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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear inquisitive readers,

Join us on an exciting adventure through the research articles of the latest issue of The International Journal of TESOL & Education, Volume 4, Issue 1, 2024. This issue has a wealth of fascinating research papers that promise to transform the landscape of language teaching and learning.

Our journey begins with an exploration by Le Hoang Son of the University of Economics, Ho Chi Minh City, and Trinh Minh Ly of the University of Cuu Long in Vietnam. In "An Investigation of Vocabulary Learning Strategies of ESP Students," they disentangle the complex web of tactics used by ESP students to expand their lexical arsenal.

Next, we visit Basrah Engineering Technical College, Southern Technical College, and the College of Education in Qurna, University of Basrah, Basra, Iraq, to explore Batool Abdul-Mohsin Miri, Mahdi Kadhim Kareem, and Mariam Naji Mazloum Al-Ghazawi who present "The Iraqi EFL Learners' Awareness of the Role of Reading Literature in their Creative Writing." Their findings shed light on the symbiotic link between literature and creative writing skills among Iraqi EFL students.

Our journey then takes a surprising turn with Jayanthi Muniandy and Subathira Devi Ramaya from Universiti Sains Malaysia in Malaysia. In "Unlocking ESP Learners' Leadership and Higher-Order Thinking Skills through Whatsapp Community of Practice," they demonstrate how a Whatsapp Community of Practice may help ESP learners improve their leadership and higher-order thinking skills.

Finally, we discuss the technical frontier with Ho Pham Xuan Phuong of the University of Foreign Language Studies at the University of Da Nang, Vietnam. This study, "Using ChatGPT in English Language Learning: A Study on I.T. Students' Attitudes, Habits, and Perceptions," reveals how ChatGPT was integrated into English language learning, offering unique insights into I.T. students' attitudes, habits, and perceptions.

Our deepest gratitude goes to the brilliant experts on our editorial board and the careful reviewers who have created the high standards that our International Journal of TESOL & Education upholds. Their skills and dedication have been the foundation of the quality and relevance contained on these pages.

We encourage you, dear readers, to immerse yourself in the intriguing narratives of this issue, which will create a dynamic interchange of ideas and innovation among the thriving TESOL and education communities.

Thank you for your continuous support; we expect more innovative research in future issues.

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 Vocabulary Learning Strategies of ESP Students

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ABSTRACT

	English is an indispensable language, especially in the digital age. For students who are not specialized in English vocabulary, understanding effective vocabulary learning strategies becomes crucial, helps increase their chances of being hired, and improves coherence in written and spoken communication. This study investigates the vocabulary learning strategies most and least commonly employed by ESP students. The research involved 59 participants from three majors: business administration, accounting, and tourism. Data collection was carried out through questionnaires and interviews. The findings highlight students' preference for metacognitive strategies and their positive attitude toward technology as a supportive tool for vocabulary acquisition. Additionally, cognitive and memory strategies linked to learned vocabulary were occasionally utilized. The implications of this research extend to teachers, students, and curriculum designers, providing insights for developing appropriate methods to enhance ESP vocabulary learning.
Keywords: ESP, vocabulary learning strategies, students	

Introduction

Specialized English courses are included in the curricula at colleges to meet the increasing demand for English language use in many fields (Dudley-Evans & St-John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). In Vietnam, the government emphasizes the goal of college and university education in assisting students in gaining profound knowledge and practical skills in their jobs with the capacity to work independently and solve problems ingeniously (National Assembly of Vietnam, 2005). Vocabulary plays a crucial role in the learning and teaching of foreign languages, as an ample vocabulary enables students to express their ideas in communication effectively. Insufficient vocabulary causes numerous challenges in acquiring and using language effectively (Nation, 2001). Emphasizing the significance of vocabulary acquisition, Schmitt (2000) asserts that "lexical knowledge is central to communicative competence and to the acquisition of a second language" (p. 55). In addition, Nation (2001) depicts the relationship

between vocabulary knowledge and language use as complementary: vocabulary knowledge enables language use while language use improves vocabulary knowledge. Vocabulary acquisition is fundamental to successful foreign language use and plays a significant role in the formation of thorough spoken and written texts (Gu, 2003; Mart, 2012; Nation, 2011; Yang and Dai, 2011). The significance of vocabulary methods for non-English majors has been extensively examined. Vocabulary acquisition is a vital component of language learning, and it is especially difficult for non-English majors. Using research-based vocabulary methods can assist students in overcoming the challenges they have while learning new words and phrases. Vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) are crucial in facilitating learners' vocabulary acquisition (Akbari, 2015; Al-Khresheh and Al-Ruwaili, 2020; Asgari and Mustapha, 2011; Goundar, 2019). Nation (2001) suggests that learners have different skills and strategies for accessing vocabulary. In other words, vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs) can help learners expand their vocabulary. The study can contribute to improving teaching methods and materials for ESP instructors, allowing them to better support their students in acquiring the vocabulary necessary for their specialized fields. By understanding ESP students' strategies to learn vocabulary, the study aims to identify which strategies are most effective in their specific context, leading to more targeted and successful language instruction. This research sought the answer to the following question:

What are ESP students' two most and least used learning vocabulary strategies?

Literature Review

Definitions of ESP

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) seeks to assist learners in developing the language skills and methods required to communicate effectively in their chosen fields of study or work. There are numerous definitions of ESP in several studies over several years. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) refer to ESP as a language teaching approach in which all content and method decisions are based on the learner's learning motivation. Robinson (1991) considers ESP to be English courses that are often end-directed and based on surveys and needs analysis to determine specifically what students need and can do through English. Some authors defined ESP as teaching English for academic, professional, or vocational purposes (Brunton, 2009; Carver, 1983; Hyland, 2006). According to Basturkmen (2010), ESP focuses on when, where, and why learners need the language, whether in school or at work. Determination about what and how to teach content will be based on the description of learners' specific circumstances in work and study. Students study ESP to gain academic achievement and satisfy their future careers (Belcher, 2004). In general, ESP denotes the promise of more effective and useful English language instruction (Akbari, 2011; Yogman & Kaylani, 1996).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) addresses learners' instructional demands by adapting language training to their specific purposes in both academic and occupational contexts. Scholars highlight the growing necessity for ESP in effective English communication, recognizing the language's importance as a lingua franca.

Importance of vocabulary in language acquisition

Vocabulary plays a vital role in acquiring language. Learners cannot communicate in the target language without vocabulary. According to Wilkins (1972), he asserts "Without vocabulary, nothing can be conveyed." Vocabulary is an essential factor in allowing for efficient communication. Understanding and employing a diverse vocabulary enables students to convey their intents and thoughts accurately and flexibly (Schmitt, 1997). Many factors, including learning techniques, group and individual activities, and vocabulary learning strategies, determine vocabulary acquisition. Vocabulary learning strategies are one of the language learning strategies in pedagogy (Afzal, 2019; Gu, 2003; Nation, 2001). The importance of vocabulary in meeting educational and professional needs. Learners need to possess specialized vocabulary to be able to understand and participate actively in their academic and professional environments.

Classification of vocabulary learning strategies (VLSs)

Language learning strategies inspire learners to take responsibility for their learning and guide their minds to become independent, positive, and masterful in language learning. Vocabulary learning strategies are a subcategory of language techniques and include information about what students do to discover the importance of new words, maintain them in long-term memory, and remind them when necessary. Different scholars have classified vocabulary learning strategies in numerous ways.

Rebecca Oxford introduced Oxford's Taxonomy of Language Learning Strategies in 1990, a system that classifies language learning strategies into three primary categories. These categories encompass cognitive strategies, which include methods like memory techniques; metacognitive strategies, which involve planning and self-assessment; and social/affective strategies, encompassing activities such as seeking assistance and coping with emotional elements like anxiety during the learning process.

Paul Nation and Norbert Schmitt's proposal of Schmitt's Vocabulary Learning Strategies in 1997 introduces a taxonomy specifically designed to address the complexities of vocabulary acquisition. This taxonomy delves into a range of strategies that are crucial for learners aiming to build a strong vocabulary foundation. It includes strategies related to discovering meaning, consolidating form and meaning, and using words in context. This taxonomy focuses explicitly on vocabulary acquisition.

According to Gu and Johnson (1996), vocabulary learning strategies are divided into 4 groups: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation. Metacognitive strategies consist of recognizing fundamental words for comprehension, and the learners find their own strategies, methods, and techniques to learn these words appropriately. On the other hand, learners adopt a number of strategies to clarify the meaning of vocabulary. Cognitive strategies are related to guessing, using a dictionary, and note-taking. Memory strategies intend to transfer a newly learned word from short to long-term memory, taking into account both pronunciation and meaning. It is required to make word lists, pay attention to pronunciation, code using visual and verbal clues, and revise. Activation strategies are ones that allow learners to employ new words in a variety of situations.

Smith (1997) divided vocabulary learning strategies into two types: discovery and consolidation strategies. He designated vocabulary learning strategies into five groups: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strategies. Determination strategies refer to strategies that learners use without the help of others to figure out the meaning of a word by using word class strategies, analyzing word components, guessing words in context, and using the dictionary. Learners can learn new vocabulary through interaction with others with social strategies. Memory strategies include imaginary, group words, and collocation. Metacognitive strategies describe how learners monitor, make decisions, and self-assess their learning progress.

Fan (2003) revised Gu's (2003) classification, which is divided into nine vocabulary learning strategies categories. It includes management, sources, guessing, dictionary, repetition, association grouping, analysis, and known word strategies. Using the dictionary and guessing strategies are frequently used and seem beneficial to the most proficient students (Fan, 2003).

Learners can generate, handle, choose, and use vocabulary learning strategies that allow explicit and implicit learning. Explicit learning refers to people who are conscious of their learning and attempt to gain language skills. Conversely, implicit learning defines a learner's gaining language skills and knowledge unconsciousness. Vocabulary learning strategies are a priority over all other strategies. To gain higher achievement, successful learners employ adaptable and flexible tactics (Schmitt, 1997; Gu, 2012; Farjami & Aidinlou, 2013).

Vocabulary learning strategies are divided into two main groups: comprehension strategies and acquisition strategies (Akbari and Tahiririan, 2009). Comprehension strategies refer to finding out the meaning of words, while acquisition strategies describe strategies to reinforce learned vocabulary. Determination strategies and transactional strategies are included in comprehension strategies. Determination strategies relate to guessing from the context, analyzing words, and looking up those words from the dictionary. And asking for meaning from teachers and friends is not a social strategy. It is considered a transactional strategy. Acquisition strategies or learning strategies include knowledge and skill strategies. Learning the new words combines linguistic features (pronunciation, part of speech, spelling, and collocation), then the frequent exposure of the word and its use in different contexts.

Vocabulary learning strategies can be highlighted according to different categorizations and perspectives. Gu and Johnson (1996) propose four main groups of strategies: metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and activation. Smith (1997) categorizes strategies into discovery and consolidation types: determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive. Vocabulary learning strategies are divided into comprehension and acquisition strategies, detailing determination and transactional strategies for comprehension and knowledge and skill strategies for acquisition (Akbari and Tahiririan, 2009). Based on the vocabulary learning strategies mentioned above, the current study will focus on determination, social, memory, cognitive, and metacognitive strateds, comprehension, and acquisition strategies.

Related studies

Asgari and Mustapha (2011) carried out a survey to investigate vocabulary learning strategies of EFL students in Malaysia. Data for this study were derived from an open-ended interview

with the participation of ten EFL students. The results showed that some strategies for learning the meaning of the words through reading and monolingual dictionaries, using multimedia to learn English, and trying to use new words in everyday conversation were implemented by participants. In other words, memory, determination, and metacognitive strategies are common strategies, and learners are interested in using them.

Al-Khasawneh (2012) conducted a study to find out the most vocabulary learning strategies and the most vocabulary learning strategies of thirty students in a university in Jordan. The results indicated that determination strategies were the most frequently used, while metacognitive strategies were the least frequently used vocabulary learning strategies among the students.

Rachmawati (2018) examined vocabulary learning strategies utilized by 140 students at Indonesia's Merdeka University. For this study, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. According to the results, students prefer utilizing dictionaries, deducing meaning from context, and analyzing images or gestures. Studying and practicing meaning in a group, visualizing word form, and imagining a word's meaning were recommended strategies for consolidating meaning. Less-utilized strategies for knowledge retention included testing oneself with words, ignoring or passing over new words, and continuing to study a word over time.

To investigate students' strategies for learning academic English words, Huong (2018) conducted a study with the participants of 132 students who are majoring in English interpretation and pedagogy in Vietnam. The finding revealed that the participants tend to use assisting devices like online dictionaries and various applications rather than cognitive strategies in learning academic words.

Goundar (2019) conducted a thorough study with 53 students in Fiji to explore vocabulary learning strategies and seek the advantages and disadvantages of each strategy. The result revealed that EFL students' most frequently used strategies to enlarge their vocabulary were repetition, reading, guessing through their experience, memorization, and dictionary strategies.

Al-Khresheh and Al-Ruwaili (2020) conducted a study to investigate the vocabulary learning strategies used by Saudi students. The results of the studies indicated that the subject of the study preferred using a memory strategy. In addition, the study's results also identified determined social and metacognitive strategies that are, respectively, the strategies used by students in learning foreign language vocabulary. Cognitive strategy is the least preferred strategy in the results of this study.

A study was conducted by Nguyen (2021); based on the findings of twenty studies, it is obvious that social media is one of the most effective ways to enhance vocabulary learning among EFL and ESL learners because it provides various benefits. According to Dinh (2022), in order to help students enhance vocabulary retention, 120 participants were invited into the study. The finding indicated that the TBLT and vocabulary retention are directly connected. The studies show a common emphasis on memory, determination, and metacognitive methods in vocabulary learning. The use of dictionaries and a desire for practical application of vocabulary are prevalent themes. However, there are differences in the frequency of cognitive techniques

and the specific tools that learners prefer across cultural and educational situations. In this current study, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were used and conducted to obtain more information about the beliefs and attitudes dealing with vocabulary learning strategies that learners use in English for Specific Purposes classes.

Methods

Research Design

With the aim to investigate vocabulary learning strategies commonly used by ESP students, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed in the current study. In order to address the two questions, this study used mixed methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative method helps analyze problems through numerical data; it is considered more realistic and objective. Furthermore, the qualitative method allows researchers to collect in-depth information that is more authentic and gain a full understanding of the phenomenon (Gay et al., 2012).

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the research conducted by Kocaman and Cumaoglu (2014). The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese to ensure understanding and prevent misunderstandings among the participants. Subsequently, a pilot test was conducted with 14 ESP students who shared similar backgrounds with the current study's participants to identify and correct any potential ambiguities. Based on the results of the piloted questionnaire, the reliability index is greater than 0.7 (α= .814), which is high enough to conduct officially. Questionnaires were distributed to 59 students studying ESP modules. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: personal information and vocabulary learning strategies. The former would find out students' background information, including gender, major, and age. The latter involves six subcategories: Memory strategies (1-6), cognitive strategies (7-11), compensation strategies (12-15), metacognitive strategies (16-19), affective strategies (20-25), and social strategies (26-31).

Participants

59 students studying business administration, accounting, and tourism at a university in the Mekong Delta were invited to participate in the basics of convenient sampling

technique. They are sophomores and are studying English for specific modules as a part of their program. All study participants completed the Basic English courses before taking the ESP module.

Findings

59 participants completed the 31-item questionnaire in order to assess the extent to which ESP students use vocabulary learning strategies. Each of the six categories of vocabulary learning strategies (Memory, Cognitive, Compensation, Metacognitive, Affective, and Social) received a descriptive statistic, as well as the aggregate mean score for each of the six categories.

Table 1

Vocabulary Learning Strategies with Mean Score

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	S.D	N
Overall	59	1.80	5.00	3.60	.49	59
Memory	59	2.00	5.00	3.69	.67	59
Cognitive	59	1.80	5.00	3.41	.71	59
Compensation	59	2.25	5.00	3.77	.65	59
Metacognitive	59	2.50	5.00	3.98	.61	59
Affective	59	2.17	5.00	3.74	.73	59
Social	59	2.00	5.00	3.74	.72	59

Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviations for the overall as well as for each category. The results revealed that participants' frequency of using vocabulary learning strategies was high (M= 3.60, SD= .49). As far as the six categories of strategies are concerned, the results showed from moderate to high usage, with metacognitive strategies (MMeta= 3.98, SD= .61) as the main strategy chosen by the participants, followed by compensation strategies (MCom=3.77, SD=.65), affective strategies (MAff=3.74, SD=.73), social strategies (MSoc=3.74, SD=.72), memory strategies (MMem=3.69, SD=.67), and cognitive strategies (MCog=3.42, SD=.71).

Table 2

Memory strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally	Sometimes	Often and Always
			%	%	%
1	When I don't remember a word in English, I try to use another word which has the same meaning.	3.34	22.0	30.5	47.5
2	I often find connections between new words and familiar words that I have learned before.	3.36	45.8	30.5	23.7
3	I pronounce new words loudly.	3.66	11.9	27.1	61.0
4	I try to learn English words with their part of speech (noun, adjective, adverb)	3.37	23.7	28.8	47.5
5	I write down the meaning of the words I look up in my native language and in English	4.08	6.8	13.6	79.6
6	To learn new words, I write them many times in my notebook.	3.05	28.8	30.5	40.7

From Table 2, regarding memory strategies, the way to write new words many times in the notebook gets the lowest mean score (M= 3.05) and the lowest frequency of the strategies "I

often find connections between new words and familiar words that I have learned before". Two of the total six strategies were reported to be highly frequent usage. Strategies to write the meaning of the word in English and the native language of the participants received the highest mean score (M=4.08) with the agreement of 79.6 percent of the respondents. The repetition strategy is the most commonly used follow-up strategy by the respondents, with an agreement of 61 percent (M=3.66).

Cognitive strategies

Table 3

Cognitive strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally %	Sometimes %	Often and Always %
7	I try to learn English words by writing them on my cards and carry these cards with me at all times.	2.86	32.2	44.1	23.7
8	I often stick to words where I can see them easily.	2.97	39	22	39
9	I learn how to pronounce English words by listening to e-dictionaries.	4.24	0	10.2	89.8
10	I have a vocabulary notebook while learning English words.	3.34	18.7	33.9	47.4
11	I often take note of the English words I want to learn.	3.68	13.6	23.7	62.7

Two of the five cognitive strategies listed in Table 3, as the most frequently used by the participants, were most frequently employed by the participants. Interestingly, the majority of respondents would use e-dictionaries to learn how to pronounce English words. There are 89.8 percent of participants who prefer to rehearse their pronunciation using technology (M= 4.24). Strategy 11, taking note of the English words students wish to learn, was employed frequently (M = 3.68), with the agreement of 62.7% of the participants.

Compensation strategies

As can be seen from Table 4, dealing with compensation strategies, 91.5 percent learned English words with the support of technology software carried by participants (M=4.41). The result also revealed that students love learning English words with visual media like videos with the agreement of 77.9 percent of the respondents (M=3.93). Doing different English vocabulary tests and learning synonyms and antonyms of target language are indicated at the medium level (M=3.49; M=3.25).

Table 4

Compensation strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally %	Sometimes %	Often and Always %
12	12. I learn the synonyms and antonyms of the English words that I am learning.	3.25	27.1	25.4	47.5
13	13. I do different English vocabulary tests while learning English.	3.49	20.4	22	57.6
14	14. I love learning English words with the support of technology software.	4.41	0	8.5	91.5
15	15. I love learning English words with videos.	3.93	10.2	11.9	77.9

Metacognitive strategies

Table 5 depicts that the mean scores of all the items were at a high level. The mean score of participants toward trying to find the most suitable method while learning English words is at the highest level (M=4.22), with 91.5 percent of participants agreeing. The mean score about trying to learn pronunciation and the meaning of new words ranked second (M = 4.15), which was used regularly by 81.4% of the participants. Learning English with the support of technology games and studying English words in a planned way was reported to be of highly frequent use (M=3.92; M=3.66).

Table 5

Metacognitive strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally %	Sometimes %	Often and Always %
16	I learn English with the support of technology games.	3.92	15.3	10.2	74.5
17	With new words, I try to learn pronunciation and their meanings.	4.15	3.4	15.3	81.4
18	I try to find the most suitable method while learning English words.	4.22	6.8	84.7	91.5
19	I study English words in a planned way.	3.66	6.8	40.7	52.5

Affective strategies

Table 6

Metacognitive strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally %	Sometimes %	Often and Always %
20	I study English vocabulary while listening to background music to relax.	4.00	6.8	20.3	72.9
21	I reward myself when I learn English words.	3.28	27.1	23.7	50.8
22	I feel pleasant when I learn English words.	3.64	11.9	30.5	57.6
23	When I develop my English vocabulary, I feel more enjoyable in class.	3.98	6.8	16.9	76.3
24	Teacher encourages us to learn English words outside of the classroom.	4.25	1.7	10.6	87.7
25	I consider the use of English words that I know while watching English videos or movies.	3.05	30.6	15.3	54.1

As can be seen in Table 6, the mean score of participants' affective strategies is from medium to high level. 87.7% percent of the participants agreed that teachers encourage them to learn English whether inside or outside the classroom (M= 4.25). It means that their feeling is more enjoyable and more eager when increasing their English vocabulary (M= 3.98). 72.9% percent supported the view that learning vocabulary while listening to music is an effective strategy (M=4.00).

Social strategies

Table 7

Social strategies students used to learn vocabulary in ESP class

No.	Item	Mean	Never and Occasionally %	Sometimes %	Often and Always %
26	I check with my friends to see if I pronounce the English words correctly.	3.61	13.3	30.5	56.2
27	I ask my friends to correct me when I mispronounce a word.	3.83	10.2	27.1	62.7
28	When learning English words, I like to work in groups	3.78	10.2	22.0	67.8
29	When learning vocabulary, I need support from my teacher.	3.90	11.9	22.0	66.1
30	I love working with classmates rather than working individually.	4.00	8.5	15.3	76.2
31	Through competition with friends, I can learn English words better.	3.39	23.8	25.4	50.8

From Table 7, the most frequently used social strategy by the participants is working in groups, with the agreement of 76.2 percent of the participants (M= 4.0). Support from the teaching is one of the frequently used social strategies (M= 3.9) following the strategy of preferring group work to individuals. Descriptive statistics were performed on each strategy from the quantitative data of the participants. The findings were arranged by two most used and two least used strategies by the participants. Purposefully, to support the quantitative data, semi-structured interviews were used to find out the reason why the participants considered using vocabulary learning strategies.

Insight into student's vocabulary learning strategies in ESP class

Interview data were collected to collect the reasons behind the strategies participants used frequently when learning vocabulary in ESP classes. Five students were randomly selected to answer the interview questions. Table 8 shows the two most used vocabulary learning strategies.

Table 8

Two most used learning vocabulary learning strategies

Item	Mean
COMP14. Learning English words with the support of technology software.	
META18. Trying to find the most suitable method while learning English words.	

To examine the reason why these two strategies were used the most. Five students participated in a semi-structured interview, showing that using technology in learning English vocabulary is indispensable.

Student A said that

> I'm afraid to be wrong when the teacher calls me. So when I have a new word, I often hear it in the phone's app dictionary. It makes me more confident, and I get better grades. (Student A, interview extract)

Sharing the same opinion, student B said that

> Rarely do I encounter specialized vocabulary in my daily life, so I frequently consult the dictionary software on my computer. If not, I will not be able to comprehend the lesson. (Student B, interview extract)

Student E added that

> I can practice many times with English learning software on the computer. I can practice pronunciation and reading skills with the words I am learning. (Student E, interview extract)

Table 9 below illustrates two least used vocabulary learning strategies.

Table 9

Two least used learning vocabulary learning strategies

Item	Mean
MEM2	Finding connections between new words and the words learned
COG7	Learning English words by writing them on my cards and carrying these cards at all times

Semi-interviews were conducted with five randomly selected participants to find out why these two strategies were the least used. The majority of the participants show that they cannot find the similarities between new words and previously learned words.

Student C stated that

> Connecting new vocabulary with learned words is only for students who have a large vocabulary. I myself have a smaller vocabulary, and my memory is not very long, so I can't associate any learned words with new words. (Student C, interview extract)

Student D said that

> Terminology vocabulary is not the same as communication vocabulary. I have not yet felt the similarity of these two types of vocabulary that I have learned. (Student D, interview extract)

Learning English words by writing them on flashcards is one of the least utilized strategies due to the fact that participants find it inappropriate, are fearful of ridicule from their peers, and are perceived as nerds by others.

Students A shared that

> Write words on cards and take them, which don't look very good to me because they don't appeal to me. (Student A, interview extract)

Student C said that

> I have a hard time concentrating on studying. I need to study with everyone in the same class. Studying alone like that makes me bored. (Student C, interview extract)

Student E stated that

> My major has to be dynamic, and I feel like a nerd with my cards if I bring them everywhere. And everyone will see me as a bookworm. I love using apps instead. (Student E, interview extract)

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of the study indicated that the participants utilized metacognitive strategies to a greater extent than other strategies. Students may prefer metacognitive strategies over other ways because they allow for a more in-depth understanding of their learning process. Self-awareness, contemplation, and the ability to regulate one's cognitive processes are all part of metacognitive methods. These strategies may help students improve their entire learning

experience by encouraging critical thinking, problem-solving, and a more aware approach to learning. Understanding how one learns can lead to better academic performance and a sense of empowerment in the learning process. The semi-structured interviews showed some valuable data about the participants' strategies. The two most commonly used vocabulary learning strategies were learning English words with the support of technology software and trying to find the most suitable method while learning English words. The participants pointed out that they can practice many times with English learning software on the computer, which helps them practice pronunciation and reading skills with the words they are learning. In addition, The two least used vocabulary learning strategies were finding connections between new words and the words learned and learning English words by writing them on cards and carrying these cards at all times. Most participants showed that they could not find the similarities between new and previously learned words.

The finding revealed the metacognitive strategies and the other strategies are utilized frequently. Al-Khresheh and Al-Ruwaili, 2020; Ghalebi and Bagheri, 2020; Vo and Duong, 2020; and Wanpen et al., 2013) have supported this finding. With metacognitive strategies, students are able to assess their learning progress, achieve success, and plan for their future education. Students are encouraged to become independent learners at universities. The results of this study indicate that the participants are active in their search for the optimal vocabulary learning method. The findings of this research contrast with those of Al-Khasawneh (2012). According to his findings, students employed metacognitive strategies for learning vocabulary the least frequently. This study revealed that students enjoy using technology to acquire their vocabulary, particularly specialized terms. This result is consistent with research by Chien (2015) and Phillips (2017). According to the current study, finding the connection between newly learned and previously learned words and learning words with flashcards and carrying them everywhere are the two least utilized strategies. It contradicts previous research on the efficacy of flashcards for vocabulary learning (Akin & Seferoglu, 2004; Erten & Tekin, 2008). It appears to align with the current learning trend. They favor using software, applications, or online websites to increase their knowledge, particularly vocabulary (Edge et al., 2012; Kose and Meda, 2018; Jafari and Chalak, 2016; Ma and Yokamlue, 2019; Trinh and Le, 2021). It aligns well with Al-Bidawi's (2018) research. He discovered that memory strategies are the least popular among the students who participated. It contradicts the findings of Goundar (2019). Participants enjoy using memorization techniques to increase their vocabulary.

Learning a foreign language is a process of practice and active acquisition. Based on the current study's findings, it can be concluded that EFL learners will succeed when they have the most appropriate strategies. The findings of this study hope to contribute useful information to teachers, students, and curriculum designers, especially for ESP courses. For further research, the experimental study can be conducted with lessons that exploit the metacognitive strategies for the learners in ESP courses in order to help the learners.

Acknowledgments

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The Iraqi EFL Learners' Awareness of the Role of Reading Literature in their Creative Writing

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Creative Writing, Reading literature, Language Proficiency, EFL Learners' Academic Abilities.

This study examines the extent of awareness among Iraqi English foreign language learners about the potential impact of reading literature on developing their creative writing abilities. Furthermore, this study investigates the relationship between those who partake in literature reading and their academic skills. It examines the participation of 120 Iraqi EFL learners currently enrolled in the faculties of Arts, Education, and Education in Qurna, affiliated with the University of Basrah. It employs a mixed methods approach, including a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The results demonstrate a significant correlation between reading literary texts and developing creative writing skills. Several literary elements enhance creative writing, including a comprehensive understanding of figures of speech, cultivating critical thinking skills, engaging in literature courses, practicing paraphrasing poetry, and exposure to various literary genres. The findings also demonstrate that EFL learners profoundly understand the impact of engaging with literary texts on their academic abilities.

Introduction

Irrespective of the literary type, literature obtained via formal education is unquestionably the foremost authority in influencing student preferences for texts while also playing a substantial role in fostering dormant creative and intellectual capacities. Active involvement with literary materials may enhance the acquisition of the four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It enables learners to go beyond acquiring fundamental language comprehension skills and better grasp the language and its underlying mechanisms. Literature is a suitable medium for casually discussing grammar after conversing with a student. This feature facilitates the transition to the standard English language and allows for the omission of broad information as necessary while maintaining it as a point of reference. The use of literature can facilitate the adoption of strategies designed to enhance the understanding and interpretation of diverse occurrences (Widdowson, 1990, pp. 177–180).

In fact, developing a strong reading habit leads to enhanced writing proficiency (Nguyen, 2022: p.105). In contrast to other modes of written discourse, creative writing is mainly intended to provide amusement and enjoyment rather than delivering a direct and objective representation of knowledge and data. The use of imaginative elements in creative writing serves to enhance reader involvement. Hence, students need to grasp the importance of engaging with literary texts regarding their general linguistic proficiency and, more significantly, their aptitude for creative writing. Following Myers (1994: p. 12), the emergence of what is now referred to as "creative writing" may be attributed to a deliberate shift of perspective, whereby literature was reconceptualized as a means of personal expression rather than a subject of analysis. Engaging students with literary works allows them to encounter idiomatic expressions, which may facilitate the acquisition of advanced speaking and writing skills. Students can express their ideas coherently, accurately, and concisely in English.

Literature Review

The existing body of research primarily examines teaching strategies and teachers' perspectives when investigating the impact of reading literature on students' creative writing skills and language development (Knoeller, 2003; Austen, 2005; Urlaub, 2011; Morris & Sharplin, 2013; Noaman, 2013; Adam & Babiker, 2015). The study by Knoeller (2003) proposes that using creative writing activities in an organized fashion might enhance students' understanding of complex literary texts. In some scenarios, integrating the interaction approach with the conventional manner of interacting with literature through critical analysis might provide advantageous outcomes. According to Knoeller (2003), a prominent expert on the subject of English literature, it has been observed that students who first show hesitancy in engaging with creative writing tend to manifest a notable surge in enthusiasm during the undertaking. Creative writing assignments can demister students from using authentic voices in their written compositions. Response prompts can include a broader spectrum of open-ended tasks that extend beyond the mere expectation of students to compose within the same genre as the prescribed reading material.

According to Austin (2009), incorporating creative writing tasks has been shown to have positive outcomes for students studying English literature. Through careful consideration of assignment design and grading methodology, the researcher discovered that educators have the potential to enhance student's learning outcomes in creative writing activities. The assertion that creative writing is viewed as a means to enhance practical skills rather than recognizing its intrinsic value fails to properly comprehend the significance of art in fostering critical thinking among students. Additionally, it was discovered that the availability of creative writing courses in most universities is restricted, necessitating students to be admitted based on a portfolio of their previous work. Consequently, only students who have already exhibited proficiency in creative writing are allowed to partake in the enriching experience of the creative writing process.

However, the research undertaken by Urlaub (2011) first thoroughly describes the skills that language learners must acquire to achieve proficiency in reading literary works in their second

language, namely German. The author posits that acquiring advanced reading skills in a second language should be considered. Engaging in activities that integrate creative writing and critical reading can enhance students' proficiency in literary reading, foster a heightened appreciation for literature, and facilitate the effective incorporation of their existing knowledge into their comprehension of literary texts. The research employs written samples and reflective observations from three students with advanced language learning proficiency to emphasize the potential benefits of integrating creative writing activities. The use of guided writing exercises has been seen to facilitate the cultivation of critical skills in students when they engage with literary works, as demonstrated by their creative outputs and reflective practices. Engaging in a meticulous investigation of the original text may foster a more profound understanding and admiration for the formal elements of literature among students.

The primary aim of the study done by Morris and Sharplin (2013) is to critically analyze the existing literature and various methodologies used in the evaluation of creative writing. There is a debate regarding the importance of categorizing students' creative writing abilities on a continuum of development, analyzing the factors that contribute to the superiority of certain students' writing over others, identifying unique characteristics, and establishing the criteria used by instructors to evaluate student work. Due to the diverse range of criteria put forth by scholars, theorists, and professionals, there is a prevailing opinion that including creative writing should be avoided in high-stakes exam environments.

Noaman (2013) stressed the significance of using literature to enhance language learning. It examines the benefits of incorporating theatrical education into the curriculum for students and the significance of integrating literary texts in fostering linguistic development, including reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills. He concluded that literary texts have the potential to facilitate both student and societal development. The authors promote cultivating readers' cultural and educational growth under their emotional attributes. Examining the impact of teaching literary on students' creative writing, with a particular emphasis on the viewpoints of educators, was at the heart of the study by Adam and Babiker (2015). It examines the pedagogical approach that focuses on integrating English novels into the curriculum to augment undergraduate students' creative writing skills. The findings indicate that students' capacity to participate in creative writing is augmented by their exposure to renowned literary works published in English. Specific pedagogical approaches in literature instruction can foster increased incorporation of literary devices, such as allusions and figures of speech, among emerging authors.

According to Elley and Mangubhai (1983: 53), research has shown that L2 students exposed to a wide variety of aesthetically appealing storybooks with captivating content experience higher-than-average improvements in their English language ability. Following these research studies, Iida (2013) examines the significance of second language reading and writing within the context of their research article. The inquiry drove the study, "What are the specific types of texts that instructors choose for language classes, and what are the fundamental rationales behind these choices?" The Classification of Linguistic Patterns in Discourse (CLPD) framework was used to categorize the responses obtained from the interviews. The CLPD model provides a theoretical framework for evaluating data and elucidating the diverse viewpoints of language

teachers about the use of poetry within educational settings. Regrettably, there exists a need for uniform enthusiasm for the topic of poetry among instructors across various educational settings. The educators surveyed in this study unanimously agree that selecting poems for language education requires careful deliberation. They underscore the need to discern the appropriate occasions for incorporating poetry into instructional practices. A significant proportion of polled instructors have expressed concerns over incorporating literary texts into all EFL instructional strategies. Nevertheless, educators commonly recognize that integrating poetry and creative writing inside language programs is appropriate since it presents several benefits for students. The study concluded that a more comprehensive investigation requires either more refined classifications or novel characterization methods. Further research is necessary to ascertain the potential applications of literature in English language instruction across different proficiency levels and contextual settings.

The research conducted by Paesani (2016) examines the relationship between students' reading and writing abilities and their comprehension of Available Designs in the domains of language and design. The study is situated within a French grammar and stylistics course designed for advanced students, focusing on fostering literary comprehension and enhancing creative writing abilities. Upon examination of the data as mentioned above within the theoretical framework of the multiliteracies approach, it was seen that students demonstrated the capacity to discern evident connections between activities centered on interpreting and transforming texts and the subsequent impact on advancing language proficiency. The level of understanding among students about conceptualizing the schematic Available Designs as instruments for constructing meaning and linguistic frameworks, as well as their proficiency in using them for creative writing tasks, remained uncertain. The findings also demonstrated that students could engage in active analysis and revision of texts as a component of activities that facilitated the construction of meaning. Moreover, examining linguistic and textual elements within the context of literature may greatly facilitate the acquisition of a foreign language. Organizing the chronology of the text is another factor that aids in identifying the main idea, extracting specific details, and drawing conclusions about concealed meanings (Phuoc, 2022: p.43).

Additionally, literature reading enhances students' proficiency in English, fosters their aptitude for innovative problem-solving, and augments their capacity for critical thinking and analytical introspection. The use of literature as an instructional instrument has shown a notable augmentation of students' cognitive abilities, particularly in critical thinking. The growth of cognitive abilities in students is significantly enhanced by the cultivation of critical analysis and evaluation skills, which enable them to generate meaningful judgments. This process facilitates the fostering of enhanced creative thinking abilities and forming a distinct worldview. The educators promoted collaborative endeavors in order to attain this objective. Educators collaborate to establish a classroom milieu whereby students assume agency over their recreational experiences. Engaging in academic activities can improve students' language and non-linguistic skills and aptitude for learning and critical analysis (Ouhiba, 2022: pp. 483).

The study of literature can expand the intellectual perspectives of students via the promotion of speculative thought, the formulation of conclusions, and the exploration of novel connections. The field of literature offers students a vast collection of genuine information in several ways,

making it an invaluable resource. The acquisition of advanced language proficiency among students may be facilitated via exposure to intellectually demanding materials, with literary competence being a crucial factor in this process (Noaman, 2013: pp. 125-131). Furthermore, as to the findings of Kim (2010), the English literature class he conducted yielded a notable improvement in students' English fluency and their ability to engage in creative and critical thinking on the subject matter.

The perception held by students on the influence of reading literature on their language proficiency and developmental aspects, such as creative writing capabilities, needs to be clarified. Hence, it is crucial to prioritize students' viewpoints on the influence of reading literature on their development of creative writing abilities and language learning. Furthermore, exploring the significance of engaging with literary works in enhancing one's academic proficiencies and competencies is essential.

Research Questions

Given the aims mentioned earlier, this research poses the following questions:
1. What is the connection between the Iraqi EFL learner's creative writing and reading literary texts?
2. What aspects contribute to developing and improving creative writing abilities among Iraqi EFL learners by reading literature?
3. Are Iraqi EFL learners cognizant of the impact of reading literature on their language development skills and their overall academic abilities?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study focuses on undergraduate students enrolled in the English Departments at the University of Basrah, namely within the College of Arts, College of Education, and College of Education in Qurna. A total of 120 participants were chosen by random sampling to provide responses to the questionnaire items, while a smaller sample of 10 students was included in the semi-structured interviews. A group of ten students was chosen by a non-probability selection technique called quota sampling to participate in the interview and answer the questions. The students were categorized into two groups according to their inclination towards reading literature. Every group consists of 5 people.

Design of the Study

This research uses a sequential mixed-method approach to gather and analyze data: a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire. The survey questions used in this research are based on the questionnaire developed initially by Adam and Babiker (2015), including 15 statements. In order to fulfill the research goals, the statements were appropriately altered. The study centers its attention on three primary domains of investigation: the perspectives held by EFL Iraqi learners about the correlation between creative writing and literary works, the impact of literature on the practice of creative writing, and the extent to which EFL Iraqi learners acknowledge the importance of literature in their overall acquisition of skills. The interview

questions were derived from the questionnaire results, specifically examining the impact of EFL Iraqi learners' literature reading on their writing skills, language proficiency, creativity, communication abilities, and critical thinking aptitude.

Data collection & analysis

The survey was administered to a total of 150 English language learners who were enrolled in four-year programs across three different institutions. Specifically, there were 50 participants from the College of Arts, 50 from the College of Education, and 50 from the College of Education-Qurna. The questionnaire was completed by a total of 40 students from each institution. The questions provided are presented in Table. 1, 2, and 3. The responses obtained were analyzed using percentages. Subsequently, the analysis succeeded by conducting interviews with ten of the aforementioned students. The inquiries posed were as follows:

1. Did the literary lectures, theatrical performances, poetry, or short stories enhance your creative writing abilities?

2. Do you see the literature study within the English discipline as indispensable? Further, if the response is affirmative, what function does it fulfill in enhancing our comprehension of the language?

3. Have literary courses played a role in enhancing your overall language proficiency and, specifically, developing your creative writing abilities?

4. What is the impact of studying literature in English language departments on the development of EFL Iraqi learners students' creative abilities?

5. To what degree does studying literary topics impact students' communication skills?

6. To what extent do literary materials influence the development of critical thinking skills in students?

The interview questions were transcribed and subjected to analysis, focusing on the student's writing abilities, language competence, creativity, communication skills, and general capacity for critical thinking.

Results

The survey questions have been formulated to examine three main areas of interest:
- The Iraqi EFL learners' perspectives on the relationship between creative writing and reading literature
- Their views of the influence of literature on creative writing
- The recognition by the Iraqi EFL learners' of the importance of literature in fostering their linguistic development

The outcomes of the EFL Iraqi learners ' responses to each category are shown below:
What is the connection between the Iraqi EFL learner's creative writing and reading literary texts?

The results of the first category demonstrate a noteworthy association between EFL Iraqi

learners' proficiency in creative writing and their propensity to participate in critical reading and analytical thinking about literary works. A significant majority of the student population at Basrah University, comprising over one-third, believes that including literary works in English courses is crucial for serving as exemplars of creative writing. They also agree (with a proportion of over 36.4) that most of these courses facilitated the development of student's creative writing skills, yielding a beneficial effect on their cognitive faculties by enhancing their understanding of effective writing techniques. Incorporating diverse literary works encompassing various perspectives, historical periods, and cultural contexts has elicited a favorable response from students (over 40%), as it has significantly contributed to expanding their intellectual and cultural horizons. A consensus among the student population indicates that engaging in reading and writing short stories may notably impact the cultivation of skills necessary to compose longer fictional works. Students' answers suggest that their exposure to poetry can enhance their cognitive abilities. The results obtained from the students are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

The Iraqi EFL Learners' Answers on Creative Writing and Literature Reading Connection

No.	Statements	SA[*]	A	N	D	SD
1	I think that literary books provide some excellent examples of creative writing.	13.6%	36 4%	40.9%	9.1%	0.0%
2	My literature classes taught me new approaches to various writing styles.	31.8%	36.4%	27.3%	4.5%	0.0%
3	Acquiring knowledge of various literary epochs has significantly expanded my worldview and inspired me for novel creative endeavors.	31.8%	40.9%	13.6%	9.1%	4.6%
4	Mastering the art of constructing short stories has contributed significantly to developing my writing style.	40.9%	40.9%	13.6%	4.6%	0.0%
5	I have seen that reading poetry enhances my cognitive processes related to creativity.	27.3%	45.5%	13.6%	4.5%	9.1%

*SA= strongly agree, A=agree, N=Neutral, D=disagree, and SD= strongly disagree

What aspects contribute to developing and improving creative writing abilities among Iraqi EFL learners by reading literature?

The results of the influence of literary factors on EFL Iraqi learners' creative writing are shown in Table 2. The findings suggest that students' enhanced intellectual and creative abilities may be attributed to their improved understanding of parts of speech. Approximately 40.9% of EFL Iraqi learners believed that acquiring knowledge about diverse elements of speech is essential for developing analytical and creative aptitudes. Research has shown that providing students with instruction on the differentiation between various literary forms, such as poetry, novels, plays, and short stories, may significantly enhance their cognitive development, increasing by more than 27%. In contrast, the analysis revealed no statistically significant improvement in language proficiency after reanalyzing the poetry, with a success rate of 45%. This phenomenon might also be attributed to the pedagogical approach used by most instructors of poetry at Iraqi

institutions, whereby the focus is mainly on the examination of poetry texts via the lens of critics' perspectives rather than engaging in a comprehensive exploration of the many subtleties inherent within the poem itself or encouraging students to actively reinterpret and reconstruct it using their own unique thoughts and linguistic expressions. The results also show that a significant proportion of EFL Iraqi learners, namely 36.4%, perceive that engaging with literary works has enhanced their critical thinking abilities. When examining the impact of lectures on enhancing students' clerical abilities, a significant proportion of EFL Iraqi learners (31.8%) strongly believe in the influential and indisputable nature of literary teachings.

Table 2

The Influence of Literature on Creative Writing

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	Acquiring knowledge about the concept of the figure of speech becomes advantageous in developing my aptitude for creative writing.	13.6%	40.9%	22.7%	13.6%	9.1%
2	Exposing me to various literary genres works as a basis for me to write effectively.	36.4%	27.3 %	22.7%	9.1%	4.5%
3	Paraphrasing poems sharpened my writing skills.	9.1%	4.5 %	22.7%	45.4 %	18.2%
4	My writing skills are facilitated and improved by using literary courses.	50%	31.8%	4.6%	4.5%	9.1%
5	Learning to think critically enhances my literary comprehension.	13.6%	36.4%	27.3%	13.6%	9.1%

Are Iraqi EFL learners cognizant of the impact of reading literature on their language development skills and their overall academic abilities?

The last category presents the outcomes of the EFL Iraqi learners' viewpoints about the significance of engaging with literature concerning enhancing their language proficiency. The response offered by Iraqi EFL learners has shown the importance of connecting with literature written in the English language. For instance, a study revealed that 31.8% of the student body maintained that active involvement with literary works had a noticeable influence on their linguistic abilities. Based on the findings of a conducted survey, it was observed that nearly half of the student participants, precisely 49%, hold the perception that the act of identifying linguistic structures and grammatical patterns plays a significant role in their understanding of language rules while engaged in narrative discourse. A substantial percentage of EFL Iraqi learners, namely 63.6%, maintain that actively involving themselves with literary subjects, such as poetry, may successfully enhance their proficiency in public speaking. Furthermore, a considerable % of EFL Iraqi learners, namely 40.9%, believe that participation in creative writing catalyzes augmenting their capacity to assess literary compositions critically. Finally, it is essential to acknowledge that engaging in reading short stories substantially enhances EFL Iraqi learners' proficiency in aesthetic language. The findings are shown in Table 3, as seen below.

Table 3

The Iraqi EFL Learners' Perceptions on the Impact of Reading Literature on their Language Development

No.	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	My Language proficiency is improved through reading literary works.	22.7%	31.8%	22.7%	18.2%	4.6%
2	The use of advanced syntactic structures and strategic paragraphing is advocated in order to enhance one's comprehension of grammar while composing narratives.	22.7%	40.9%	9.1%	9.1%	18.2%
3	My pronunciation skills are improved through poetry writing and reading.	9.1%	63.6%	18.2%	9.1%	0.0%
4	The enhancement of critical reading may be facilitated by the practice of creative writing.	4.5%	40.9%	9.1%	36.4%	9.1%
5	Short story writing encourages my artistic expression.	31.8%	36.4%	18.2%	4.5%	9.1%

However, conducting a more thorough investigation of these results is essential. In order to get a complete picture of the influence of literary studies on language development in Iraqi universities, a series of in-depth interviews were conducted with a cohort of 10 students. These interviews aimed to investigate the participants' viewpoints on the importance of studying literature concerning their language proficiency. The interview questions focus on the student's writing skills, language proficiency, creativity, communication skills, and overall critical thinking aptitude. Their answers to the interview questions can be summarized as follows:

Creativity and Writing Skills

Many EFL Iraqi learners believe that engaging in the reading and analyzing of literary works, such as novels, poems, short stories, and drama, plays a significant role in fostering a student's capacity to articulate their perspectives on topics within the realm of English literature. This practice is seen as instrumental in addressing a wide range of human challenges, particularly those of a psychological nature. It serves as a means for EFL Iraqi learners to convey their distress experiences through written language. Engaging in literary reading has a discernible impact on EFL Iraqi learners' cognitive abilities, influencing their capacity for creative thinking and the generation of innovative literary compositions. Skilled literary readers possess a distinct methodology for subtraction, characterized by a critical and inventive approach, owing to their extensive familiarity with the novel's original principles. These EFL Iraqi learners possess a significant prospect for skill development, yet they must engage in an atmosphere that fosters diligent effort and physical exertion. This resource focuses on the literary and creative arts of the time and techniques that enhance student proficiency. As a result, it is considered an essential resource for English language departments worldwide.. As for the polite influence of students' abilities, "the teacher and his way of transmitting the information he gives is a shilling because the teacher who doesn't have a spectacle would impact the students' interest in reading". Literature is a "hobby of ideas that one can take advantage of, mainly the literature student, because of the language that creates power and strengthens self-confidence". This is primarily due to the belief that language can generate influence and bolster self-confidence. This is rooted

in the notion that the courteous effect of language positively impacts learners' creative capacities.

Many EFL Iraqi learners believe engaging in extensive literary reading has contributed to their growth and proficiency as writers, Novels, plays, poetry, and short stories are seen as "valuable sources that help develop creative writing. These materials allow you to express your thoughts and feelings in different and varied ways. It enables you to discover the methods of narrative and mental imaging and develop your skills in building characters and creating a plot.". This can be attributed to several advantages associated with such actions. It instructs EFL Iraqi learners to organize their thoughts into coherent narratives, exhibiting seamless transitions between concepts. It provides diverse methods for expressing and conveying ideas and emotions.

Engaging in the study of narrative structure is a commendable method to enhance one's cognitive abilities in visualizing scenes and developing and expanding upon character and story ideas. It is accepted that the development of physical abilities depends on "exercise, eating healthy foods, and mental skills. The human body needs to practice mental activities, such as puzzle-solving, cross-wording, or reading books with exciting stories. The reader arrives at the middle of the story when he holds the plot... the stories, the motives for guessing what the story or the play will be".

It expands the vocabulary repertoire of EFL Iraqi learners. This source is widely recognized as a reliable and authoritative reference for a significant percentage of English, including idioms and idiomatic expressions often seen in literature and many forms of creative writing. EFL Iraqi learners may enhance their vocabulary and stimulate their creative writing abilities by studying literary works, such as English plays or critical analyses of poems and short stories. These subjects constitute a tremendous amount of "vocabulary, sentences, and some of the phrases" that they "generally use in writing".

Additionally, literature gives them a valuable perspective on the world and human beings. One additional benefit is the exploration of literature that draws inspiration from the author's anguish and delves into societal or psychological issues, fostering the cultivation of student perspectives among EFL Iraqi learners. The subject matter of "the specific literary work makes a student more creative in expressing uncharacteristic feelings because the literature comes from the real suffering of the writer, who is intended to deal with a social or psychological problem. So, we (readers) interact with it deeply."

Language Proficiency and Communication Skills

The consensus among EFL Iraqi learners is that literature has had a significant role in fostering a general improvement in reading, writing, and speaking proficiency. Integrating literary programs into educational institutions may significantly improve EFL Iraqi learners' cognitive, historical, and linguistic advancement. In addition, maintaining the source language and using traditional language is of utmost importance, transcending the linguistic standards and conventions often observed in formal modes of conversation and interaction.

In order to strengthen their comprehension of literary themes, EFL Iraqi learners should use a wide array of materials. Studying the literary works of well-known poets such as T.S. Eliot and

Emily Dickinson might enhance a person's language skills. Moreover, examining the common characteristics of modern Arab and English poetry might help enhance language proficiency. One participant exemplified her experience of reading English poetry, highlighting the enjoyable nature of it. She expressed her fondness for the poems of Elliot and Emily Dickinson, and also noted, "the connections" she has seen between current Arab and English poetry. These similarities facilitated the development of her "persuasive writing".

EFL Iraqi learners use linguistic and textual methodologies, such as text interpretation tools, to comprehend diverse concepts and perspectives. The recognition of the relevance of literary literature in molding the development of synchronism and antagonism within the English language has been fully acknowledged. After a student has reached a particular stage of proficiency in English, "he must test himself by writing a paragraph or an article as a minimum." Pursuing English literature is often seen as a valuable approach to augmenting one's lexicon and understanding grammatical constructs.

Reading literature can augment a student's lexicon and cultivate the aptitude to articulate intricate ideas and sentiments via language. Participating in the acts of reading and writing in the English language contributes to cognitive growth, allowing EFL Iraqi learners to develop critical thinking abilities, effectively express ideas, imitate literary techniques, demonstrate discernment, and communicate verbally with linguistic accuracy, employing words that convey subtle meanings and align with the writer's intended message. Literature "contributes to the development of language skills including knowledge of many subjects and sharing ideas and beliefs".

Improving English as a Foreign Language of Iraqi learners to articulate themselves and promote meaningful conversations may be enhanced by the study of literature that provokes discussion and critical thinking on controversial moral topics, so promoting the examination of other viewpoints. Studying literature allows students to engage with society, whether it is with other students or members of the public. For instance, when he refers to "a short story that reflects the suffering or problem of a group that is not unidirectional", it may be described as a satirical narrative that positively impacts its audience. By making work public, "it is the critique that enhances its future composition".

The acquisition of language necessary for interpersonal communication among students is facilitated by the examination of literary texts and the engagement in discussions centered on ideas, poetry, and characters found within a diverse range of literary works. Consequently, it has influenced students' aptitude to articulate their thoughts via written and spoken means. Engaging in extensive reading and discussions on the material read contributes to developing students' self-assurance and ability to understand and connect with others. Literature is essential in developing communication skills since "it simulates the different ideas of different poets or characters of other plays or novels", … when we want to communicate with our friends, we're joking with them using vocabulary, the language of a particular story, a play, a poem or a novel".

Critical thinking Aptitude

It is widely held among EFL Iraqi learners that literature can enhance cognitive abilities and facilitate deep engagement with imaginative realms. It helps explore the perspectives of EFL Iraqi learners from many cultural backgrounds since literature reflects the broader societal context. The effect of literature stems from its capacity to foster critical thinking and the development of student perspectives among readers. The demanding nature of studying literature fosters the development of student's analytical and critical thinking skills and their capacity for original thought and future innovation through evaluating and comparing various literary works, historical figures, and their progeny. Literature opens up a great horizon in students' mentality and allows them to be "seduced in this fabulous fantasy world, so we see a "lot of students being greatly influenced by poets and writers like Shakespeare and others for their great thought and imagination."

Engaging with and analyzing a fictional character may augment a student's aptitude for analytical reasoning and proficiency in comprehending and assimilating novel characters, symbols, and subjects. These literary subjects are "so profound that they necessitate students to possess a profound philosophy and thinking ability". Consequently, in order to expand their intellectual horizons, "students must engage in critical thinking and comparative analysis of various types of literature, as well as the characters and their successors." This analytical process enables students to develop "their own philosophy and depth of thought, which in turn facilitates their personal growth and fosters a unique perspective." Ultimately, this significantly enhances students' aptitude and prepares them for future endeavors.

Discussion

The research findings indicate a robust correlation between engagement with literary texts and cognitive processes such as critical thinking and creative writing. Engaging with a diverse range of literary works, such as books, novels, and poetry, contributes to enriching vocabulary and enhancing grammatical and expressive conventions. Furthermore, understanding various writing techniques and cultivating imagination and creativity may be beneficial. Engaging in revisiting previous literary works by reading, evaluating, and analyzing may serve as a valuable tool for identifying areas of potential improvement and fostering the development of one's literary aptitude. Engaging with literary texts on the craft of writing may prove to be a fruitful endeavor. Many textbooks and scholarly works exist, serving as invaluable resources that provide insightful counsel and direction for enhancing one's aptitude in literature. The outcomes of this study are consistent with the previous research conducted by Knoeller (2003), Austen (2005), Urlaub (2011), Morris and Sharplin (2013), Norman (2013), and Adam and Babiker (2015).

Irrespective of the literary type, literature obtained via formal education is unquestionably the foremost authority in influencing student preferences for texts while also playing a substantial role in fostering dormant creative and intellectual capacities. In a contemporary setting, it is essential to use language that conforms to contractual obligations and ethical principles without transgressing any boundaries. Nevertheless, it is crucial to underscore certain noteworthy

aspects of English literature. Literature is a reflective medium that offers valuable insights into many facets of human civilization. Gaining knowledge and actively engaging in the literary works of several cultures might provide various advantages. To comprehensively analyze English literature, it is necessary to consider the diverse forms and genres of the works, including narratives, novels, verses, dialogues, and others.

Moreover, paying attention to the linguistic aspects, compositional elements, visual representations, and other essential components included within the texts is essential. This offers a rationale for the variations in literary assessments and the rarity of a single erroneous perspective. It is essential to acknowledge that engaging with classic works of English literature can enhance EFL Iraqi learners' linguistic proficiency, such as creative writing, reading, and speaking. Creative writing functions as a medium through which writers may leave their mark on the annals of history by producing groundbreaking literary creations. The genre of fiction writing exemplifies these phenomena by allowing authors to transcend their ordinary lives and engage with an alternate world that emerges from the underlying symbolism inside their cognitive processes. Enhanced creative writing skills may be attributed to many factors, including a comprehensive understanding of figures of speech, the cultivation of critical thinking capabilities, successful completion of literature courses, proficiency in paraphrasing poetry, and exposure to diverse literary genres. The findings of this study, together with others conducted by Elley and Mangubhai (1983), Widdowson (1990), and Paesan (2016), provide support to the assertion that engaging with literary texts may significantly enhance EFL Iraqi learners' language growth and competency.

In agreement with previous scholarly investigations (Kim, 2010; Noaman, 2013; Ouhiba, 2022), engaging with literary works has been shown to positively impact cognitive abilities, specifically critical thinking, and foster a profound examination of a student's creative capacities. Literature study presents a formidable task for EFL Iraqi learners as it necessitates evaluating and comparing an extensive array of texts, historical figures, and their descendants. This multifaceted endeavor enhances their analytical and critical thinking skills, fostering their capacity for innovative thinking and future creative endeavors.

Conclusion

The use of reading materials may be advantageous for EFL Iraqi learners in Iraq, as it allows them to encounter new concepts, perspectives, and literary techniques across a diverse array of issues. Enhancing critical thinking and reading comprehension skills is directly proportional to the extent of authors' reading. Based on the findings, EFL Iraqi learners who engage in regular reading and writing activities benefit from their exposure to diverse texts. EFL Iraqi learners can improve their writing skills and broaden their perspectives via comprehensive reading and critical analysis of the texts they encounter. Engaging with literary texts can facilitate the student's English grammar and style acquisition. It was observed that Iraqi EFL students had a notable appreciation for the capacity of literature to enhance their overall language proficiency. Linguistic and textual tactics, including the use of text interpretation tools, are employed by students in order to appreciate the perspectives of others entirely. Reading literature has been

shown to have a measurable influence on students' aptitude, enhancing their ability to think creatively and produce original writing pieces. The analysis of literary texts and the discussion of themes, poetic elements, and characters included in diverse literary works contribute to acquiring language skills necessary for interpersonal communication among EFL Iraqi learners. Consequently, there has been an improvement in students' ability to articulate their thoughts and ideas vocally. The research further demonstrates the need to examine students' perspectives on the various methods and approaches used in teaching literature in the English departments of Iraq. This investigation explicitly emphasizes the effectiveness of these tactics in preserving students' academic capabilities. However, the various methods and approaches used in teaching literature in the English departments of Iraq and the effectiveness of these tactics in preserving and promoting students' academic capabilities and skills still need further investigation.

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Unlocking ESP Learners' Leadership and Higher-Order Thinking Skills through Whatsapp Community of Practice

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ABSTRACT

Keywords: Community of practice, English for Specific Purposes, Gender, Higher-order thinking skills, Leadership skills, WhatsApp

This study investigates the relationship between the WhatsApp group, an instant messenger application as a community of practice platform (knowledge management, regular interactions, ease of using technology, and sense of belonging) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) learners' leadership and higher-order thinking (HOT) skills. The current study also examines how participation in the community of practice through the WhatsApp group can enhance leadership and HOT skills for male and female learners. 197 ESP learners participated in the five-point Likert scale questionnaire. The SPSS-AMOS analysis showed that knowledge management, regular interaction, and a sense of belonging significantly enhance learners' leadership and HOT skills. The results also showed that male learners increased their leadership skills while female learners excelled in the HOT skills by the WhatsApp community of practice. This study has significant educational implications, particularly in emphasizing essential measures when developing an ESP curriculum to prepare learners for their future careers.

Introduction

The 21st-century learning has ushered in new teaching and learning in virtual environments. The COVID-19 outbreak has hastened this shift, as governments have mandated the transition from physical to virtual classrooms. Today, virtual learning has become an increasingly important tool in higher education, offering quality education to learners worldwide.

Nevertheless, literature shows that learning solely in the virtual environment can cause stress, marginalization, disengagement, and frustration for many learners, including ESP learners (Ghamrawi, 2022; Mayoob, 2020). Educators have also expressed difficulties in bringing all learners together and ensuring their participation in online settings (Ghamrawi, 2022; Pham & Nghiem, 2022). Pham and Nghiem (2022) highlighted that these difficulties stem from inadequate technical training and pedagogical constraints, eventually affecting the

development of learners' employability skills in virtual learning environments, including English for specific purposes (ESP) learners (Mahyoob, 2020).

This study delves into the effectiveness of WhatsApp within a Community of practice (CoP) as a transformative digital tool, specifically aiming at mitigating the challenges mentioned above and fostering the development of ESP learners' employability skills, particularly leadership and higher-order thinking (HOT) skills.

ESP, designed to equip learners with specific content knowledge and skills (Robinson, 1991), faces challenges in virtual settings. Hatane (2009) expressed concerns about the difficulties in developing employability skills such as communication, teamwork, leadership, self-management, and digitalization among employees in a small organization through virtual learning environments. The limitations, such as poor internet connectivity and employees' lack of interest in e-learning, remain a big challenge in developing employability skills in small organizations (Hatane, 2009). The idea of a virtual CoP, uniting learners through the Internet with shared interest and expertise, offers an innovative solution to these challenges (Andrienko, 2017; Bates, 2014; Della & Jurberg, 2019; Ekici, 2017; Sibbald et al., 2022; Wenger et al., 2002).

While the connection between social media and employability skills, such as leadership, HOT, communication, and teamwork, have been studied (Bourhis et al., 2005; Chrisentary & Barett, 2015; Goncalves, 2021; Della & Jurberg, 2019), there is a gap in the literature regarding the impact of CoP by using WhatsApp on the development of ESP learners' leadership and HOT skills.

WhatsApp is an instant messenger application that seems prevalent in today's society due to its ability to stay connected by sharing videos, pictures, texts and voice messages (Alouch et al., 2021). By enabling various methods of communication and sharing, WhatsApp has become a viable tool for acknowledging learners' capabilities in communication skills (Della & Jurberg, 2019) and writing skills (Alouch et al., 2021). However, its potential to enhance employability skills needs empirical research.

Research shows differences in employability skill sets acquired by male and female learners (Jacob, 2002; Pető & Reizer, 2022). According to Dominic and Fulgence (2019), female learners have heightened social and interpersonal skills, whereas male learners have excellent HOT and management skills. Nevertheless, there has been a lack of comprehensive research on ESP learners' acquisition of skills based on gender differences. In order to bridge the gaps, this study aims to determine the effectiveness of the WhatsApp community of practice (WCoP) in enhancing ESP learners' leadership and higher-order thinking skills, as well as investigate potential gender-specific skill sets. This study offers significant insights at the crossroads of virtual learning, WCoP, and ESP education. An in-depth investigation of these aspects ultimately contributes to the innovation of ESP learning practices through digital tools.

Literature Review

Community of Practice via WhatsApp

Several scholars have investigated the use of WhatsApp for developing English language skills, such as writing (Alouch et al., 2021; Hamad, 2017), reading (Khan, 2016), and vocabulary (Bensalem, 2018). They have explored the potential of WhatsApp to motivate learners to participate in learning activities (Khan, 2016). In addition, experts have recognized its role in enhancing a sense of belonging within a CoP (Della & Jurberg, 2019). However, there is a notable gap in the literature concerning the impact of WCoP on employability skills among learners, especially in the context of ESP. This gap suggests a need for further investigation to understand the effectiveness of WCoP in developing ESP learners' employability skills, particularly leadership and higher-order thinking skills.

CoP, rooted in the situated learning theory, emphasizes that participants acquire knowledge and employability skills through authentic activities within specific contexts via interaction and collaboration (Jing, 2017; Wenger & Lave, 1998). It is also influenced by experiential learning theory and connectivism, where learners gain knowledge through hands-on activities and reflection in virtual environments (Bates, 2014). According to Downes (2010), the Internet's accessibility has created a connected community where knowledge acquisition and sharing are readily available to everyone at any time.

Previous studies reveal that ongoing discussion focused on specific subjects, with the aim to achieve a desired goal either through asynchronous or synchronous learning, can improve language skills, such as vocabulary and writing, as well as employability skills like self-regulation, teamwork and HOT skills (Ekici, 2017; Fisher et al., 2014). Scholars also have indicated that CoP in social media develops knowledge management (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015; Ekici, 2017; Li et al., 2009; Trust, 2015), collaboration (Li et al., 2009; Della & Jurberg, 2019), sense of belonging (Ekici, 2017; Li et al., 2009; Della & Jurberg, 2019), motivation (Ekici, 2017), and the ease of using social media platform (Dogoriti & Pange, 2014). Cronjé and Izak (2022) highlight the value of CoP via WhatsApp tool as it facilitates information sharing, feedback provision, and interaction among individuals with shared interests, promoting the development of autonomy skills. The researchers reiterate that using WhatsApp in education builds an influential learning community by allowing continuous discussions. Della and Jurberg (2019) also shared a similar view that WhatsApp successfully built CoP by bringing visually impaired learners to communicate and share ideas, which eventually created a sense of belonging among learners.

Those researchers shared the ability of WhatsApp as a platform for a CoP and its influence on learners' English language skills. However, they did not highlight its impacts on learners' employability skills. Therefore, the current study addresses the gap in the literature by investigating the effectiveness of WCoP in enhancing ESP learners' HOT and leadership skills. The components essential to forming WCoP, namely knowledge management, regular interaction, ease of using technology, and a sense of belonging, were derived from the literature review. In this study, the researchers investigate the impact of these elements on the development of leadership and HOT skills among ESP learners within the WCoP.

Leadership and Higher-order Thinking Skills

The development of ESP learners' employability skills, particularly HOT and leadership skills through the WCoP, is the central focus of this study. Leadership skills are crucial skills that are sought by many industries. Zimmerman-Oster and Burkhardt (1999) define leadership skills as the ability to understand, set clear goals, examine ethics, have a willingness to take risks, and develop responsibility. The literature shows that CoP plays a vital role in producing leaders from the community (Bourhis et al., 2005; Chrisentary & Barett, 2015). Bourhis et al. (2005) suggest that community leaders should provide clear guidance, facilitate communication, address members' perspectives, and sustain and develop the community. A study by Della and Jurberg (2019) showed that CoP in WhatsApp helps learners take on a leader's role by making the first effort to communicate and encourage others in the community to share their ideas.

According to Chrisentary and Barett (2015), elements such as empowerment, communication, trust, motivation, integrity, and connection with members play essential roles in developing leadership skills in the CoP. Chrisentary and Barett (2015) also explain that CoP in the virtual environment poses several challenges in shaping leadership skills, such as managing the community, communicating, giving motivation, and collaborating with the members. Channing (2020) suggests that experiential learning, regular communication, and attending workshops and classes will boost leadership skills among learners in the community.

On the other hand, HOT skill is commonly linked with Bloom's taxonomy, which includes synthesis, analysis, application, evaluation, and creation (Ho & To, 2022; Watson, 2019). According to Ciardiello (2000), HOT skills allow learners to think critically, innovate ideas, and develop creative knowledge. Creativity and criticality are the primary components of this skill, and they aid in problem-solving and decision-making (Ho & To, 2022; Wechsler et al., 2018). Creativity and criticality are indivisible and require high cognitive processing (Ciardiello, 2000). Doyle (2020) identifies HOT as an essential skill highly valued in today's job market. He explains that employers seek employees who can think beyond the norm, reason logically, generate novel ideas, and make sensible judgments (Doyle, 2020).

In today's contemporary world, fresh graduates are expected to acquire employability skills such as leadership and HOT skills that foster deep thinking and knowledge application in real-life situations. However, preparing learners with sufficient employability skills has become a crucial challenge among many educators due to a lack of readiness to embed these skills in the pedagogy (Abu Bakar, 2019), preference for the traditional classroom, time constraints (Gunawan, 2049; HIVE, 2023), and lack of understanding and competence on the implementation of soft skills in the curriculum (Gunawan, 2019). Therefore, this study examines how the application of WCoP affects ESP learners' leadership and HOT skills, which are perceived as 21st-century skills in today's workforce (Muftahu, 2022).

Theoretical background and hypotheses development

The literature underlines that using WhatsApp in education contributes significantly to developing language skills among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners (Alouch et al., 2021; Hamad, 2017; Khan, 2016). Research also shows the effectiveness of WhatsApp in enhancing collaboration (Della & Jurberg, 2019), motivation (Khan, 2016), interaction (Della & Jurberg, 2019; Nsabayezu, 2020), and rapport between teachers and learners (Nsabayezu, 2020). According to Mheidly et al. (2021), WhatsApp is a tool commonly used by both educators and students due to its affordability and accessibility.

However, studies on the use of WhatsApp as a CoP platform among learners are still dearth. One significant example that exhibits the potential of WCoP is a study by Della and Jurberg (2019). They identified that online group discussion through the WhatsApp tool among visually impaired learners allowed knowledge sharing and developed collaboration, communication, and a sense of belonging. Cronjé and Izak (2022) investigated the use of WhatsApp as a platform for a CoP among postgraduate students in a research proposal writing course. They found out that most learners favoured using WhatsApp as a medium for CoP because it fosters interactions and knowledge sharing. However, the major challenge faced by the learners was the time it took to form the WhatsApp group (Cronjé & Izak, 2022).

The underlying idea of the CoP is that participants who share the same domain of interest contribute knowledge, experiences, and solutions to problems (Bates, 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). The concept of the CoP in education is more analytical as it is derived from the situated learning theory, and as such, it focuses on exposure to real-life issues and experiences (Wenger et al., 2002). Scholars state that CoP can bring learners together (Fisher et al., 2014; Della & Jurberg, 2019), develop collaboration and interaction (Cronjé & Izak, 2022; Ekici, 2017; Della & Jurberg, 2019), increase academic grades (Andrienko, 2017), and enhance knowledge and skills (Penfold, 2010; Soto & Waigandt, 2017).

In this study, the selection of the CoP is based on its relevance in the ESP course. ESP has three significant characteristics: authentic materials, purpose-related orientation, and self-direction (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Javid, 2015). Authentic materials refer to altered and fixed materials such as books, charts, forms, and other sources, including the ones from the Internet, that are relevant to the objectives of the ESP course (Javid, 2015). Purpose-related orientation aims to prepare ESP learners to function well in the target situation by developing a simulation of a communicative task (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). In ESP courses, learners are trained through participation in various tasks such as paper presentation, reading skills, note-taking, writing, and listening. Self-direction transforms ESP learners into users (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Hence, learners will be free to decide when and how to study (Gatehouse, 2001; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). By employing CoP, ESP learners have the autonomy (self-direction) to share relevant information (authentic materials) through a communicative task (purpose-related orientation) to perform well in the target situation (Gatehouse, 2001; Soto & Waigandt, 2017). The main purpose of CoP in the ESP course is to encourage learners to take responsibility for their learning (self-direction) by sharing and constructing knowledge (authentic materials) through ongoing interaction (purpose-related orientation).

Dogoriti and Pange (2014) found that incorporating social media in ESP learning effectively provides access to authentic materials, tasks, and autonomy skills. They studied the effect of Twitter and Edmodo on ESP learners' learning communities and identified that social media that encourages engagement, intrinsic motivation, interaction, and performance are crucial for establishing a virtual learning community among ESP learners.

Andrienko (2017) conducted a study with 60 computer engineering students enrolled in an ESP course within a CoP environment. The findings indicate that using social media in teaching and learning enhances language skills like reading, writing, vocabulary, and translation. However, those studies did not touch on issues related to WCoP and ESP learners' employability skills. The ESP course considers These skills essential (Paltridge & Richard, 2013).

Knowledge management

Knowledge management is crucial in a CoP, involving effective planning and knowledge sharing to generate new ideas or suggestions (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015). Wenger et al. (2002) emphasize that knowledge is a core unit, shaping the identity of individual members and the community. Scholars advocate that knowledge management in the educational CoP empowers learners to take responsibility for their learning and gives opportunities to exchange innovative ideas, produce meaningful information or concepts, create mutual understanding and collaborative analysis, and synthesize disseminated information (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2014; Nussbaum et al., 2020). According to Nussbaum et al. (2020), comparing and analyzing shared ideas enables learners to respond critically even if the learners learn in a virtual environment. In another study, Baker and Beams (2016) highlight that the contribution of knowledge within the community encourages evaluation, facilitation, and motivation among members, which eventually sustains the community's lifespan. Therefore, the researchers hypothesized:

H_1 = Knowledge management impacts ESP learners' leadership skills significantly.

H_2 = Knowledge management impacts ESP learners' higher-order thinking skills significantly.

Regular interaction

According to Wenger et al. (2002), CoP members range from core to peripheral participants. Peripheral members may not be actively involved in discussions but can still gain valuable knowledge by observing the community's interactions. Wenger et al. (2002) also state that a community's success depends on the effectiveness of its discussions. Probst and Borzillo (2008) highlight that a lack of participation and low interaction among members can result in the community's failure. The literature suggests that regular interaction is the main component of a CoP (Fisher et al., 2014; Wenger et al., 2002). As highlighted by Hajhosseini et al. (2016), frequent interaction motivates learners to share their views, evaluate information, and construct new ideas. Yeh et al. (2012) add that virtual interactions stimulate HOT skills and increase self-confidence. According to Baker and Beams (2016), the active participation of core members in the community cultivates leadership skills, which are vital for the CoP's success. Wenger et al. (2002) suggest that the members' involvement in the community enables them to plan and support through effective communication. Therefore, the researchers

hypothesized:

H_3 = Regular interaction impacts ESP learners' leadership skills significantly.

H_4 = Regular interaction impacts ESP learners' higher-order thinking skills significantly.

Ease of Using Technology

According to Fisher et al. (2014), the emergence of social media eases the growth of CoP by breaking the geographical barrier. Although there has been a lack of comprehensive studies on the influence of social media in developing learners' leadership and HOT skills, the literature shows that the online platform has become the essential channel for communicating new ideas, sharing opinions, facilitating other learners, and creating collaborative interface (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015). Ekici (2017), who investigated the use of social learning networks (SLN) among pre-service teachers, found that the teachers shared their new ideas and presented their lesson plans with other learners and teachers effortlessly through the SLN. Della and Jurberg (2019) indicate that visually impaired learners perceived WhatsApp as a convenient tool due to its quick accessibility through smartphones. Mheidly et al. (2021) also shared a similar idea that the main reason for using WhatsApp in education is its user-friendly interface. According to Patel (2023), constantly evolving technology in various fields eventually helped people, especially leaders, manage and delegate tasks easily by leveraging the right technological tool. He elaborates that comprehensible technology motivates people to accomplish their tasks, communicate their goals, and work efficiently, even in a remote environment (Patel, 2023). Therefore, the researchers hypothesized:

H_5 = The ease of using technology impacts ESP learners' leadership skills significantly.

H6 = The ease of using technology impacts ESP learners' higher-order thinking skills significantly

Sense of Belonging

A sense of belonging is considered an essential element in CoP (Li et al., 2009). According to Wenger et al. (2002), the sense of belonging to a community increases the interaction between novices and experts, facilitates personal growth, and forms a professional identity. They emphasize that solid relationships and trust are established when members interact and share similar interests and passions. Notably, new knowledge is created within the community, and meaning is developed through comfortable communication and collaboration among members (Della & Jurberg, 2019). However, learners may experience discomfort or stress when participating in a community where teachers are present (Kling & Coutright, 2004). Such a situation occurs when teachers fail to switch their roles from experts to facilitators because students may have a strong sense of anxiety if they are evaluated throughout their participation in the discussion (Kling & Coutright, 2004). Learners' apprehension in a community can lead to less engagement, potentially causing the community to lose its functions if members fail to establish trust among themselves. Li et al. (2009) assert that low levels of trust and mutual understanding would discourage members, especially the novices, from being prominent in the community. This scenario hinders their development of HOT skills and professional growth. According to Wenger (1996), fostering a strong relationship in

the community is the key to applying new knowledge into practice. Wenger and Lave (1991) state that the strong bond within the community enables experts to mentor and coach the novices, supporting the development of their professional identity. Therefore, the researchers hypothesized:

H7 = Sense of belonging impacts ESP learners' leadership skills significantly.

H8 = Sense of belonging impacts ESP learners' HOT skills significantly.

Gender Differences

The literature shows that men and women use different skills in employment. Pető and Reizer (2022) examined 33 800 employees across 12 countries on skills used within an occupation based on their gender differences. They found that female workers use less cognitive, numeracy, and digital skills than male workers in the same occupation. The female employees also used fewer reading and writing skills at the workplace than the male employees (Pető & Reizer, 2022). Two decades ago, Jacob (2002) reported a similar result that women tend to have higher non-cognitive skills and lower cognitive skills. Jacob (2002) further highlighted that about 80% of female students intensively used non-cognitive skills, eventually becoming the main reason for their enrolment in higher education.

Non-cognitive skills such as social, interpersonal, teamwork, perseverance, and decision-making have been underlying needs among today's employers. However, many employers claim the skill gap between fresh graduates and industry has raised concerns about the effectiveness of university programs in preparing undergraduates for the real workforce (Dominic & Fulgence, 2019). Dominic and Fulgence (2019), who studied students' tendency towards developing 21st-century skills based on their gender differences, reported that male students demonstrated higher abilities in numeracy, creativity, critical analysis, and self-management than their female counterparts. Mawanga (2018) found that female workers exhibit less confidence in utilizing digital skills in the workforce despite having good ICT skills during their academic years. Additionally, Korlat (2021) notes that female learners have shown higher engagement in online learning during the pandemic than male learners. Therefore, the researchers hypothesized:

H_{1a} = ESP learners' gender differences affect the relationship between knowledge management and leadership skills significantly.

H_1b = ESP learners' gender differences affect the relationship between knowledge management and higher-order thinking skills significantly.

H_{2a} = ESP learners' gender differences affect the relationship between a sense of belonging and leadership skills significantly.

H_2b = ESP learners' gender differences affect the relationship between a sense of belonging and higher-order thinking skills significantly.

H_{3a} = ESP learners' gender differences affect the relationship between regular interaction and leadership skills significantly.

H_3b = ESP learners' gender differences significantly affect the relationship between regular

interaction and higher-order thinking skills.

H$_{4a}$ = ESP learners' gender differences significantly affect the relationship between ease of using technology and leadership skills.

H$_4$b = ESP learners' gender differences significantly affect the relationship between ease of using technology and higher-order thinking skills.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study centered on knowledge management, regular interaction, ease of using technology, and a sense of belonging within the WhatsApp CoP (Al-ghamdi & Al-ghamdi, 2015; Ekici, 2017; Cronjé & Izak, 2022; Dogoriti & Pange, 2014; Della & Jurberg, 2019; Trust, 2015), is designed to examine their influence on ESP learners' leadership and HOT skills. Moreover, this study broadens its focus to investigate gender differences in skill acquisition. Figure 1 shows the conceptual framework of the current study.
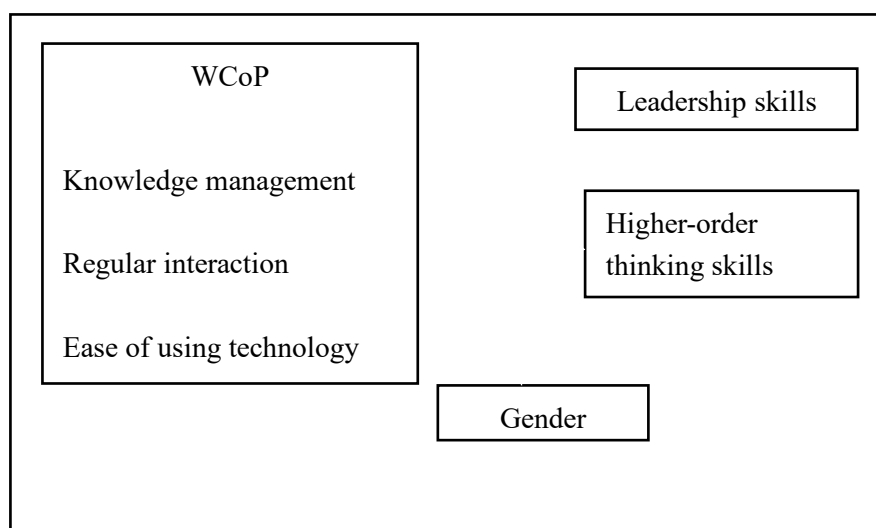
Fig 1. Conceptual framework

Methods

Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional design because it is appropriate for hypothesis testing, as Bhattacherjee (2012) and Neuman (2014) suggested. The current study chose a stratified random sampling based on ESP learners' gender differences to strengthen the internal and external validity of the research. Literature suggests that random sampling has a high potential to prevent bias during the participants' selection and has a more robust capacity to generalize the research results (Bhattacherjee, 2012; Neuman, 2014).

In addition, a diverse sample in this study increased the generalisability of the research findings and external validity. The researchers employed ESP learners taking the Business Communication English course (Academic Semester 2021/2022) at one Malaysian university to participate in the survey. 89 (45.18%) male and 108 (54.82%) female learners completed

the survey. Regarding the participants' age distribution, most fell within the 19-22 age group (67.2%), followed by the 23-26 age group (19.3%). 6.5% belonged to the 27-30 age group, and 7% were above 30. Besides, 44.3% of learners were Malays, 25.4% were Chinese, 10.2% were Indians, 10.1% were foreigners, and 5% were others. In terms of the participants' performance in the English proficiency tests that align with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), 43.3% of learners fell within the upper-intermediate category (B2), 30.5% of learners were at the intermediate level (B1), and 26.2% of learners were advanced (C1).

Learners used WhatsApp as a platform for a CoP to interact with the topics given by their ESP practitioners and share report writing, individual oral presentations, and job interview videos. Learners and practitioners would provide constructive feedback and suggestions to improve one another's performance. WhatsApp was also used to invite questions pertinent to Business Communication English and grammar from the learners. Therefore, learners had the flexibility to answer the questions and share any relevant files for justifications. The demographic data shows that 41.1% of learners spent three to four hours weekly on this WCoP platform. Additionally, 33% of learners spent less than three hours, 12.7% allocated around five to six hours, and 11.2% invested more than six hours.

Data collection and analysis

In this study, a questionnaire was created using a *Google* form. 197 participants, meeting the minimum sample size requirement of 191 suggested by Kerjcie and Morgan (1970) for a 95% confidence level. The questionnaire was categorised into two sections: demographic profile and 35 five-point Likert scale items. The questionnaire items consisted of knowledge management (six items), regular interaction (six items), ease of using technology (five items), and sense of belonging (five items), while the dependent variables comprised leadership (seven items) and HOT (six items) skills.

An informed consent was attached to the questionnaire, and the questionnaire items were validated by two experts in the related field. In order to reduce the inherent risk of bias, participants were assured of their confidentiality and were instructed to answer the questionnaire honestly. Besides, a pilot test was conducted to determine participants' comprehension of the questionnaire, improve the questionnaire items based on the participants' feedback, and get a better understanding of the possible result of the actual research. It is essential to emphasize that the participants of the pilot study were excluded from the actual research.

The research model in this study was developed based on the CoP theoretical foundation, incorporating principles from constructivism, situated learning, experiential learning, and connectivism theories. The theoretical underpinnings, integrated with an extensive review of related literature, have formed key constructs representing essential components for an effective WCoP. Each construct is aligned with a specific learning theory, contributing to the robustness of the framework. For example, 'knowledge management', encompassing knowledge creation and sharing within the community, aligns with constructivism. 'Regular interaction', emphasizing social interactions in the ESP context, derives inspiration from

situated learning theory. 'Ease of using technology', drawn from connectivism, highlights the role of technology in the learning process. Lastly, a 'sense of belonging', integrating with experiential learning principles, underscores the practical experiences of being in the community. The alignment of these constructs with CoP theory and relevant literature establishes a strong framework for investigating the effectiveness of the WCoP in fostering the development of HOT and leadership skills among ESP learners.

The data were screened in terms of normality, missing values, outliers, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity. The questionnaire items were validated through content and statistical validation. The reliability test was carried out for all seven constructs to measure their internal consistency. The invariance test was performed during confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to determine the effect of gender on the relationship between WCoP, leadership, and HOT skills. The convergent and discriminant validity were explained through average variance extraction (AVE) and composite reliability (CR).

Results

Preliminary analysis

Preliminary analysis is required before testing the hypotheses to ensure the robustness of the results of this study. The analysis showed that the data set of this study was normally distributed with skewness and kurtosis values ranged from -1 to +1. The multicollinearity of the independent variables was >1 for the tolerance value and <10 for the variance inflation factor (VIF) value (<10), as indicated by Field (2009). No missing values and outliers were detected. Although the study assumes a level of normality in data distribution, it is crucial to highlight that this may not account for all types of data irregularities, which could be a potential limitation of this study. The Cronbach coefficient alpha was used to examine the internal consistency of each item from the questionnaire. Field (2009) explained that a value above 0.70 indicates acceptable reliability. In this study, all variables showed high reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values exceeding 0.80. During the CFA, the factor loadings for each indicator were determined to identify any cross-loadings. According to Hair et al. (2006), factor loadings that exceed a figure of 0.50 are considered significant. In this analysis, all the indicators showed a significant value. The model fit indices of the current study are also at an acceptable level with χ^2/df = 1.87, CFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.94, and RMSEA = 0.06 as Hair et al. (2006) suggested. All the factor loadings are above 0.6, and thus, each item is at a satisfactory level. In addition, each factor loading was scrutinized to ensure that the relationships between observed variables and latent constructs fit the theoretical framework. To enhance the trustworthiness of the research model, the researchers used an iterative process by checking the alignment and coherence between the theoretical framework, model, and observed variables. Modification indices were performed to refine the model fit. Figure 2 shows the model measurement using the CFA.
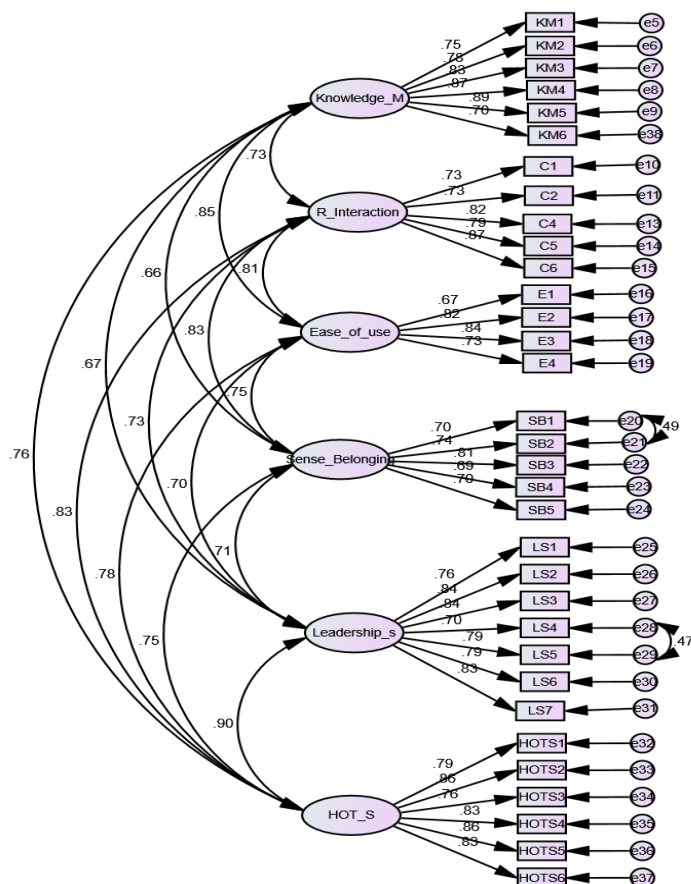
Fig. 2 Measurement model

In the configural invariance test, the unconstrained model appeared to have a good model fit with X^2/df=2.10; GFI=0.86; TLI=0.91; CFI=0.91; RMSEA=0.07. The metric invariance test seemed good because both male and female groups are invariant with a p-value > .05. This means both groups are equivalent across factor structure. The values of CR (>0.70) and AVE (>0.50) showed that knowledge management, regular interaction, ease of use, sense of belonging, leadership skills, and HOT skills achieved convergent validity, as displayed in Table 1. Table 2 shows that the square root of AVE is above the inter-construct correlation. Therefore, the discriminant validity of this study is achieved (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 1

Measurement of convergent validity

Construct	CR	AVE
Leadership skill	0.91	0.67
Knowledge management	0.91	0.71
Regular interaction	0.88	0.71
Ease of use	0.84	0.64
Sense of belonging	0.79	0.56
Higher-order thinking skills	0.91	0.72

Table 2

Measurement of discriminant validity

	LS	KM	RI	EoUT	SB	HOTS
Leadership skills	**0.82**					
Knowledge management	0.62	**0.85**				
Regular interaction	0.71	0.66	**0.84**			
Ease of using technology	0.66	0.71	0.73	**0.80**		
Sense of belonging	0.67	0.59	0.73	0.71	**0.75**	
Higher-order thinking skills	0.80	0.71	0.81	0.74	0.71	**0.85**

Note: LS= Leadership skill, KM= Knowledge management, RI= regular interaction, EoUT= Ease of using technology, SB=sense of belonging, HOTS= Higher-order thinking skill

Structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis

After confirming the collected data's normality, reliability, and validity, the hypotheses were tested using SEM in Amos. Learners' age, fields of study, and proficiency were controlled while running the SEM to increase the results' validity. The structural model in Figure 3 exhibited a good fit (x^2/df = 2.81; CFI = .93; TLI=.85; RMSEA=.07).
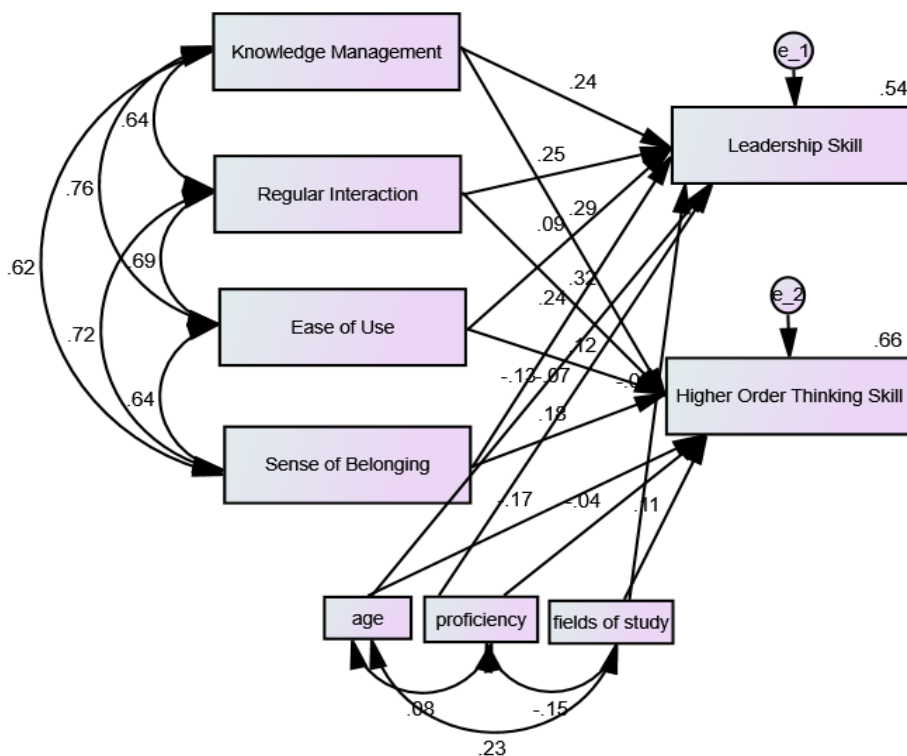

Fig. 3 Path analysis

The above model shows that the application of WCoP is more effective in enhancing ESP learners' HOT skills (r^2= .66) than their leadership skills (r^2=.54). In other words, WCoP influences 66% variance of ESP learners' HOT skills. In comparison, its influence towards leadership skills only explains 54%.

Table 3

Path coefficient

Hypotheses			β	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
Leadership skills	<---	Knowledge management	.24	.09	3.05	**.00**	Supported
Leadership skills	<---	Regular interaction	.25	.08	3.25	**.00**	Supported
Leadership skills	<---	Ease of use	.09	.10	1.14	.26	Not supported
Leadership skills	<---	Sense of belonging	.24	.08	3.26	**.00**	Supported
HOT skills	<---	Knowledge management	.29	.08	4.36	**.00**	Supported
HOT skills	<---	regular interaction	.32	.070	4.79	**.00**	Supported
HOT skills	<---	Ease of use	.12	.09	1.63	.10	Not supported
HOT skills	<---	Sense of belonging	.18	.07	2.86	**.00**	Supported

Table 3 clearly shows that knowledge management has positive and moderate influence in enhancing ESP learners' leadership skills (β=.24; $p < .05$) and HOT (β=.29; $p < .01$). A similar result is also shown on the influence of regular interaction in the WCoP towards leadership skills (β=.25; $p < .05$) and HOT (β=.32; $p < .01$). Therefore, hypotheses H_1, H_2, H_3, and H_4 are supported. The data in Table 4 shows that WCoP, which promotes self-learning skills, up-to-date information, and collaboration with other learners through social media, has helped increase learners' leadership and HOT skills.

Table 3 shows a positive association between ESP learners' sense of belonging in the WCoP and their leadership and HOT skills with β=.24; $p < .05$ and β=.18; $p < .05$, respectively. Therefore, hypotheses H7 and H8 are supported. Table 4 shows that ESP learners' enjoyment of being with their team members and the comfort of interacting with them through WCoP increased their leadership and HOT skills.

The impact of ease of using technology on ESP learners' leadership (β=.09; $p > .05$) and HOT skills (β=.12; $p > .05$) seemed to have a non-significant value. This shows that learners' use of WhatsApp effortlessly does not impact their leadership and HOT skills. Therefore, hypotheses H5 and H6 are rejected. Although the hypotheses are rejected, the coefficient value for the ability to utilize the features of WhatsApp (β=.174; $p < .05$) and the ease of learning process via this platform (β=.122; $p < .05$) show a positive correlation with ESP learners' leadership skills. However, they appeared to have a non-significant relationship ($p > .05$) with learners' HOT skills, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4

The standardized beta coefficient of construct items towards leadership and hot skills

			Item	B	P value
LS	<---	KM1	I can share knowledge through the use of WhatsApp.	.06	.27
HOTS	<---	KM1		.11	.06
LS	<---	KM2	I can access information through WhatsApp.	.08	.16
HOTS	<---	KM2		.19	**.00**
LS	<---	KM3	I can follow the discussion on WhatsApp.	.05	.32
HOTS	<---	KM3		.15	**.01**
LS	<---	KM4	I can update information through WhatsApp.	.18	**.00**
HOTS	<---	KM4		.26	**.00**
LS	<---	KM5	I can organize knowledge through WhatsApp.	.04	.43
HOTS	<---	KM5		.11	**.05**
LS	<---	KM6	I can gain more responsibilities while learning through WhatsApp.	.47	**.00**
HOTS	<---	KM6		.31	**.00**
LS	<---	RI1	I can interact with my educators effectively through WhatsApp.	.01	.85
HOTS	<---	RI1		.15	**.01**
LS	<---	RI2	I can understand the shared information on WhatsApp.	.17	**.01**
HOTS	<---	RI2		.21	**.00**
LS	<---	RI4	I can discuss effectively through WhatsApp.	.26	**.00**
HOTS	<---	RI4		.31	**.00**
LS	<---	RI5	I can collaborate with my team members through WhatsApp.	.31	**.00**
HOTS	<---	RI5		.15	**.01**
LS	<---	RI6	I can interact with peers effectively through WhatsApp.	.20	**.00**
HOTS	<---	RI6		.35	**.00**
LS	<---	E1	My interaction through WhatsApp is clear and understandable with my classmates and teachers.	.03	.56
HOTS	<---	E1		.01	.76
LS	<---	E2	I can easily use and explore the features of WhatsApp (e.g., upload and download files, share websites, and post comments) for effective learning.	.17	**.00**
HOTS	<---	E2		.08	.17
LS	<---	E3	WhatsApp eases my learning process.	.08	.14
HOTS	<---	E3		.12	**.04**
LS	<---	E4	It is easy for me to become skillful at using WhatsApp.	-.00	.94
HOTS	<---	E4		.10	06
LS	<---	SB1	I enjoy being in the WhatsApp community.	.34	**.00**
HOTS	<---	SB1		.36	**.00**
LS	<---	SB2	I am motivated to share ideas in the WhatsApp community.	.10	.13
HOTS	<---	SB2		.10	.12
LS	<---	SB3	I am satisfied working with my peers through the WhatsApp community.	.16	**.01**
HOTS	<---	SB3		.14	**.03**
LS	<---	SB4	I can express my personal views freely through the WhatsApp community.	.14	**.03**
HOTS	<---	SB4		.23	**.00**
LS	<---	SB5	I feel comfortable interacting with my peers through the WhatsApp community.	.22	**.00**
HOTS	<---	SB5		.19	**.00**

SEM multigroup analysis

A multigroup analysis was performed to determine if male and female ESP learners acquire different sets of leadership and HOT skills through WCoP. 89 (45.18%) male and 108 (54.82%) female learners completed the questionnaire.

Table 5

Standardized regression weights of male and female learners in acquiring leadership and HOT skills

			Male		Female	
			β	P	B	P
Leadership	<---	Knowledge management	.26	.00	.22	.05
Leadership	<---	Regular interaction	.37	.00	.24	.03
Leadership	<---	Ease of use	.02	.86	.10	.40
Leadership	<---	Sense of belonging	.32	.00	.20	.06
HOT skill	<---	Knowledge management	.24	.00	.37	.00
HOT skill	<---	Regular interaction	.52	.00	.19	.04
HOT skill	<---	Ease of use	.03	.73	.09	.34
HOT skill	<---	Sense of belonging	.18	.03	.22	.01

Table 5 shows that regular interaction has the strongest predictive power in enhancing male learners' leadership (β= .37; p< .01) and HOT skills (β = .52; p <.01) than the female counterparts. Similarly, knowledge management plays an essential role in developing male learners' leadership skills (β= .26; p< .05) than female learners (β= .22; p< .05). However, in terms of HOT skills, knowledge management has a stronger predictive power towards female learners (β= .37; p< .01) than male learners (β= .24; p< .05). It is also crucial to highlight that the ease of using WhatsApp does not play a significant role in influencing male and female learners' leadership and HOT skills. Therefore, hypotheses H$_{1a}$, H$_1$b, H$_{2a}$, H$_2$b, H$_{3a}$, and H$_3$b are supported while H$_1$c and H$_2$c are rejected.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that WCoP components such as knowledge management, regular interaction, and sense of belonging play a significant role in enhancing learners' leadership and HOT skills, with regular interaction as the strongest predictive power (Table 3). The researchers advocate Wenger et al.'s (2002) notion that core members in a community are considered community leaders because they have the capabilities to identify issues, take responsibility, make decisions confidently, and monitor and convene the members in the community. Likewise, the study's results reveal that learners who discuss regularly and collaborate effectively with peers improve their leadership skills with coefficient values .26 and .31, respectively, which show a positive and moderate relationship with leadership skills (Table 4). The findings also indicate that frequent communication with educators (β=.15) and comprehension of the shared information (β=.21) have a more substantial impact on learners' HOT skills compared to their leadership skills (Table 4).

Wenger et al. (2002) emphasise that even if some community members are not active participants, they can still gain valuable insights as peripheral members. These individuals gain information and gather ideas by observing active members' communication. In this study, it is identified that learners who access information and follow discussions tend to develop learners' HOT skills rather than leadership skills. This suggests that knowledge management has a stronger relationship with learners' HOT skills than leadership skills. However, Fisher et al. (2014) indicate that peripheral learners have the opportunity to progress gradually as active and core members when they feel confident enough to share ideas based on the collected information. Hence, this study demonstrates that WCoP offers a platform for ESP learners to develop leadership and HOT skills.

The findings also reveal that the ease of using WhatsApp does not significantly impact the development of learners' leadership and HOT skills. Although Patel (2023) and Penfold (2010) state that a user-friendly technology platform eases the accomplishment of tasks and interactions between learners, educators, and content, the current study shows that this feature is unable to enhance learners' leadership and HOT skills. The researchers highlight that the effectiveness of CoP does not rely on the advancement or user-friendliness of social media. Instead, the success of acquiring employability skills lies in the active involvement of community members. Members who share knowledge, interact, and take responsibility for their learning process play a vital role in developing their HOT and leadership skills, as portrayed in Table 4.

Regarding a sense of belonging, it is identified that learners' enjoyment of being in a particular group and the comfort of sharing ideas play a significant role in determining learners' leadership and HOT skills (Table 4). The result aligns with Wenger et al.'s (2002) notion that the success of CoP is dependent on mutual understanding among team members. Team members are more likely to share knowledge and generate new ideas when they feel a sense of belonging, which eventually lengthens the span of WCoP. The researchers concur with Akcaoglu and Lee (2016) that positive group experiences encourage learners to develop innovative ideas and autonomy skills.

WCoP also enhances male and female learners' leadership and HOT skills. The study's results clearly indicate that knowledge management, regular interaction, and a sense of belonging contribute to the development of leadership skills in male learners more than in female learners. In contrast, knowledge management and a sense of belonging have a stronger impact on HOT skills for female learners than their male counterparts. Additionally, regular interactions have a greater influence on the development of HOT skills in male learners than in female learners. Overall, the influence of WCoP on leadership skills is more remarkable among male ESP learners, while its impact on HOT skills is more pronounced among female ESP learners.

In short, the findings show that leadership and HOT skills are developed through influential WCoP. The two essential skills were not taught separately, but they were developed by incorporating an appropriate pedagogical approach in the ESP course. Knowledge management, regular interactions, and a sense of belonging are underlying components in enhancing learners' employability skills. In other words, WCoP gives authentic exposure to

practice leadership and HOT skills. However, male and female learners acquire these skills to varying degrees through WCoP.

Conclusion

In conclusion, WCoP is a vital contributor to enhancing ESP learners' leadership and HOT skills, which explains 54% and 66%, respectively (Figure 3). This study makes a vast contribution to education, especially in providing quality education for ESP learners.

The present study reveals that knowledge management, regular interaction, and a sense of belonging are crucial pillars in developing learners' leadership and HOT skills. Since the demand for fresh graduates with high employability skills is increasing from various sectors, academic institutions need to embed CoP in the ESP curriculum. Scholars have highlighted that one of the core objectives of an ESP course is preparing learners for the future workforce (Paltridge & Richard, 2013). Hence, it is necessary for ESP practitioners to create CoP in a virtual environment as a medium to enhance learners' 21st-century skills. ESP practitioners should allow frequent interactions among ESP learners to boost their leadership and HOT skills. Active participation is the lifeline of CoP. Therefore, ESP practitioners and active learners should encourage the peripheral learners to interact, share knowledge, and give new ideas for an effective community. Regular communication eventually brings all learners in the community closer together. The results show that the sense of belonging significantly impacts on learners' leadership and HOT skills.

This study gives a new insight into the benefits of WCoP in the ESP classroom. Although the literature suggests that choosing an appropriate technology is required for effective interaction and collaboration in the community (Ekici, 2017; Penfold, 2010), this study provides a unique notion that it is not the technology that contributes to the development of learners' employability skills, but it is the initiative taken by the learners to make a successful community.

Another important highlight of this study is that male and female learners have different social skills and self-efficacy abilities that affect their development in employability skills. The findings suggest that male learners develop leadership skills while female learners enhance HOT skills through the WCoP. The awareness of gender differences in acquiring the two essential skills is necessary to break gender stereotypes. Therefore, educators, policymakers, and curriculum designers should develop a strategic pedagogy that gives ESP learners more opportunities for knowledge sharing, planning, independent learning, making decisions, creativity, and criticality to create a balance between male and female learners in acquiring essential skills.

One practical guidance that can be initiated is changing educators' mindsets. ESP practitioners should see the learners as experts trying to improve their skills and expertise rather than perceiving them as beginners. The role of ESP practitioners should not be limited to an educator alone but more so as active members collaborating and interacting with other learners in the WCoP. ESP practitioners should also track the frequency of learners' participation in the WCoP and make adjustments accordingly to create an equitable learning

environment.

Another significant strategy is peer evaluation and mentoring. ESP practitioners should encourage learners to give constructive feedback to other learners by providing an evaluation form rather than allowing them to give general comments. Educators should also supply competent learners with detailed instructions on the ways to mentor other learners. Besides, motivating learners to work together regardless of gender differences will showcase that the acquisition of leadership and HOT skills is not limited by gender.

Since the present study focuses on a group of ESP learners from the Business Communication English course, it is recommended that further research will envelop ESP learners from various fields such as tourism, medicine, technical, and so on. This study employed a quantitative research method, and therefore, future studies should focus on mixed-method research to obtain a robust result. Finally, future studies should test interventions to ensure all learners receive equal opportunities to develop employability skills regardless of culture and gender differences.

Acknowledgments

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Using ChatGPT in English Language Learning: A Study on I.T. Students' Attitudes, Habits, and Perceptions

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ABSTRACT

	In the realm of AI-driven education, it is pivotal to evaluate the viability of ChatGPT as a substitute for human teachers in English classrooms. This study aims to explore learners' behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes to ChatGPT usage in English language learning. Participants were 120 I.T. students in Vietnam – the Korea University of Information and Communication Technology and the University of Da Nang- who were learning English as a non-specialized subject. Data collection was conducted with multiple choices, a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire, and in-depth interviews. The findings highlight students' need for teacher's instruction and physical classroom despite recognizing ChatGPT's efficacy for ESP vocabulary acquisition, translation, grammar checking, and paraphrasing. Students predominantly exploited ChatGPT to find instant solutions to English learning difficulties. The research underscores the importance of guiding learners to appropriately utilize ChatGPT, emphasizing the need for further investigation into plagiarism-detecting tools to mitigate potential misuse of the technology.
Keywords: ChatGPT, English language learning, attitudes, habits, perceptions	

Introduction

ChatGPT, a recent AI technology chatbot, has been developed and applied in different areas of society, benefiting various aspects, including labor-saving and work productivity. Some areas that have successfully gained assistance since the introduction of such technology are content generation, language translation, personalized recommendations, and even medical diagnosis and treatment (Hariri, 2023). According to Lo (2023), launched in November 2022, ChatGPT can generate human-like responses in a cohesive and informative way that reduces user working time and unnecessary effort. Meanwhile, the question is whether the existence of ChatGPT transforms the way that university students obtain knowledge and language skills and threatens the role of English language teachers. Therefore, this study is conducted to explore the English learning setting in Vietnam within tertiary education due to the impact of AI chatbots, as not only learners but teachers and instructors are potentially affected. In this research, we

investigated the students from Information Technology (I.T) class who are likely to have experience with the newly developed AI chatbot, ChatGPT. Based on the observation of students' behaviors in some I.T classes that the researcher was in charge of and English is not a core and compulsory subject, it is likely to catch the sight of learners typing the assignments from their English teacher, such as email writing or vocabulary translation into the ChatGPT website seeking for quick solutions to their learning problems instead of brainstorming and completing the tasks by themselves. As a result, the submitted essays from different students in such I.T. classes can often bear some resemblance to each other. However, ChatGPT's responses are sometimes unreliable, with errors detected as such intelligent answering machines can produce reasonable results but are incorrect or illogical (Amaro et al., 2023; Fitria, 2023). Therefore, it is vital to explore whether the students are aware of this AI technology's limitations and use it with caution. The study, henceforth, aims to deeply delve into the students' behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes to the use of ChatGPT in English language learning to comprehend the phenomenon and provide implications for teachers to adopt a suitable pedagogical practice in similar contexts.

Literature Review

Although ChatGPT - Chat Generative Pre-trained Transformer, a significant language model-based chatbot developed by OpenAI, was recently launched on November 30, 2022 (Sarrion, 2023), widespread attention and considerable discussions have exponentially emerged surrounding the integration of this AI technology across various fields, including education and learning.

Ascribing the efficacy of ChatGPT, Hariri (2023) pointed out its usefulness in facilitating research endeavors and assisting with writing tasks, which thereby enables users to engage in self-directed learning activities such as translations and text summarization within seconds. Simultaneously, this AI technology can serve as a supportive tool within the context of personalized learning as it bolsters learners' motivation and reading comprehension skills by generating authentic language material (Baskara & Mukarto, 2023). In line with this, Hong (2023) asserted that ChatGPT represents a big step forward in personalized learning as such an AI chatbot affords students an opportunity to practice and hone language skills, particularly speaking and writing. Notwithstanding, these earlier investigations predominantly employ document research methods, encompassing existing literature reviews, while lacking experimental or qualitative data from the perspectives of teachers and learners.

Regarding a closer look at the benefits of ChatGPT in dealing with writing tasks, there are several qualitative studies conducted from the perspective of learners. An exploratory investigation into the impact of ChatGPT's automatic text generation on learners by Yan (2023) showed that students regarded it as a "powerful yet obedient servant" to paraphrase and detect mistakes in their writing, reaching above average or acceptable levels. Analyzing the efficacy of ChatGPT assistance in English writing, Schmidt-Fajlik (2023) concluded that ChatGPT provided more detailed and clearer explanations for grammar mistakes found in a Japanese student's paper compared to responses from Grammarly and ProWritingAid. In addition, the

ability to translate explanations of grammar mistakes was notably beneficial for lower-level Japanese English language learners, which supports the finding by Kohnke et al. (2023). In fact, over 85% of the first-year students in Schmidt-Fajlik (2023)'s research advocated its ease of use and usefulness in English writing learning. Congruent with this, Bonsu and Baffour-Koduah (2023) discovered that students expressed support for the integration of ChatGPT at universities, accompanied by an effective management system, as students find ChatGPT valuable to alleviate the stress of generating ideas while doing scientific research. However, these previous studies have yet to consider students' attitudes towards English language learning and teachers' role when incorporating ChatGPT in instruction and learning. Therefore, further research is essential to gain a comprehensive insight into the students' perceptions and experiences with ChatGPT.

Besides the benefits mentioned above for English learning, ChatGPT offers noteworthy time efficiency and labor-saving assistance for instructors in terms of scoring tasks and providing individualized feedback to learners. Accordingly, investigating the feasibility of ChatGPT to automatically score 12,100 essays contained in TOEFL11 in comparison to benchmark levels, Mizumoto and Eguchi (2023) advocated that ChatGPT can be a promising writing assessment tool for teachers to utilize with a certain level of accuracy and reliability. Specifically, ChatGPT enables teachers to pinpoint areas where students struggle, excel, and need grammatical and style improvement (Hong, 2023). Consequently, AI technology can alleviate teachers' burdensome workloads of essay-scoring workloads, thereby enabling them to have more time for lesson planning and engaging content creation for teaching (Iqbal et al., 2022; Rudolph et al., 2023; Topsakal & Topsakal, 2022). Investigating the affordances of the generative AI chatbot ChatGPT for language instruction, Kohnke et al. (2023) showed that ChatGPT, with its ability to generate follow-up open-ended or multiple-choice questions for reading tasks and modify their complexity, allows teachers to select suitable materials and assignments for distinct levels of learners, which possibly enhances the training quality.

Despite the benefits as mentioned above of ChatGPT to teachers, their attitudes towards the application of ChatGPT remain a subject of debate. Bii et al. (2023) found that teachers who received training to use ChatGPT in their instruction exhibited a positive attitude toward chatbot usage and were willing to incorporate this technology into their upcoming pedagogical practices. However, it is noteworthy that this quasi-experimental case study was limited to only two selected teachers, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to the wider population and consequently needs further investigations. Meanwhile, Iqbal et al. (2022) revealed a pessimistic outlook among teachers regarding the integration of ChatGPT in language teaching. Concerns were raised regarding the potential risks, such as cheating and plagiarism (Lo, 2023). In line with this, Yan (2023) found that those who had prior experience with the AI chatbot in writing class perceived it as a means for lazy students to seek shortcuts instead of developing their own ideas, which yields unfair academic results (Moqbel & Al-Kadi, 2023). To detect plagiarism generated by ChatGPT, a recent upgrade of the Turnitin tool, GPT Zero has been developed to identify AI-generated texts; however, more research should be conducted to explore its effectiveness (Kohnke et al., 2023). In addition, the study pointed out that errors in the system or unclear prompts by users could lead to misleading information and confusion. Accordingly, Hong (2023) emphasized that ChatGPT responses are not based on reasoning or

emotions but are retrieved from the most frequently occurring and relevant feedback from the existing data. Particularly, when faced with creative and complex tasks, ChatGPT may fail to produce satisfactory answers, which requires the provision of clear and precise input prompts (Hariri, 2023). Thus, to address teachers' concerns about students using ChatGPT as a means of cheating, it is necessary to explore students' usage habits and their nuanced attitudes towards ChatGPT in the context of English language learning to provide a comprehensive understanding of this issue and help identify appropriate solutions.

Research Questions

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

1. What are the attitudes of students towards utilizing ChatGPT in English learning?

2. How do students make use of ChatGPT in their English language learning routines?

3. What are students' perceptions of the advantages and drawbacks of ChatGPT in English language learning?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This research employs a mixed-method technique to gain insights into I.T. students' perceptions and usage habits regarding ChatGPT. To collect quantitative data, a structured questionnaire was administered to 120 university students from Vietnam – Korea University of Information and Technology, the University of Da Nang, Vietnam. These participants were attending an introductory English course at level A2 CEFR, as instructed by the researcher. Furthermore, the group interview was conducted with 10 students to obtain in-depth insights complementing the questionnaire data, thereby enhancing the understanding of students' perceptions.

Design of the Study

The questionnaire comprises three sections, amongst which Section 1 (I1 to I5) investigates students' attitudes toward using ChatGPT in English language learning. It assesses their agreement levels regarding the reliability of ChatGPT's translation results, whether it is beneficial to use ChatGPT in English learning, and their perspectives on its potential to replace teachers, English face-to-face language classes, and English language study for I.T students. Similarly, the third section, coded from I17 to I31, also in the form of 4-point Likert scale questions, investigates students' perceptions of this AI technology's potential benefits and drawbacks that may influence learning progress. The questions adopt a 4-point Likert scale to avoid neutral responses with high reliability and coefficients for a measurement scale (Chang, 1994). The reliability was assessed with Cronbach's Alpha (Jain & Angural, 2017) with the total score of 0.912, which shows a high degree of consistency in responses throughout the list of 4-point Likert scale items in section 1 and section 3.

Equation: $\alpha = (n / (n-1)) * [1 - (\Sigma V_i / V_{test})]$, in which: n = number of questions, V_i = variance of scores on each question, V_{test} = total variance of overall scores on the entire test.

Cronbach's α	Internal consistency
0.9 and above	Excellent
0.8 – 0.89	Good
0.7 – 0.79	Acceptable
0.6 – 0.69	Questionable
0.5 – 0.59	Poor
Below 0.5	Unacceptable

Meanwhile, the second section, coded from I6 to I16, consists of multiple-choice items, which aim to collect the exact responses of individuals familiar with the technology and frequency of using ChatGPT in English language learning. These questions were adapted from a previous study by Nguyen (2023), which investigated instructors' usage of ChatGPT in language training and their attitudes about its use in EFL writing courses by combining both multiple-choice and 4-point Likert items in the questionnaire. In addition, the group interview question was structured based on the responses from the questionnaire to obtain in-depth insights of students' perceptions of its benefits and drawbacks regarding the application of ChatGPT in education.

Data collection & analysis

To collect quantitative data, questionnaires were administered to 120 students attending basic English classes with clear instructions on completing the questionnaire provided, and the data was collected online with Google form, allowing students 45 minutes to complete. Additionally, a pilot study was implemented for content modification to avoid vague meanings or misunderstandings of the questions. Next, the group interview was conducted within 30 minutes, recorded, and transcribed for analysis afterward.

The questionnaire items regarding students' attitudes towards using ChatGPT in English language learning and their perceptions of the potential benefits and drawbacks of this AI technology, coded as I1 – I5 and I17 – I31, respectively, were analyzed by SPSS 27.0, calculating descriptive statistics: mean (M), and standard deviation (St. D). The Likert scale data was interpreted based on a mean range: Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.75), Disagree (1.76-2.50), Agree (2.51-3.25), and Strongly Agree (3.26-4.00) (Bizimana & Orodho, 2014). Likewise, quantitative data to investigate learners' habits of ChatGPT use was coded as I6 – I16 and analyzed by percentage and N out of the total. Moreover, qualitative data from the interview with 10 students underwent content analysis, coded as S1 – S10.

Results/Findings

Students' overall attitudes towards using ChatGPT in English language learning

The findings of descriptive statistical analysis regarding students' overall attitudes towards using ChatGPT in English language learning are presented in Table 1 below. Accordingly, the retrieved data of item 1 (I1) indicates the consistency of the results as all the surveyed students agreed that ChatGPT generates reliable and effective translation results, with a mean of 2.9 (in the range of 2.51-3.25 - Agree) and slight standard deviation of 0.64 (between 0.53-0.74). In other words, students are willing to use and learn from ChatGPT, and the perceived level of reliability of using ChatGPT for translation and looking words up for meanings is high. Notably,

it was reported from the interview that ChatGPT is helpful for their comprehension of learning materials of other subjects (S5), and they attained a more extensive English vocabulary, especially technical terminologies related to their major and specialization (S2). Congruent with this, item 2 (I2) shows that students advocated the general usefulness of ChatGPT in their English learning progress with a mean of 2.725. However, the data of St. D in I2 proved to be the highest figure, compared to those of the other items, which indicates varied opinions amongst the students regarding the benefits of this AI chatbot in distinct aspects of English learning and whether to use it as a learning assistance tool or an alternative to the role of teachers.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of students' attitudes towards using ChatGPT in English language learning

Item	Statement	N	M	S.D.
I1	Chat GPT provides reliable and accurate translation.	120	2.9000	.64038
I2	Chat GPT is useful for my English language learning.	120	2.7250	.76655
I3	ChatGPT can replace English language teachers.	120	1.5250	.67317
I4	Self-studying with ChatGPT can replace English classes.	120	1.9083	.75588
I5	It is unnecessary to study English because ChatGPT can solve English language problems.	120	1.6333	.63422

Despite the perceived reliability of ChatGPT's translation results, students strongly opposed the replacement of English teachers due to ChatGPT as the mean of item I3 stays remarkably low at 2.1 and the consistency is high with a minor St. D of 0.67. In addition, students disapproved of the idea that they could totally empower ChatGPT to self-study and improve their English without attending English classes (I4). S1 reported that it is the interaction with teachers and other students that matters. "I can learn English vocabulary with ChatGPT thanks to its accurate translation, but my motivation is to plunge eventually, especially with the dearth of classroom communication and socialization. So, I think ChatGPT could never grow to replace our English teachers in this sense, at least in the instant future," S2 maintained. Furthermore, item I5 reflects students' unwavering beliefs in English learning prospects despite technological advancements. S4 said, "English learning is still important to me and our generation, even with the existence of ChatGPT, which can translate everything within a click. We can instantly type the English words into the Chatbot and receive the translated result. However, this scenario and emotion are not worthwhile and fulfilling as we have nothing in our brain but heavily rely on technology instead." Thus, a thorough and cautious analysis of the benefits and drawbacks of using ChatGPT in English learning is warranted.

Students' habits of using ChatGPT in English language learning

Based on Table 2, the highest figure - over a third of the learners majoring in I.T. (35.83%) extensively used ChatGPT as a learning assistance tool to solve English tasks and assignments, which indicates a moderate proportion of the learners are ChatGPT users (I6). Conversely, a mere 2.5% of the students never entered ChatGPT due to its unavailability in Vietnam (I7). In fact, a low of 14.16% of the respondents purchased accounts from abroad or adopted its extensional version Poe–ChatGPT, which can be found free of charge in the country (I8).

Table 2

Students' familiarity with ChatGPT

Item	Statement	Total	N	%
I6	I use it as a regular tool for my English learning.	120	43	35.83
I7	I have never used ChatGPT because it is not available in Vietnam yet.	120	3	2.5
I8	I often use the extensional version, Poe – ChatGPT.	120	17	14.16
I9	I have used it sometimes because of my curiosity.	120	39	32.5
I10	I barely use it because I find it unnecessary for English learning.	120	34	28.33
I11	I use ChatGPT in classrooms.	120	15	12.5

Compared to I6, an equivalent percentage of learners (39 out of 120 students) reported their limited use of ChatGPT, driven primarily by their curiosity about a newly released AI chatbot (I9). However, this proportion remains minor, which means the rest of the learners, 67.5%, took ChatGPT seriously for English learning purposes. Likewise, a minority of students, 28.33% advocated with the statement in I10, indicating that most participants consider ChatGPT a necessary tool for their English language learning. However, based on I11, a few students, 12.5% of the participants, admitted to using ChatGPT within the classroom context. Therefore, it can be speculated that the learners predominantly employed ChatGPT outside the classroom. To illustrate, as S9 reported, there was more sense of comfort in self-study and interacting with the AI chatbot at home or outside the classroom, and ChatGPT could exert its effectiveness as an online dictionary in case of unfamiliar vocabulary and knowledge. In this sense, the result suggests that ChatGPT serves as a potentially valuable resource for autonomous language learning and vocabulary acquisition.

In reference to Table 3 discussing the frequency of students' usage of ChatGPT in their English language learning, the results indicate that most of the surveyed I.T. students rarely utilize ChatGPT for this purpose, which aligns with the insights gathered from the interview.

Table 3

Frequency of students' using ChatGPT in English learning

Item	Frequency of using ChatGPT	Total	N	%
I12	I use ChatGPT on a daily basis	120	10	8.33
I13	I use ChatGPT on a weekly basis	120	32	26.67
I14	I use ChatGPT once a month	120	6	5.00
I15	I rarely use ChatGPT	120	53	44.16
I16	I never use ChatGPT	120	19	15.83

One student, S8, expressed that ChatGPT can only assist with vocabulary and grammar, and there are other aspects of English learning, such as the four skills, which it cannot address. In another case, some students had long been used to online dictionaries such as Cambridge Dictionary or Google Translate and found these websites sufficient to obtain satisfactory translation results (S5, S7). Moreover, as English is not their core subject of I.T. at university, they tended to prioritize solving their I.T. problems, such as coding, and seeking assistance from the AI chatbot, rather than using it to improve English knowledge and proficiency. Thus, only a limited percentage of students (8.33%) used ChatGPT daily for English learning (I12). Meanwhile, an even smaller percentage (15.83%) never took advantage of this tool for studying English (I16), along with 5% of the students learning English using ChatGPT on a monthly

basis (I14). In fact, the students tended to rarely employ ChatGPT in their English improvement, with slightly over 44% in agreement with I15. Obviously, the second most popular case, accounting for 26.67% of responses, is turning to ChatGPT for help every week (I13) to address English-related issues or acquire specific-purpose English vocabulary (S6).

ChatGPT's perceived usefulness and limitations in English language learning

Although the survey data confirmed certain benefits, the level of positivity regarding students' attitudes towards the effectiveness of ChatGPT in English language learning was relatively moderate, with the Mean value of all the figures only ranging between Disagree and Agree. While the lowest Mean and S.D. in I17 indicate a high consistency in student's responses that ChatGPT had little influence on their development of English language skills, particularly in listening and speaking, the students were in slight agreement with the positive impact of using ChatGPT on English reading and writing proficiency (M = 2.5333). However, SD in I18 doubles that of I17, which shows a greater variation in learners' opinions.

Table 4

Perceived usefulness of ChatGPT in English learning

Item	Statement	Total	M	S.D.
I17	There was an improvement in my English communication skills.	120	1.9083	.31744
I18	I improved my reading and writing skills.	120	2.5333	.69733
I19	My interest in English learning increased.	120	2.8000	.86578
I20	ChatGPT should be used in English classrooms.	120	2.6083	.71356
I21	ChatGPT boosted my confidence in doing assignments.	120	3.1833	.57953
I22	I gained more English vocabulary after using ChatGPT.	120	3.2333	.49761

Notably, the results in I22 show that the majority of participants evaluated English vocabulary gains through the interaction with ChatGPT with the highest Mean value of 3.2333 and the second lowest S.D in the table. Congruently, some students from the group interview reported that chatting with ChatGPT provided them with a useful source of vocabulary, especially ESP unfamiliar words related to their specialization. Moreover, with the aid of human-like responses from ChatGPT, the students became more confident with their solutions to learning problems and assignments. Explicably, the second highest Mean (3.1833) and a relatively low S.D. (0.57953) demonstrate an elevated level of consistency and agreement with I21 as ChatGPT was considered beneficial in alleviating concerns about misspellings or grammatical mistakes in dealing with essays, according to S1. Nonetheless, S2 argued that students cannot rely completely on this AI chatbot for tasks that require creativity or due to the possibility of machine errors and misleading prompts. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that, in general, learners considered ChatGPT a source of motivation to practice English (I19) and were in favour of deploying it as a potential tool in English classrooms alongside teachers (I20). However, the S.D.s of I19 and I20 rank first and second, which convey a difference in students' opinions regarding these issues. In other words, the idea of whether ChatGPT boosts learning motivation and should be applied in English classrooms remains relatively divergent.

The detailed results from Table 5 shed light on various aspects of English learning that benefit the incorporation of ChatGPT in the learners' study progress. The results in I23 illustrate that a

large majority of students highly valued ChatGPT as an excellent tool for the acquisition of English vocabulary related to their I.T. major, with a far higher level of agreement (M = 3.4750 and S.D. = 0.57923), compared to the figures recorded for general English vocabulary gain as shown in the item I24. More specifically, S9 explained that with the aid of ChatGPT, it becomes more straightforward to comprehend specialized reading materials from I.T. subjects and absorb domain-specific terminology. Likewise, S10 admitted to using ChatGPT frequently to search for the meanings of specialized English terminologies encountered in reading materials rather than basic general English.

Table 5

Aspects of English learning benefiting from ChatGPT

Item	Statement	Total	M	S.D.
I23	Vocabulary gained of ESP	120	3.4750	.57923
I24	Vocabulary gain of general English	120	2.8250	.87603
I25	Grammatical check and paraphrasing	120	3.2833	.72394
I26	Cultural knowledge	120	2.5833	.57370
I27	English communication	120	2.0167	.44878

Regarding item I25, the grammatical checking and paraphrasing function of ChatGPT ranked second in usefulness, with a prominent level of agreement (M = 3.2833) that they worked more efficiently on essay writing as ChatGPT assisted learners with time reduction, checking for misspellings and incorrect grammar usage, and vague meanings. In line with this, S8 reported that the AI chatbot could suggest suitable word choices and finetune a written text along with detailed explanations. In other words, ChatGPT is able to paraphrase drafts of ideas into more comprehensive and well-written ones, added S7. However, the S.D. of I25 is noticeable, standing at 0.72394, showing varied opinions amongst respondents. Based on the interview results, the concerns are about the occasional system errors, which result in imprecise grammar-checking results and require learners to refix the problems manually. Moreover, in reference to potential plagiarism, learners who are over-reliant on the AI language learning machine are highly likely to submit similar essays with their peers without knowledge. Hence, unintentional plagiarism can occur unless they manage to modify the suggestions provided by ChatGPT and finalize the essay submission in their own words.

On the contrary, the benefit of acquiring cultural knowledge was considered minor with a Mean of 2.5833, although learners partly agreed that ChatGPT helped broaden their horizons of cultural identities and offers explanations of diverse etiquettes (I26). However, few students regarded ChatGPT as a valuable way to enhance their English language skills, especially speaking and listening, with the lowest Mean and S.D. Evidently, the only means to connect with the AI chatbot is via written text instead of oral conversation. Henceforth, there is no input that requires learners to practice listening for comprehension and produce spoken output. As a result, according to learner S1, their ability to respond to English orally has yet to improve.

Table 6

Disadvantages of ChatGPT to English learning

Item	Statement	Total	M	S.D.
I28	Heavy reliance on AI technology to solve learning problems	120	3.6417	.61897
I29	Lack of interaction with teachers	120	3.3333	.67778
I30	Distraction from other topics to ask ChatGPT, especially in Vietnamese instead of in English	120	2.9583	.74918
I31	Misleading and confusing responses from ChatGPT	120	2.3333	.58458

Insights into the downsides of using ChatGPT in English learning, faced by I.T. students, are demonstrated in Table 6. Overall, students totally expressed concerns regarding the major problem of heavy reliance on AI technology, with the highest level of agreement (M = 3.6417). Explicably, students were worried about a growing tendency to rely on ChatGPT for all English learning problems lazily. This dependence could discourage critical thinking and lead to delays in generating personal thoughts and own ideas, impeding creativity and language development. Additionally, S4 argued that there could be a risk of academic misconduct if many students submit the same essays, plagiarize, and use such AI chatbot for exam cheating.

The lack of face-to-face interaction emerged as the second most problematic issue highlighted by learners, with a Mean of 3.3333 within a range of Strongly Agreement (I29). In fact, most students expressed their unwavering need for guidance from teachers who can adapt different pedagogical methods that suit their levels and needs as well as provide them with proper English learning strategies and a sense of motivation through real-life communication. As a result, this can establish a friendly and realistic learning environment, in contrast to simply engaging in silent conversations with a robot (S6). Moreover, many students admitted to being distracted by diverse topics irrelevant to the purpose of English language learning while using ChatGPT (I30). However, the S.D. in I30 is considerably high, which indicates a variation in students' perception depending on their personal learning discipline and language competence. For instance, low-level learners may chat with ChatGPT in their native language, Vietnamese, instead of using English, which yields no significant advancement in language skills (S6).

On the other hand, the students demonstrated particular trust in the AI technology's capability to generate correct and reliable responses that fulfill their needs and inquiries. Based on the results in item I31, the respondents unanimously disagreed that the responses from ChatGPT were incorrect and confusing (M = 2.3333 and S.D. = 0.58458), which indicates that a sizable proportion of the participants valued ChatGPT as a promising learning tool for the precision and reliability of its responses. This finding is congruent with the data shown in item I1, which demonstrates their perception of its accurate translation capability. In some circumstances, the students received incorrect answers due to system errors or not yet up-to-date learned data; most responses to factual questions from ChatGPT were satisfying and human-like. Notwithstanding, regarding the tasks that required creativity or the unfamiliar questions that lacked previous data, the same level of performance was not observed, as reported by S1. Ultimately, the ideas created by ChatGPT can prove helpful for learners during brainstorming sessions, but they may not result in flawlessly polished final products of creativity, such as project presentations.

Discussion

In line with previous studies conducted by Hariri (2023), Kohnke et al. (2023), and Schmidt-Fajlik (2023), the findings highlight the positive attitudes of students towards using ChatGPT, primarily regarding it as a prompt and dependable translation machine that assists with solving English learning difficulties. For instance, the AI chatbot attributably enhances ESP reading comprehension related to their I.T specialization and facilitates the acquisition of specialized vocabulary rather than general English. Likewise, the students demonstrated their confidence in ChatGPT's capability as an automatic grammar checker and paraphrasing tool, particularly when handling written essays. Notwithstanding, the learners tend to have an impromptu chat with ChatGPT in need of instant solutions instead of earnestly exploring the website for autonomous learning. The data reveals that students predominantly interacted with ChatGPT on a weekly basis to seek assistance or shortcuts to English language problems.

However, a major concern is that learners will excessively rely on AI technology and become disinclined to generate their own innovative ideas, potentially hindering learners' creativity and dynamism, which poses an educational hazard (Bonsu & Baffour-Koduah, 2023; Yan, 2023). For instance, they are likely to encounter essays automatically generated by the AI chatbot or identical ideas submitted by different learners. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be mindful of this risk and remain attentive when scoring students' essays. One approach to tackle this problem is to compare students' submissions and ascertain if there are any striking resemblances between them or to the other authors' work collected from previous data (Hong, 2023). Additionally, teachers can employ various formative assessment methods to gauge learners' English proficiency and progress. These methods encompass face-to-face interaction through question-and-answer sessions, online quizzes to test vocabulary, and teamwork projects that require advanced reasoning, complexity, and creativity. In this way, teachers can identify and prevent learners from committing plagiarism and exam cheating.

Despite learners' perceived trust in the competence of ChatGPT as an automatic translator, grammar checker, and paraphraser, it is worth noting that students still recognize its limitations in developing English listening and speaking skills. Explicably, the technology lacks oral face-to-face communication, and the role of teachers in the English classroom is irreplaceable for motivation and interactive guidance, aligning with the other studies (Ausat et al., 2023; Baskara & Mukarto, 2023). Therefore, instead of fearing the potential educational threats associated with the presence and popularity of ChatGPT (Iqbal et al., 2022; Yan, 2023), teachers should take control of the situation by providing prompt guidance and regulations to guarantee the responsible use of ChatGPT, avoiding plagiarism and the development of laziness. Specifically, it is imperative for teachers to raise learners' awareness of its benefits and limitations, educating them not to go beyond the boundaries and commit plagiarism unknowingly. That is while encouraging students to utilize ChatGPT for checking unfamiliar ESP terminologies and acquire vocabulary, mainly from reading assignments in autonomous learning (Baskara & Mukarto, 2023; Yan, 2023), teachers should guide them to critically evaluate the suggestions by the AI chatbot, ensuring accuracy and suitability during the initial brainstorm session. Afterward, students are advised to employ paraphrasing techniques to express ideas using their own words, reasoning, and critical thinking.

Conclusion

Given all the considerations, the role of teachers is perceived as irreplaceable despite the omnipresence of artificial intelligence in almost all aspects of life, including English language learning, based on I.T. students' perceptions of its benefits and unavoidable educational threats posed by excessive reliance and misuse. In this AI world, besides working as an instructor of language, teachers should be a trustworthy guide for learners to exploit ChatGPT in self-directed learning for translation, grammar checking, and initial brainstorming, provided that critical thinking is applied to their own ideas and expressions of words before final submission. Notwithstanding, since educating learners to use ChatGPT is insufficient to tackle the risks of cheating in English language learning, the study falls short in investigating a specific tool to detect plagiarism resulting from the misuse of this AI chatbot. This thereby highlights the need for further in-depth research to gain insights into this aspect. Another limitation of the research is that the findings are exclusively based on students' perceptions, attitudes, and usage behaviors of ChatGPT in language learning. Henceforth, it is urgent for future studies to complementarily explore the use of this AI technology through the lens of teachers.

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Biodata

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