps me self-correct my mistakes and improve my current performance' (mean: 4.19) and 'the rubric-feedback is easily understood' (mean: 4.10). The students also present their high level of agreement on the other question items. In other words, they all confirm the feedback from rubrics is useful for them.

Table 4.

Students' perceptions on the quality of feedback from rubrics

		The rubric-feedback is formative.	The rubric-feedback is easily understood.	The rubric - feedback helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.	The rubric - feedback helps me self-correct my mistakes and improve my current performance.	The rubric – feedback provides me lessons to improve my future performance.
N	Valid	95	96	96	96	96
	Missing	1	0	0	0	0
Mean		3.92	4.10	4.19	3.35	3.84
Median		4.00	4.00	4.00	3.00	4.00

Data from interviews presented that rubric feedback was helpful for the students in several ways. Firstly, it was easy for the feedback receivers to understand the level of their achievement (S2, S3, S5, S6, S8, S9) because it included not only the grades but also the descriptions. This way, they could easily self-correct and improve their performance. Secondly, the participants (S1, S2, S5, S8, S9, S10) thought that the written feedback in the rubrics ensured them plenty of time to learn about it and have a document to revise their performances whenever they wanted without worrying about missing any points from feedback givers. The third benefit was that rubrics provided equal number of feedback to all students' work (S3, S4, S8, S9, S10). It means in the same amount of classroom time, all students received feedback with the use of rubrics, while in some other cases, such as when the teachers gave oral feedback, only a few students got the chance to get feedback.

Students perceptions on challenges in rubric-based peer and self-assessment

Although the rubrics are useful in peer and self-assessment, students had several difficulties in using them. Table 5 below illustrates students' opinions on the challenges of using rubrics(Cronbach's Alpha of 0.87).

Among 8 hypothesis difficulties, students disagreed with 4 and agreed with 4 of them. Particularly they did not think that using rubrics is too complex to use (mean: 2.35) or prevented

them from creativity (mean: 2.30). In addition, in their point of view, their English competence (mean: 2.01) and assessment skills (mean: 1.88) do not challenge them to practice using rubrics in peer and self-assessment. However, 4 difficulties a large number of students face when using rubrics are in time consuming (mean: 3.50), understanding feedback (mean: 3.49) how to correct mistakes (mean: 3.39), and how to improve their weaknesses (mean: 3.39).

Table 5.
Student's difficulties in using rubrics in peer and self-assessment

Question items	N		Mean	Median
	Valid	**Missing**		
It is time consuming to use rubrics.	96	0	3.50	4.00
It is too complex to have peer and self-assessment.	96	0	2.35	2.00
It is difficult for me to understand all feedback from the rubrics.	96	0	3.49	4.00
I realize my mistakes but do not know how to correct them.	96	0	3.39	4.00
I realize my weaknesses but do not know how to improve them.	96	0	3.39	4.00
My English competence level is not high enough to peer and self-assess speaking performance.	96	0	2.01	2.00
I do not have sufficient assessment skills to practice using rubrics for peer and self-assessment.	96	0	1.88	2.00
It is difficult for me to be creative in my assignment.	96	0	2.30	2.00

However, one important finding from interview data analysis showed a surprising aspect of the problem with time-consuming. What they actually meant from their explanation was that they needed more time to conduct their assignments with the use of rubrics than usual. It was because the learning process included many stages: studying the rubrics – preparing the first draft – self-assessment – revising the first draft – peer assessment – revising the second draft – final submission. According to 9 of them (except S9), this process was really helpful in improving the quality of their speaking performance. This way, 'time-consuming' was not really a problem, but it turned out to be beneficial for their learning process. For the issue of understanding feedback, the student pointed out that they (S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S9) sometimes did not know or were not sure about what the feedback givers meant in their responses in rubrics. They thought it would be more useful if they could discuss with the rubrics givers about their feedback (S1, S4, S5, S6, S9) or if the teacher could provide them with some more explanation (S1, S2, S4, S5, S6, S9). In terms of correcting mistakes and improving their weaknesses, most of the students (except S2, S10) admitted that they mostly realized their mistakes and weaknesses from rubric feedback but usually did not know how to correct or improve some of them. This way, they need 'the suggestions from the feedback givers' (S2, S4, S5, S6, S7) and/ or 'a hand from the teacher' (S3, S4, S5, S7, S8, S9, S10) to correct and improve them.

Discussion

According to the study conducted at Hong Duc University, the rubrics designed by the lecturers and used in the English Listening and Speaking 2 course were found to be of high quality and were well-received by the students. The use of rubrics in the course provided numerous benefits to the students, as shown in previous studies (Kochiyama et al., 2013; Phan & Phuong, 2017; Nsabayezu et al., 2022; Mat & Par, 2022). Rubrics helped the students to prepare better for their speaking tasks, as they provided detailed requirements of the assignments and expectations of the teachers (question item 6), and helped them to make a clear plan (question item 8) and appropriate structures for their performance (question item 9).

The use of rubrics in peer and self-assessment helped the students to focus on the main points of the tasks (question item 7) and not miss any important elements of the performance (question item 10). Rubrics also enabled the students to practice revising and refining their performance to meet the established criteria (question item 12). The use of rubrics also facilitated fair evaluation (question item 17) in classroom assessments and provided specific evidence for each evaluation (question item 18).

The study also found that the use of rubrics in the learning process improved the students' motivation (question item 20), responsibility (question item 24), and confidence (question item 25), making their learning more effective (question item 19). Rubric-based peer and self-assessment helped the students to enhance their teamwork skills (question item 21), assessment skills (question item 22), and critical thinking skills (question item 23). These findings are consistent with those of Ratminingsih, Marhaeni, and Vigayanti (2018), who found that students developed a sense of responsibility in assessing their own work and evaluating others' performance according to the criteria in the rubrics.

The rubric feedback that the students received provided them with valuable information about their performance, particularly their strengths and weaknesses. Based on the rubric feedback, the students were able to self-correct their mistakes and refine their performance, and learn valuable lessons for future assignments. These findings are consistent with those of Chye et al. (2014), who found that self-assessment checklists helped students diagnose their weaknesses and improve their performance, and Heidarian (2016), who demonstrated that learners practicing self-assessment are encouraged to identify their errors to avoid repeating them in the future.

However, the study also identified some challenges that the students faced when using rubrics in peer and self-assessment. Unlike the results of a study by Phan and Phuong (2017), which found that high school students did not recognize any challenges and disadvantages of using rubrics in speaking self-assessment, the current research identified four main struggles: time consumption, deeply understanding all the feedback from rubrics, lack of suggestions on how to fix mistakes, and the need for additional practice and guidance (Mat & Par, 2022). These difficulties could be partly explained by the findings of Phan, Ho, and Nguyen (2022), who stated that students could not self-correct many of their mistakes and errors in pronunciation, grammar structures, and word choices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of the study once again confirmed the benefits and usefulness of rubrics in language assessment. Particularly, when rubrics are used as a tool for students to peer and self-assess their speaking performance, learners take many advantages of them not only in preparing for their assignments and practicing valuable and fair assessments but also in making their learning process become more effective. However, this study discovered some difficulties students encounter while using rubrics in peer and self-assessment. They are matters of time-consuming, understanding feedback and fixing mistakes, and avoiding weaknesses. The results raised the ideas for further studies on cooperating rubric-based peer and self-assessment with teacher's assessment or cooperating between written rubric feedback with oral discussions afterward. In addition, this study only examined the students' perceptions on using rubrics in peer and self-assessment in a general way. A closer comparison of those aspects in different groups of learners according to their genders, English language competencies, or majors could be investigated, showing further findings for employing rubric-based peer and self-assessment.

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Biodata

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Appendix 1:

SURVEY QUESTIONAIRE ON RUBRIC-BASED ASSESSMENT

Thank you very much for participating answering this survey questionnaire. Please let us know your experience with using rubrics in self-and peer assessing your speaking performance. This survey is anonymous, so feel free to answer the question honestly. Many thanks for your co-operation.

1. Your name: ……………………………………………..…………………………..

2. Your final speaking and listening course 1 band score: …………………………………..

3. How many rubrics have you used to self-and peer-assess speaking performance…………

Please put a tick on the degree of your agreement on the following statement.

Your opinions on rubric-based peer and self-assessment	Totally agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Totally disagree
I. The quality of the rubrics					
1. The rubrics are easy to use.					
2. The language in the rubrics is clear and understandable.					
3. The criteria in the rubrics are appropriate and logical.					
4. The descriptors in the rubrics clearly clarify level of performance.					
5. The format of the rubrics are user-friendly.					
II. Usefulness of rubrics in preparation for assignments					
6. Rubrics help me know more about the requirement of the tasks.					
7. Rubrics help me remain focussing on the main points of the tasks					
8. Rubrics help me make a clear plan for my performance.					
9. Rubrics help me make an approriate structure of my performance.					
10. Rubrics prevent me from missing any important elements of the performance.					
11. Rubrics help me save time in preparing and conducting my performance.					
12. Rubrics help me revise my performance and refine it to the established criteria.					
III. Usefulness of rubrics in peer and self-assessment					
13. Rubrics help me self-assess my work appropriately after each rehearsal.					
14. I can evaluate my peer's performance appropriately with rubrics.					
15. Rubrics allow me more objective in self- assessment.					
16. Rubrics allow me more objective in peer- assessment.					
17. Rubrics facilitate a fair evaluation in my class.					
18. Rubrics provide specific evidence for each evaluation.					
IV. Usefulness of rubrics in learning process					
19. My learning has been more effective.					
20. I have been encouraged to learn and complete the tasks.					
21. My teamwork skills have been improved.					
22. My assessment skills have been improved.					
23. My critical thinking skills have been improved.					
24. I have more responsibility in doing the tasks and in my learning.					
25. My confidence in performing my work has been improved.					
V. Quality of feedback from rubrics					

26. The rubric-feedback is formative.					
27. The rubric-feedback is easily understood.					
28. The rubric - feedback helps me realize my weaknesses and strengths.					
29. The rubric - feedback helps me self-correct my mistakes and improve my current performance.					
30. The rubric – feedback provides me lessons to improve my future performance.					
VI. Challenges in rubric-based peer and self-assessment					
31. It is time consuming to use rubrics.					
32. It is too complex to have peer and self-assessment.					
33. It is difficult for me to understand all feedback from the rubrics.					
34. I realize my mistakes but do not know how to correct them.					
35. I realize my weaknesses but do not know how to improve them.					
36. My English competence level is not high enough to peer and self-assess speaking performance.					
37. I do not have sufficient assessment skills to practice using rubrics for peer and self- assessment.					
38. It is difficult for me to be creative in my assignment					

Appendix 2:

INTERVIEW GUIDE ON RUBRIC-BASED ASSESSMENT

I. Introduction

Hello, I am Nguyet – a lecturer at Hong Duc University**.** I am conducting research on using rubrics in self-and peer assessing speaking performances. Thank you for your argreement to join the interview with me today. The interview will last about 10 minutes. It will be recorded and remain strictly confidential. Extracts from the interview may appear in my research report but under no circumstances will your name or any identifying characteristics be included. Your participation is totally voluntary; you are free to withdraw from the interview at any time or decline to answer any of the questions.

II. Background Information

1. What is your name?

2. Which class are you in?

3. Do you use rubrics for peer ans self- assessment in your English speaking classes?

III. Content Information

4. What do you think about the quality of rubrics (the language, the criteria, the format ect.)? Why?

5. Do you think the rubrics is useful for your speaking learning process? If yes, in what way?

6. How do the rubrics help you in assignment preparation?

7. How do the rubrics help you in peer and self- assessment process?

8. How is the rubric feedback helpful for your learning process?

9. Are you sastified with the rubric feedback from your peer? Why?

10. Do you want to receive any other types of feedback apart from rubric feedback? If yes, when and why?

11. What are the difficulties you face when using rubrics in peer and self- assessing your speaking performaces?

12. What have you done to deal with such kinds of difficulties?

13. Do you have any comments/ suggestions/ requirements in using rubrics in peer and self- assessing your speaking performaces?

A Study on Motivation of Second-year Students Enrolling in Math-though-English Teacher Training at a University in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Math-through-English, motivation level, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, motivational factors

This study aimed to examine the motivation of 31 sophomores taking the Math-through-English teacher preparation program at the Faculty of Mathematics, Hanoi National University of Education. The study's use of quantitative and qualitative methods revealed that the second-year students were mostly intrinsically driven and had a modest level of motivation to complete this integrated course. This contributed to affirming that teaching science subjects in English was somewhat essential and influenced students' learning and career orientation. The three most common motivators were the lecturers, the voluntary aspect of MTE learning, and the pleasant relationships with classmates. Given the study's findings, various suggestions are made to improve the course's efficacy in particular and the use of teaching sciences through English in Vietnam generally.

Introduction

Globalization, which is characterized by the integration of the world's economies and the advancement of science and technology, has had a significant impact on global education in general and Vietnam in particular during the past few decades. In this setting, learning English, the world language, becomes crucial for success in all domains, particularly in the academic and professional domains.

By taking part in the signing of agreements like the TPP, ASEAN has expanded Vietnam's labor market. With more employment options comes more intense competition and stricter hiring standards. Employees must therefore possess both high levels of competence and sufficient foreign language proficiency. Vietnam has acknowledged the significance of increasing foreign language proficiency for the whole national education system, including English proficiency, and has given it tremendous attention as an active participant in the international integration process.

There are several restrictions on the teaching and learning of English in Vietnam. The time has come to implement a fundamental and thorough reform of English language instruction, starting with new teaching strategies and higher teacher standards. Resolution 1400 (September 30, 2008) and Prime Minister's Decision No. 959 both approved the project "Teaching Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the Period 2008-2020." (June 24, 2010) mandates the teaching of the fundamental sciences, such as Math in English in all schools by the year 2020, with a target of 30% of schools in major cities by that time.

The application of teaching science topics in English in Vietnam is also supported by the prevalence of the trend of studying abroad. Several international bilingual schools and SAT/A-level preparation facilities have been built to adequately educate pupils to adjust to a new learning environment where all information is provided in English. Most Vietnamese instructors of math and other science disciplines in high schools lack the credentials to teach in English, while English teachers cannot teach science in English. In other words, there is a severe shortage of English-speaking scientific professors from Vietnamese universities. Vietnamese instructors will not be able to satisfy the rising education standards and will lose work possibilities in their own country if the status of pedagogical training is not changed.

As the top pedagogical university in Vietnam, Hanoi National University of Education (HNUE) has begun providing bachelor's degree courses in Mathematics taught in English since 2013. This is done with the support of the Ministry of Education and Training, specifically the National Foreign Language Project 2020. The program offers 50 training opportunities per year for math teachers who teach in English. The future of the supply of English-language science instructors in Vietnam is looking up thanks to this training program.

At the heart of any instructional strategy is motivation. Motivation is regarded as one of the significant variables to be measured in the process of language learning (Liang & Kelsen, 2018). According to Vo (2021), good evidence supports that L2 motivation could refer to the various purposes, not least of which is part of learning a second language. To improve the efficacy of teaching science courses in English in Vietnam, especially for subjects like students of Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English, research on learning motivation is required.

The research focuses on examining of the intensive English learning program with the intention of increasing the adoption of the integrated teaching approach in general and the training of scientific teachers in English in particular in Vietnam. The program for students holding a bachelor's degree in Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English at HNUE is investigated in terms of course time and English output requirements. To identify any parallels or variances, the the abovementioned elementsare contrasted with European standards. The goal of the study is to identify the elements that influence student motivation for learning (including the level and kind of internal and external motivation). A number of recommendations will be made based on the research's findings in order to increase learners' motivation, nurture motivating factors, and support teachers in constructing a competence framework for teaching science courses in English.

Literature review

Definition of Motivation

In his socio-educational model, Gardner (1985, p.10) states, "motivation refers to the combination of effort plus desire the objective of learning the language with positive attitudes about learning language." He decides to describe motivation by outlining its three components: (1) effort relates to the amount of time spent studying the language and the learner's motivation; (2) desire denotes the degree to which the learner aspires to language proficiency; and (3) affect denotes the learner's emotional responses to language study (Gardner, 1985, p.13).

Dörnyei and Ushioda (2013) described the Latin word "movera," which means "to move," as the origin of motivation. Motivation affects how we behave and what decisions we make. They used the direction and magnitude of the phrase to characterize motivation, and with certain points, they provided a more detailed definition of motivation. The fact that there are numerous different definitions demonstrates how difficult it is to describe the motivation and its significance in the learning process (Filgona et al., 2020).

According to Gopalan et al. (2017), the process of initiating, directing, and maintaining goal-oriented behaviors in learning is known as learning motivation. Motivation is a persuading emotion that prompts actions, a direction for our energy, an explanation for our behavior, and the "what" and "why" of what people do. From this point on, motivation fosters optimism regarding students' ability to successfully complete a task or activity, regardless of how challenging it may be (Ainley & Ainley, 2011; Gopalan et al., 2017). Nuridin (2019) agreed, "It is undeniable that motivation plays a key role in second or foreign language learning".

According to Crookes and Schmidt (1991), motivation has both internal and external components. Interest level, sense of significance, expectation of success or failure, and perception of reward are examples of internal factors. The overt decision to learn, a persistent learning habit, and strong participation are examples of external elements, on the other hand. As a result, learning only works when pupils are engaged in the material and work hard.

According to Lightbrown and Spada (1999), the motivation to acquire a second language may be summed up in terms of two factors: the communicative demands of the learners and their views toward the community of speakers of the second language. The author explains that learners would recognize the communicative value of the second language and be driven to become proficient in it if they need to speak it in a variety of social contexts or to pursue their professional goals. Similarly to this, if language learners feel positive about native speakers, they will want to interact with them more.

Types of Motivation

There are many different dynamic classification models. According to the Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), motivation can be classified into two basic categories: intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the motivation that motivates learners to perform activities voluntarily, stemming from a real interest in and satisfaction with that activity; extrinsic motivation is the driving force that motivates learners to conduct activities to achieve certain goals such as getting good grades, finding a job, settling down, etc. The differences between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation have attracted a lot of attention in

recent years in the field of EFL learning. According to Oletić and Nina (2014), "intrinsic or extrinsic motivation and the correlation between motivation and success in learning a foreign language have been examined".

Three categories of intrinsic motivation are identified by Dornyei (2001): (1) The intrinsic want to learn is the desire to "engage in an activity for the joy and satisfaction of comprehending something new, gratifying one's curiosity, and exploring the universe" (p.28); (2) The intrinsic motivation toward achievement is the feeling of satisfaction associated with attempting to surpass oneself, to overcome challenges, and to accomplish or create something; (3) The intrinsic motivation toward stimulation is the type of motivation to engage in an activity in order to experience pleasurable sensations stimulated by the activity itself (Dornyei, 2001, p. 149). According to Dornyei (2001), extrinsic motivation is divided into four subtypes: (1) external regulation refers to "the least self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, coming entirely from external sources such as rewards or threat" (p.28); (2) interjected regulation involves " externally imposed rules that student accepts as norms to be followed in order not to feel guilty" (p.28); (3) identified regulation occurs when the student engages in an activity as he highly values and identifies with the behaviour, and see it useful to do, a student with the identified regulation may learn English because it is necessary for him to listen to English songs or watch films in English.; lastly, (4) integrated regulation indicates "choiceful behaviour that is fully assimilated with the individual's other values, needs and identity" (p.28).

Integrative motivation is characterized by Mun (in Widesti, 2020) as motivation that lacks an external inducement (reward). Because of their good manners, students are motivated to study a foreign language through integrative motivation. According to Hanyeq and Suhatmady (2018), instrumental motivation is an incentive that motivates students to study a language with more practical linguistic objectives like applying for a well-paying job or gaining greater social standing.

There are many motivating factors, according to Harmer (1991), Dornyei (2001), and William (2011), including the group of factors about the teacher, the organic conditions of the educational institution, the learners' confidence, positive attitudes towards foreign languages and the foreign language community, the voluntary nature of learning, the absence of any outside influences, the class's attitudes, and the curriculum.

Research on Motivation

The motivation of teachers and learners is also an issue that attracts the attention of scientists (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Cook, 2001). Research on motivation is extremely diverse in terms of topics, subjects, and methods, and there are many quantitative studies using questionnaires that are referenced and synthesized from previous studies.

The majority of these studies' findings agreed with Gardner and Lambert's (1972) theory that learning a foreign or second language is necessary for a person's ability to interact socially with others who speak that language, known as integrative motivation, and for their ability to acquire knowledge and skills that can be used in that language, known as instrumental motivation.

Another research by Siriluck and Sirithip (2004) examined the connection between undergraduate students' motivation and English-language competency. The study made it very

evident that students with high English proficiency are more eager to integrate than those with poor English proficiency. Yet, there was no discernible difference in the two student groups' levels of instrumental drive. Also, the study demonstrated that students with high levels of English proficiency are more driven than students with low levels of English performance.

According to Masum (2016), "students learn the English language for practical reasons, i.e., get a good score in public exams, securing a good job, getting opportunities for higher education, and so on" (p. 185). In his study, Mohammad Rukanuddin (2014) hypothesized that students at the tertiary level are driven to learn English for practical reasons. Jenifara Zaman (2015) argues that in order to motivate their students' performance, both teachers and students should attempt to enjoy the learning process. According to P. Singh & M. Singh (2021), while students might have a strong desire to study, the teacher's external help profoundly impacts their learning. The teacher's capability to enhance students' competency, interest in the subject studied, and feelings of self-efficacy all affect students' motivation to study. Self-confidence also matters in learning, for a student's motivation will be lost if it is weakened (Lo, 2022).

According to Wimolmas (2013), Thammasat University students are a little more "instrumentally" inclined when it comes to studying English. Furthermore, students are integratively motivated to acquire this second language, according to Nidana's (2017) findings. Yamagami (2023) has explored the relationship between the L2 motivational self-system, students' perceptions of their English proficiency, and their attitudes toward translanguaging in Japanese EFL classrooms that examined this relationship using structural equation modeling (SEM) and analyzed changes in attitudes towards translanguaging by adopting the trajectory equifinality approach (TEA).

Research Questions

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

1. To what extent is the learning motivation of students with a Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English?

2. Do intrinsic or extrinsic motivations have a greater influence on students of the Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English when participating in the course?

3. What factors motivate students of Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

In general, the Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy program taught in English is equivalent to a high-quality Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy program, but with an additional 28 credits (420 hours or 350 hours) for the English program. Intensive English (taught by a lecturer in the Department of English Education) is taught in the first four semesters. Students have to complete 350 hours of intensive English language study at the university. The student's English output standard is equivalent to B2, according to the CEFR. According to the Guided learning hours of CEFR, learners should devote between 500 – 600 hours to studying to achieve the B2

level. In the context that students' English entry level is relatively low and inconsistent, from A1 - B1 (Nguyen, 2014), 350 hours are insufficient for students with an equivalent input level A1/A2 to achieve English output standards. Therefore, adding to the program some additional English credits will be necessary and effective for students to have the opportunity and time to acquire and practice English, a necessary condition for students to access specialized knowledge in Mathematics and transmit that knowledge in future careers.

The questionnaire was given to 31 students at the Faculty of Mathematics, Hanoi National University of Education. 20 students out of 31 students participated in answering interview questions.

Design of the Study

The study was conducted using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the research questions. The questionnaires for students were written in English and translated into Vietnamese to ensure they could understand the researcher's requirements and study purposes thoroughly. It contained 20 questions that investigated the learning motivation of sophomores taking the Math-through-English teacher preparation program at Hanoi National University of Education's Faculty of Mathematics. The interview used in this study contained one open-ended question to investigate the time students utilized to study English by themselves.

Data collection & analysis

Data type	Data collection instruments	Data analysis instruments	Data presentation instruments
Quantitative data	**Survey questionnaire** **Part 1:** A 5-point Likert scale with 20 questions to determine the level of motivation and type of learning motivation of the participants (intrinsic/ extrinsic motivation) was carried out in the second semester of the school year 2022-2023. The scale has 5 levels of choice from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The content of the scale course is referenced from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery formula (Gardner, 1972; 1985) with adjustments to suit the participants and research objectives. The 20 questions are divided equally into 2 groups: Group of questions about intrinsic motivation: questions 1, 2, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19 Question group on extrinsic motivation: questions 3, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 20 ***Part 2:*** A multi-choice sentence table includes 9 groups of motivational factors.	**SPSS software** ***Descriptive statistic*** Calculate mean (and standard deviation) scores to assess motivation level and type Rating criteria: 1.00 – 1.33: low motivation 1.34 – 3.67: average motivation 3.68 - 5.00: high motivation ***Descriptive statistic*** Calculate the frequency of the factors Cronbach's alpha calculates the reliability of the scale	Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel

Qualitative data	**Interview with an open-ended question:** "How much time do you spend on studying English by yourself after class?" The answers are classified into specific groups.	**SPSS software** ***Descriptive statistic*** Calculate the frequency of the answers	

Findings and Discussion

Learning Motivation of Students with a Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy Taught in English

Table 1.

Mean and assessment of intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation	Mean	Standard deviation	Motivation level
Question 1	3.8387	.93441	High
Question 2	3.4516	1.20661	Average
Question 6	3.8065	.70329	High
Question 8	3.1935	.87252	Average
Question 9	3.7742	1.11683	High
Question 12	2.9355	.99785	Average
Question 13	3.0968	1.07563	Average
Question 14	3.2258	.99028	Average
Question 15	3.8065	.74919	High
Question 19	3.2903	.69251	Average
Mean of Measure	3.4419	.93391	Average
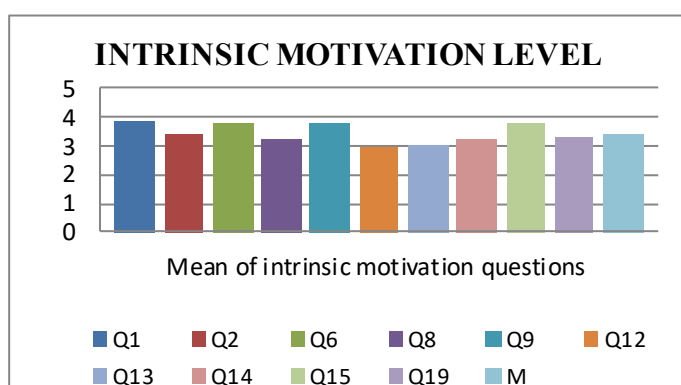
Figure 1. The mean of intrinsic motivation questions

Accordingly, students had an average intrinsic motivation (M = 3.4419). Question 1 (I enjoy learning Math in English) had the highest average score (M = 3.8387), followed by question 6 (I am interested and want to learn about teaching methods of Math in English), question 9 (I study Math in English quite well and understand the importance of English, so I enjoy studying

Math in English) and question 15 (I study Math in English voluntarily and always voluntarily to study to improve study habits). High scores in all four of the questions as mentioned above indicated a high level of intrinsic motivation. Although it was still assessed as having average motivation, question 13 (I admire/love the teacher who teaches Math/English/Math in English) had the lowest mean score (M = 3,0968).

Subsequently, passion for English, subject content, integrated subject, methods of teaching science subjects in English, and confidence were internal factors that created high learning motivation for students (Questions 1, 6, 9). Besides, the intrinsic motivation motivated students to participate in the course voluntarily (Question 15). Students studied this programme to become Math teachers to teach Math through English because of their own aspirations. With intrinsic motivation, students were more actively engaged in learning. The results also showed that novelty, interest, and support of the integrated lesson contributed to students' intrinsic learning motivation (Question 19). Students have been much inspired to learn Math through English because of the significant pedagogical differences between integrated teaching techniques and conventional approaches. Another impressive outcome was Math through English teachers' impact on their students. Students preferred to follow the teachers they respect; therefore, this would assist them in making professional decisions in choosing their careers. In conclusion, students with average intrinsic motivation would feel free to complete academic assignments, actively engage in class to pursue their preferences, and feel that the course is meaningful and useful to achieve their long-term objectives.

Table 2.

Mean and assessment of extrinsic motivation

| Extrinsic motivation	Mean	Standard deviation	Motivation level
Question 3	2.7742	1.08657	Average
Question 4	4.0323	.83602	High
Question 5	3.2903	1.07062	Average
Question 7	2.6129	1.38269	Low
Question 10	3.0968	.94357	Average
Question 11	3.1613	.89803	Average
Question 16	3.7419	.96498	High
Question 17	4.3226	.65254	High
Question 18	4.0323	.83602	High
Question 20	3.1935	.83344	Average
Mean of Measure	3.4258	.9836	Average
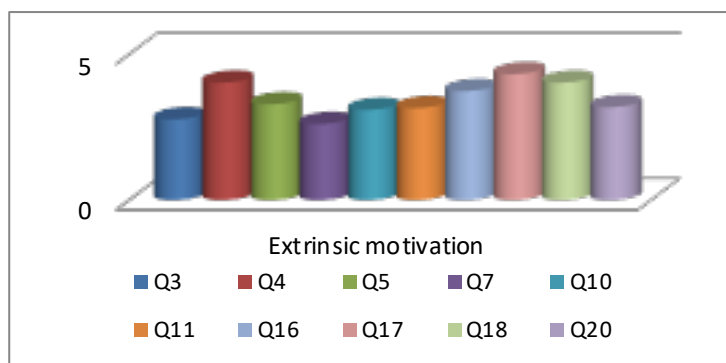
Figure 2. Mean of extrinsic motivation questions

The mean of the questions belonging to the extrinsic motivation group was presented in Table 2. With the mean of all 10 questions being 3.4258, students had average extrinsic motivation. One notable difference between the data for the two types of motivation were that three questions in the extrinsic motivation exceeded the score of 4.00, while none in the intrinsic motivation achieved that mark. Question 17 (I just want to pass the test/get a university degree to apply for a job without caring about major) was the one with the highest score (M = 4.3226) and showed that the students had extrinsic motivation at a high level while question 7 (I study Math/English/Math in English just to satisfy the wishes of my friends/relatives) was the question with the lowest result and showed a low extrinsic motivation (M = 2.6129). The other three questions that also showed a high level of motivation of learners were question 4 (I am studying for a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics pedagogy in English because this is a trendy career with a high income and a major trend in the future), question 16 (I want to read and understand Mathematical documents in English to serve my study and research), and question 18 (I learn how to think mathematically and logically in English directly). The remaining questions show average motivation.

Thus, in terms of extrinsic motivation, the factors related to career prospects, undergraduate/ graduate education and professional development motivated students to a high level of learning and teaching Mathematics in English (Questions 4, 16, 17, 18). In other words, students could achieve their practical goals by learning to teach Math in English. The potential practical benefits that could be achieved through a high level of expertise in integrated subjects were both the learners' goal and motivation. This fact further reinforced the importance of teaching and learning Mathematics in English, which students also acknowledged and appreciated. However, having students with average extrinsic motivation also posed challenges for educators. Since extrinsic motivation was synonymous with taking an action to gain a benefit, learners will become disinterested in learning when the benefits motivate students to learn and reach their goals disappear. Therefore, to prevent the disappearance of beneficial factors, the teachers must maintain and strengthen the external motivation and nurture the student's internal motivation simultaneously. Only in this way can enthusiastically learning behaviors be formed.

In general, students were moderately motivated to take the course to become a Math teacher in English, while Loima and Vibulphol (2016) found contradicting findings in the regional study that a high level of motivation was found among Thai students. This relatively high degree of

enthusiasm to learn English has been seen in other EFL situations as well (Cho, 2012; Fan & Feng, 2012; Winewska, 2013), which supports the idea that English is a necessary skill for individuals all over the world (Fiedler, 2011; Johnson, 2009). The reason for this is that the samples in this study are Vietnamese, while in Wong's study (2011), the samples are primarily Chinese students. Moreover, students know the importance of learning English as it is the world's lingua franca and as the language for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education (Nair, 2020).

More specifically, learners were more motivated by intrinsic motivation than by extrinsic motivation, although the difference was relatively small. The research by Achmad and Yusuf (2016) revealed similar results, showing that university students in Aceh enrolled in secretarial programs showed a greater intrinsic drive to learn English than extrinsic incentives. The students concur that studying English is crucial in today's world as English is becoming a universal tongue in order to facilitate contact with individuals from various nations. However, the majority of prior studies in EFL settings suggested that students had strong external motivation—learning the value of English for objectives connected to education and employment (Hayes, 2014; Long, Ming, Chen, 2013).

There was no evidence of a direct link between motivation and learning (Fan & Feng, 2012; Kitjaroonchai, 2012). According to the data, these students' learning may not be improved by curiosity alone (Jang, 2008). Loima and Vibulphol (2016) stated that "acculturated external motivation," also known as peer recognition, and student-teacher interaction were important elements influencing students' motivation and learning in the classroom.

Motivational Factors of Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy Taught in English
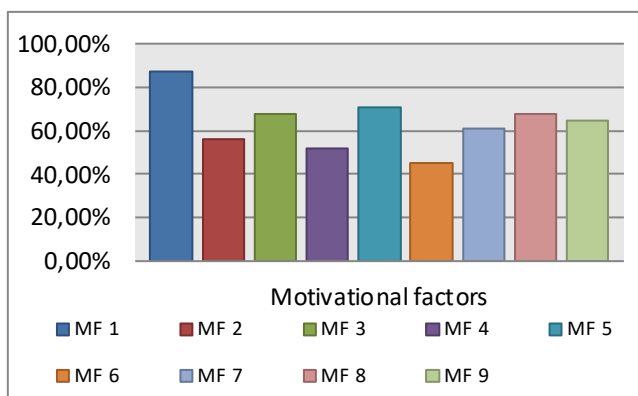

Figure 3. Frequency of motivational factors

Table 3.

Frequency of motivational factors

No.	Motivation factors	Choice	
		Frequency	Percentage
1	Lecturers have: dedication, enthusiasm, high professional qualifications, good pedagogical skills, an attractive and engaging lecture presentation method, and good teacher moral qualities.	27	87.1%
2	Adequate university conditions and modern facilities (reasonable class size, fixed teacher assignment, sufficient equipment for teaching and research).	16	56.1%
3	Learners themselves attain good achievements/ results in the learning process, study effectively and achieve self-satisfaction, thereby improving their self-confidence.	21	67.7%
4	Learners (especially) enjoy/are passionate about Math and/in English.	16	51.6%
5	Learners have intrinsic motivation (personal interests, ...) to learn Math in English; the motivation to learn Math in English comes from the learners' needs and desires/aspirations.	22	71%
6	English is the only second language that learners acquire.	14	45.2%
7	Learners who are interested/passionate or have the desire to learn and integrate with the community of English-speaking countries.	19	61.3%
8	The members of the class study actively and enthusiastically, have an equal level of learning and have a good spirit of cooperation.	21	67.7%
9	The content of Math in English knowledge is of moderate difficulty, practical, and easy to absorb and apply; the curriculum is designed in a balanced manner, ensuring the fit; the textbook has a clear layout, the knowledge is presented scientifically, easy to understand, and attractive.	20	64.5%
Sum		31	

From Table 3, it could be seen that the factors about lecturers was the group that motivated the most students with the choice of 27/31 students (accounting for 87.1%). This data suggests that lecturers like Loima & Vibulphol (2016), are a potent external source of incentive for students. According to earlier research, positive teacher-student interaction is one of the fundamental motivating factors needed in a classroom (Al Shlowiy, 2014; De Witte & Rogget, 2013; Urhane, 2015). The data also showed that 71% of students were motivated when they voluntarily studied Math in English, making the group of factors related to the voluntary nature of learning the second most popular choice. About two-thirds of the students cited their self-confidence and the attitude of their classmates as motivating factors. Fourteen students (over 45%) feel motivated because they only had to learn a second language, English. The frequency of factors

such as conditions of the faculty and university, the students' positive attitude towards the subject and the English-using community as well as the learning materials used, were not significantly different. Those groups of factors affected about 50% - 65% of students. From that, it could be concluded that the lecturers, the voluntary nature of the subject, the confidence and the positive attitude of the classmates contribute to the formation of motivation in the learners.

Among nine factors, the factors related to lecturers greatly influenced the formation of learning motivation in students. The English lecturers had solid expertise from the Faculty of English, the experienced Math lecturers who have studied and worked both domestically and internationally from the Faculty of Mathematics, along with Vietnamese visiting lecturers and foreigners, have played an essential role in improving the professional quality of teaching and learning Mathematics in English at the Faculty of Mathematics. Students had valuable opportunities to gain in-depth language and subject content knowledge from experts and were inspired by their teachers' professional commitment and enthusiasm. In addition, with professional teaching methods and engaging lectures, the lecturers in charge of the course strived to create a supportive learning environment that encouraged the ability to self-study and research as well as equip learners with the necessary qualities of a science teacher in English. In short, educators have done a great job of supporting students and having a certain impact on learners.

The research results also showed that the voluntary nature of learning Math in English was a source of motivation for many students. This conclusion was supported by the fact that students had average intrinsic motivation. Students learned to satisfy themselves, and for them, learning Math in English was not merely a compulsory subject that the university required them to learn. This spirit should be nurtured and promoted by propagandizing the importance and inevitability of these integrated subjects in particular and the method of teaching science in English in general to more students.

It is a fact that if students feel confident, they will be encouraged to study Math in English. The results of research on types of motivation also supported this statement. Successful experiences or achievements often created high self-confidence, and the confidence then motivated the students to learn. To maintain learner confidence, educators should design tasks that are fit and of moderate difficulty while clearly stating learning goals (William, 2011). In addition, students need to be able to express their personal views and understanding freely in the learning and research process.

The positive attitude of classmates was also a motivating factor for two-thirds of the study's participants. Most of the students were qualified and capable, eager to learn and actively participated in classroom activities. This has created active cooperation as well as competition among learners. Active cooperation between learners will contribute to improved learning outcomes in the way that students can also learn from their classmates and seek motivation from them. Teachers need to pay attention to the formation of a learning environment where individuals have the opportunity to demonstrate their own abilities and form a collective spirit. Class tasks and activities must be carefully designed to ensure that students learn and utilize them to share experiences and knowledge. Class assignments also need to be diversified and

flexible. The remaining factors only motivated about 50% of the students, so they need to receive proper attention to improve efficiency.

English Learning Habits of Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy Taught in English

When asked about the amount of time spent studying English after class, 6/20 students answered that they did not spend time studying English on their own. In other words, those students relied solely on 420 lessons at university to raise their English level from A1/A2/B1 to B2 (according to the CEFR). 10 students said they spent 15-60 minutes studying English at home daily. Only 1 student spent 2-3 hours studying English on a daily basis. The remaining 3 students spent 2-3 hours a week on self-studying English, especially when the exam was coming up.
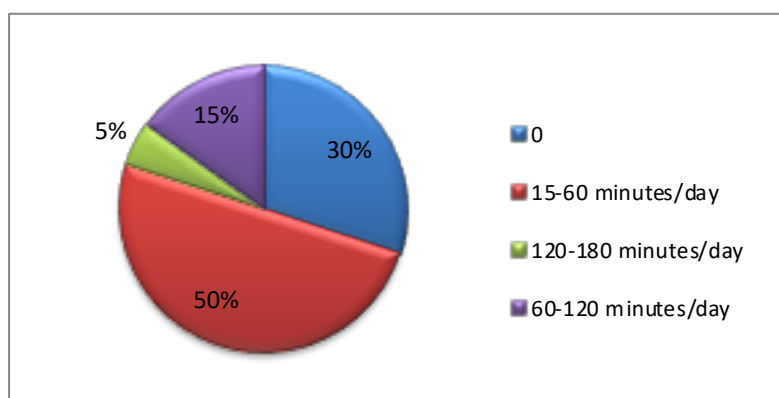
Figure 4. Time to self-study English outside of class by Bachelor of Mathematics Pedagogy taught in English

The above results showed that educators still have a lot of work to deal with the students who did not spend time studying English at home and only rely on the number of classes at university to improve their English ability from A1/A2/B1 (CEFR) to B2. The above time period was basically not enough to reach the output target. For students who have spent time on self-study, being guided by the lecturers with effective and appropriate self-study methods will contribute to maximizing learning results.

Recommendations and Suggestions

From the results discussed above, the study proposes four recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of similar courses in the future:

1. Learners need to clearly understand career prospects and job opportunities while they are still in school and need to be given more opportunities to practice teaching Mathematics in English in a real educational environment. Learners' learning motivation really needs proper attention and constant nurturing; therefore, educators should pay more attention to providing students with up-to-date information and knowledge about subject content value and the importance of integrated teaching methods.

2. It is necessary to develop a set of national competency standards for teachers of science subjects in English with reference to documents from Europe and developed countries to have

a reasonable curriculum framework, testing and assessment standards, and output capacity more synchronously and accurately.

3. It is vital to enhance and supplement modules/lessons on language of instruction and language used in the classroom.

4. The institution should increase and supplement the number of credit hours of intensive English courses to a minimum of 500 hours/600 periods (40 credits). The number of credit hours should be appropriately distributed between the Intensive English courses as well as the Mathematical English courses based on the student's entry level of English competence.

Conclusion

From the above research results, it is plausible to conclude that students with a bachelor's degree in Mathematics pedagogy taught in English had an average level of learning motivation. This contributed to affirming that teaching science subjects in English was somewhat essential and influenced students' learning and career orientation (although this influence was not extensive). The obtained results demonstrated that the research participants were motivated by both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, placing great demands on the formation and maintenance of supportive and nurturing learning environments and learning motivation.

In this course, students felt motivated to learn thanks to the impact of the factors about lecturers, the voluntary nature of subject learning, high self-confidence, and the positive attitudes of classmates. The learning materials, the university's facility, together with students' positive attitudes towards Math in English, learner autonomy, and the language community also created motivation for learners to a certain extent.

Another conclusion that could be drawn from the study was that not all students spent time self-studying English after class. As analyzed in the study, 350 hours of general and specialized English at the university were not enough to assist all students in achieving the English output standard (CEFR B2), which required them to be autonomous learners outside the classroom to achieve the learning outcome of English proficiency. Therefore, students need to spend more time learning English and accessing the study materials themselves, and lecturers also need to make more efforts to improve this situation.

Through the discussion, four recommendations were proposed to improve the effectiveness of the course, namely adding more credit hours to the intensive English program, increasing the lessons on the language of instruction in English, providing students with up-to-date materials on methods as well as developing a national competency standard for teachers of science subjects in English.

In order to overcome the limitations of this study, the author hopes to conduct further studies in the future with more participants, focusing on analysis and comparison between students' learning motivation, learner autonomy and their learning outcomes.

Acknowledgments

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