ISSN: 2768-4563

International Journal of TESOL & Education

ICTE Press
International Association of TESOL & Education
5243 Birch Falls Ln, Sugar Land, Texas, USA, 77479
https://i-jte.org | https://i-cte.org/press

International Journal of TESOL & Education (ijte)

ISSN: 2768-4563
Volume 6, Issue 2, 2026

Doi: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.2662
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3233-457X

Indexed
Crossref
Google Scholar
LOCKSS
CLOCKSS
PKP PN
Library of Congress, U.S. ISSN Center
ROAD
J-Gate
EuroPub

Publication frequency
International Journal of TESOL & Education will publish 4 issues per year in February, May, August, and November. The IJTE will publish manuscripts as soon as they are accepted.

Publisher: ICTE Press
Address: International Association of TESOL & Education, 5243 Birch Falls Ln, Sugar Land, Texas, USA, 77479

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International Journal of TESOL & Education

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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear beloved TESOLers & Educators,

It is my great pleasure to announce the successful publication of Volume 6, Number 2, 2026 of the International Journal of TESOL & Education (IJTE). This issue was published on 25 May 2026 and includes five research articles and one literature review, addressing significant topics in TESOL and education, including young learners' literacy development, teacher agency in digital transformation, pronunciation learning through technology, technology integration in Vietnamese tertiary education, learner autonomy, and responsible generative AI integration in language education.

This issue reflects IJTE's continued commitment to publishing scholarship that is pedagogically meaningful, methodologically grounded, and responsive to the changing realities of language education. Across the six papers, readers will find a shared concern with how learners, teachers, technologies, and institutions interact in increasingly digital, multilingual, and learner-centered educational environments.

The opening article, "Utilizing the Big Book to Facilitate Indonesian EFL Young Learners' Literacy," by Siti Mariam and Sayyidatul Fadlilah of Universitas Islam Negeri Walisongo, Indonesia, and Catur Kepirianto of Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia, explores how Big Books can support literacy development among Indonesian EFL young learners. Using a qualitative descriptive case study with twenty fifth-grade pupils, the authors show that Big Book-based instruction can increase learner engagement, support reading comprehension through multimodal resources, and strengthen meaning-making through teacher mediation, dialogic reading, and scaffolding. The study is particularly valuable because it situates early EFL literacy within sociocultural, multimodal, and emergent literacy perspectives, while also emphasizing the importance of culturally responsive materials for young learners.

The second article, "EFL Teacher Agency in the Era of Digital Transformation: A Multiple-Case Study in Vietnam," by Ho Thi Nhu Uyen of Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam, examines how Vietnamese EFL teachers enact agency in the context of digital transformation. Drawing on the ecological model of teacher agency, the study reports how teachers' past experiences, present working conditions, and future aspirations shape their use of digital tools. The findings show that although teachers experienced early challenges with technology adoption, peer support, reflective practice, and classroom adaptation enabled them to develop digital competence and move toward more learner-centered teaching. This article makes an important contribution to teacher education by showing that digital transformation is not merely a technical process but also a professional, institutional, and identity-related process.

The third article, "YouGlish as a Tool for Enhancing English Pronunciation: Students' Perceptions at a University in Hanoi," by Nguyen Minh Ngoc and Nguyen Thi Minh Huyen of the School of Languages and Tourism, Hanoi University of Industry, Vietnam, investigates university students' perceptions of YouGlish as an ICT tool for pronunciation learning. Based on data from 150 first-year students and follow-up interviews, the study shows that YouGlish can help learners improve pronunciation accuracy, become more aware of diverse English accents, and engage in autonomous pronunciation practice. At the same time, the study notes challenges such as Internet connectivity, video quality, and the complexity of exposure to diverse accents. This article contributes to the growing discussion on how authentic, video-based digital platforms can support pronunciation learning beyond the classroom.

The fifth article, "Vietnamese EFL Learners' Perceptions of Abilities and Challenges of Learner Autonomy," by Duong Thanh Hung Duc of the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, Vietnam, investigates English majors' perceptions of their autonomous learning abilities and challenges. Based on survey data from 57 students, the study finds that students reported moderate to high levels of learner autonomy, with the strongest ability in Internet use and the weakest area in self-evaluation. The study offers

practical implications for EFL teachers, particularly the need to provide explicit training in self-evaluation strategies and material selection. This article reminds us that learner autonomy should not be assumed simply because students have access to digital resources; rather, autonomy requires structured pedagogical support, strategic training, and sustained learner reflection.

The final paper, a literature review titled "Navigating the AI Turn: Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education," by Pham Vu Phi Ho of the Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, and Willy Ardian Renandya of Nanyang Technological University / National Institute of Education, Singapore, and Industrial University of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, addresses one of the most urgent issues in contemporary language education: the responsible integration of generative AI. The paper proposes the Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education (FRAILE) and introduces an AI Task Typology to support cognitive engagement, academic integrity, critical thinking, teacher development, and AI literacy. This review is significant because it moves beyond the excitement surrounding AI tools and asks how language educators can integrate AI in ways that deepen, rather than replace, meaningful language learning.

In general, the articles in this issue point to several important directions for future research in TESOL and education. First, future research should continue to investigate literacy development among young EFL learners, especially through multimodal, culturally responsive, and teacher-mediated instructional approaches. The Big Book study in this issue shows the value of visual, textual, and dialogic resources, but further longitudinal and comparative studies are needed to examine how such interventions influence reading fluency, vocabulary growth, writing development, and learner motivation over time.

Second, studies on teacher agency and technology integration suggest a need for more research into teacher professional development in digitally transformed educational environments. Future studies should examine how institutions can support teachers not only with digital tools but also with time, training, mentoring, infrastructure, and communities of practice. More attention should also be given to teachers' emotional experiences, professional identities, and decision-making processes when adopting new technologies.

Third, the article on YouGlish highlights the growing role of authentic digital resources in pronunciation learning. Future research may examine how tools such as YouGlish, YouTube, AI pronunciation assistants, speech recognition systems, and corpus-based platforms can be integrated into pronunciation pedagogy. Experimental and longitudinal designs would be valuable for measuring actual gains in intelligibility, pronunciation accuracy, listening discrimination, and learner confidence.

Fourth, the findings on learner autonomy indicate that students' ability to use the Internet does not automatically lead to effective autonomous learning. Future research should explore how learners develop self-regulation, self-assessment, goal setting, and strategic use of learning resources. Studies may also investigate how teachers can scaffold learner autonomy through classroom tasks, digital portfolios, reflective journals, AI-supported feedback, and collaborative learning communities.

Finally, the literature review on responsible AI integration opens an important research agenda for AI literacy, academic integrity, and human-centered language education. Future studies should examine how teachers and learners actually use generative AI in language classrooms, how AI affects writing, speaking, assessment, feedback, and learner identity, and how institutions can design policies that promote ethical, transparent, and pedagogically sound AI use. More empirical evidence is needed to distinguish between superficial AI substitution and deeper forms of cognitive, linguistic, and critical engagement.

On behalf of the Editorial Team, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all contributors to this issue. Their research reflects strong scholarly commitment and provides valuable insights for teachers, researchers, teacher educators, and educational leaders in TESOL and related fields.

We also extend our deep appreciation to the peer reviewers who supported this issue through their careful reading, constructive feedback, and professional recommendations. IJTE's peer-review process involves editorial assessment and double-blind external peer review by qualified experts, with manuscripts normally reviewed by at least two independent reviewers. Their work is essential to maintaining the academic quality, methodological rigor, originality, and integrity of the journal.

I would also like to acknowledge the dedication of the IJTE editorial staff. Their continued commitment to editorial quality, ethical publication practice, peer-review coordination, and author support has made the successful completion of this issue possible.

Call for Papers for the Upcoming Issue

The International Journal of TESOL & Education warmly invites researchers, teachers, teacher educators, graduate students, and scholars to submit manuscripts for the upcoming issue.

We welcome high-quality submissions in areas including, but not limited to:

TESOL and applied linguistics; English language teaching and learning; second language acquisition; language teacher education; language assessment; curriculum and materials development; technology-enhanced language learning; AI in language education; learner autonomy; academic writing; multilingual education; English-medium instruction; and educational innovation.

IJTE accepts research articles, literature reviews, and book reviews. Authors are encouraged to prepare manuscripts in clear academic English and follow the journal's author guidelines. Full manuscripts should generally be 6,000–8,000 words, inclusive of references, tables, and figures, and all citations and references should follow APA 7th edition. IJTE also requires anonymous manuscripts for double-blind review, a separate title page with author information, and the required submission forms.

We look forward to receiving manuscripts that contribute new theoretical, empirical, and pedagogical insights to TESOL and education.

Thanks be to God for everything!

Warm regards,

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

Utilizing the Big Book to Facilitate Indonesian EFL Young Learners' Literacy

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26621

Received: 03/02/2025 Revision: 05/05/2026 Accepted: 11/05/2026 Online: 24/05/2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Big Books promote literacy development in young Indonesian EFL learners. It used a qualitative method and descriptive case study research design with twenty fifth-grade kids from a primary school in Semarang, Central Java. Data were gathered through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with the teacher and chosen pupils, and an examination of teaching materials and pupils' work. The findings show that Big Book-based training improves student engagement by providing engaging and dynamic learning experiences. Multimodal features, such as expanded texts and visual graphics, improve reading comprehension by allowing for a variety of meaning-making processes. Teacher mediation through dialogic reading and scaffolding has a substantial impact on literacy development. Furthermore, culturally sensitive content boosts learner motivation and contextual knowledge. Based on sociocultural, multimodal, and emergent literacy perspectives, the study emphasizes literacy as a socially mediated activity. It provides both practical and theoretical insights into effective literacy instruction for young learners in EFL settings.

Keywords: big books, EFL, Indonesian young learners, literacy

Introduction

In the Indonesian context, where literacy levels remain a national priority, the development of young learners' literacy has emerged as a major concern in modern education. Literacy encompasses more than just reading and writing; it also entails understanding, critical thinking, and creating meaning across a variety of social contexts. The significance of implementing engaging and developmentally appropriate literacy practices at the early stages of school has been highlighted by educators and scholars more and more in recent years. The use of Big Books, characterized by large fonts, vibrant pictures, and interactive storytelling, is a promising educational tool that captures young students' interest.

It is clear that primary school pupils in Indonesia need to enhance their literacy skills. Research shows that many students still have difficulty with fundamental reading comprehension and

CITATION | Mariam, S., Kepirianto, C., & Fadlilah, S. (2026). Utilizing the Big Book to Facilitate Indonesian EFL Young Learners' Literacy. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *6*(2), 1-18. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26621

text engagement, especially in the post-pandemic educational environment. Innovative teaching methods that may both increase students' interest in reading and improve their literacy abilities are necessary in this situation. In this sense, Big Books have become a useful teaching tool because they offer a shared reading experience that promotes engagement, communication, and group learning.

Recent research demonstrates how Big Books might help young students improve a variety of literacy-related skills. For example, studies show that Big Books greatly improve vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and students' confidence in learning English. Big Books' integration of text and visuals makes it easier for students to connect words to their meanings, promoting deeper comprehension. Similarly, further research shows that Big Book media can greatly enhance children's reading literacy outcomes, as demonstrated by quantifiable improvements in pre- and post-test scores. These results imply that Big Books offer educational benefits in addition to their interest. The statements are supported by (Harsiwi & Yunarni, 2021; Widiastuti, & Cahyono, 2024; Wiwikananda & Susanti, 2022).

Furthermore, Big Books promote multimodal literacy development, which is critical in the 21st-century educational environment. Big Books cater to varied learning styles by mixing visuals, text, and storytelling, allowing young learners to generate meaning through a variety of representations. Research indicates that Big Books can improve vocabulary acquisition and pique students' interest in learning by offering engaging graphics and contextualized content. Furthermore, the interactive aspect of Big Book reading sessions promotes active engagement, which is essential for early literacy development.

In the Indonesian setting, incorporating local culture with Big Book content enhances its relevance and usefulness. According to a recent study, Big Books that incorporate local wisdom boost literacy skills while also making learning more relevant and culturally responsive. This is consistent with current educational trends, which emphasize context- and culture-grounded learning resources to enhance pupils' identification and involvement. Despite these advantages, the use of Big Books in Indonesian classrooms remains limited and frequently underutilized, particularly in aiding full literacy development. Many teachers continue to use traditional textbooks, which may not completely engage young students or meet their unique requirements. As a result, there is an increasing need to investigate and deploy innovative media, such as Big Books, to improve reading training.

Finally, using Big Books is a potential way to promote literacy among Indonesian young learners. Big Books, which provide interactive, graphically rich, and culturally appropriate learning experiences, can significantly improve students' reading skills, vocabulary, and overall engagement in literacy activities. As a result, incorporating Big Books into early literacy education can help solve literacy issues while also creating a more effective and meaningful learning environment for Indonesia's young learners.

Despite the growing body of research demonstrating the efficacy of Big Books in improving young learners' reading, key gaps persist, particularly in the Indonesian educational system. While prior research has shown that Big Books can improve reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and learner engagement, much of this work focuses on short-term results and constrained instructional settings. As a result, there is still a lack of understanding of how prolonged and regular use of Big Books affects long-term literacy development, particularly higher-order reading skills such as inference, critical thinking, and interpretative ability. The statements are supported by (Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Lantolf, J. P., et.al, 2021; Mayer, 2021).

One notable gap is the prevalence of small-scale and quasi-experimental research that typically uses pre-test and post-test designs. Although such studies provide useful insights into immediate learning gains, they often fail to capture the complexities of literacy development as a long-term, socially mediated phenomenon. There is a scarcity of longitudinal studies on how continual exposure to Big Book-based education influences learners' reading trajectories across grade levels. This constraint limits our understanding of whether the reported improvements are sustained and transferable to other literacy contexts beyond the classroom.

Another notable issue is the poor incorporation of theoretical frameworks in previous investigations. Many studies on Big Book use are mostly descriptive or practice-oriented, with little engagement with established theories such as sociocultural theory, multimodal literacy, or emergent literacy frameworks. As a result, more theoretically grounded research is needed to explain how and why Big Books promote literacy development, rather than simply establishing their effectiveness. Such theoretical integration is critical for advancing scholarly discourse and shaping educational design more systematically.

Furthermore, the present research does not adequately investigate the role of teacher pedagogy in moderating the effectiveness of Big Books. Most studies regard Big Books as a stand-alone teaching tool, ignoring the role of instructor practices, including questioning, scaffolding, dialogic reading, and classroom interaction styles. This creates a gap in understanding the interaction between instructional media and teaching practices, a critical factor for optimizing Big Books' pedagogical potential in real-world classrooms. In the Indonesian context, there is also a scarcity of research using culturally responsive, locally contextualized Big Book resources. While a few studies have begun incorporating local wisdom into Big Books, this topic remains underexplored. Given Indonesia's vast cultural diversity, there is a pressing need to explore how culturally embedded Big Books affect not only literacy abilities, but also learners' identity construction, motivation, and engagement. This is consistent with current educational paradigms that emphasize culturally sustainable pedagogy and global English viewpoints. (Hidayatullah, S., 2023; Lantolf, J. P., et al,2021; Dubovi, I., & Lee, V.R., 2022).

In addition, there has been little emphasis on using digital or multimodal Big Books in literacy training. With the growing shift toward digital learning environments, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic, it is critical to investigate how digital Big Books or interactive storytelling platforms compare with traditional printed Big Books in terms of literacy development. This gap is especially important for meeting the demands of 21st-century learners, who are increasingly exposed to digital media. This study presents several noteworthy new findings that advance both theoretical development and practical innovation in the field of young learners' literacy, particularly in the Indonesian context. While earlier research has shown that Big Books improve fundamental literacy skills, this study goes beyond traditional approaches by introducing a more comprehensive, contextually grounded, and theoretically grounded model of Big Book use. These statements are supported by (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Harsiwi, N.E & Yunarni, 2021).

First and foremost, this study is unique in combining Big Books with a multimodal literacy approach. Unlike previous research, which focused only on printed Big Books as visual-textual media, this study views Big Books as multimodal literacy tools that include visual, textual, oral, and interactive features. By doing so, the study broadens Big Books' pedagogical function from basic shared reading resources to dynamic meaning-making tools. This method aligns with 21st-century literacy needs, which require learners to perceive and produce meaning across different forms, not just written text.

Second, this study proposes a culturally sensitive Big Book paradigm that combines Indonesian indigenous wisdom, tales, and sociocultural contexts. While previous research has only briefly addressed cultural content, this study integrates local stories, values, and circumstances into the design and implementation of the Big Book. This innovation not only increases learner engagement but also promotes identity construction and culturally relevant learning. In this way, the study bridges the gap between literacy instruction and culturally sustaining pedagogy, a gap that has been underexplored in Indonesian literacy research.

Third, the study offers a new perspective by emphasizing the importance of teacher mediation through dialogic reading and scaffolding. Rather than viewing Big Books as stand-alone instructional material, this study sees teachers as active agents shaping literacy acquisition through directed engagement, questioning strategies, and collaborative meaning-making. This transfers the emphasis from media effectiveness to pedagogical processes, resulting in a more comprehensive knowledge of how literacy develops in classroom settings.

Fourth, this study used a hybrid Big Book strategy, which combines traditional printed Big Books with digital or interactive versions. This hybrid model addresses the increasing digitalization of education by investigating how multimodal and digital affordances can improve young learners' reading experiences. Such integration has been limited in prior studies, particularly in the Indonesian context, making it an important contribution to modern literacy practices. Finally, this study provides a context-specific conceptual framework that connects Big Book use, multimodal literacy practices, teacher mediation, and literacy results for Indonesian young learners. This framework provides a novel perspective for future study and can serve as a reference model for educators and researchers seeking to adopt innovative literacy training in comparable settings.

Research Questions

The complexity of literacy development as a multifaceted process comprising cognitive, social, and affective components is intended to be captured by these research questions. The study intends to contribute to theoretical and practical developments in early literacy education by addressing these interrelated issues and providing a thorough knowledge of how Big Books serve as pedagogical instruments in EFL literacy instruction.

- **RQ1:** How do Big Books support young learners' reading comprehension and meaning-making?
- **RQ2:** How does teacher mediation facilitate literacy improvement during Big Book activities?
- **RQ3:** How do young learners and teachers perceive the use of Big Books in the classroom?

Literature Review

Recent years have seen a rise in scholarly interest in the development of literacy instruction for young students, especially in response to concerns about declining reading engagement and proficiency in early education worldwide. The use of Big Books has become a pedagogically effective strategy in this changing environment, particularly for promoting early literacy development through interactive, captivating learning experiences. Early literacy development is most successful when pupils actively participate in meaning-making processes rather than passively absorb information, according to recent studies. By facilitating shared reading activities, in which educators and pupils work together to engage with texts, Big Books promote this paradigm. This is consistent with modern theories of emergent literacy, which see literacy

as a socially constructed process influenced by conversation, interaction, and contextualized learning (Björk, 2025; Neumann, 2020; Wasik, B. A., & Hindman,2023). In these contexts, Big Books serve as both reading materials and tools for promoting vocabulary acquisition, oral language development, and comprehension.

The incorporation of multimodal literacy into early education is another significant trend in the literature. In addition to written text, scholars contend that young learners understand meaning through a variety of semiotic resources, such as gestures, sounds, and images (Kress, 2005; Serafini, 2022; Tang, M., et al, 2026). This multimodal engagement is naturally supported by Big Books' huge pictures and visually engaging design. According to empirical research done between 2020 and 2025, students who get multimodal Big Book education significantly outperform those who use traditional textbooks in terms of reading comprehension and narrative interpretation (Ferk-Dornstauder, M., n.d.; Mayer, 2021; Nan, J., & Tian, 2025). This suggests that combining textual and visual components improves cognitive processing and promotes deeper learning.

Additionally, recent research has placed a strong emphasis on the function of dialogic reading and instructor scaffolding. Interactive questioning, prompting, and feedback techniques are used in dialogic reading to motivate students to take an active role in the reading process. Research indicates that when dialogic reading strategies are used with Big Books, children demonstrate increased comprehension, improved expressive language, and greater engagement (Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Wilhelm, A. M., & McGraw, 2023). This is part of a larger movement to acknowledge the teacher's function as a learning facilitator rather than just a knowledge transmitter.

Recent studies emphasize the significance of culturally appropriate literacy resources in the Indonesian environment. To make learning more relevant and approachable for younger students, academics have begun investigating the incorporation of indigenous stories and local wisdom into Big Books. According to research, culturally embedded Big Books boost pupils' motivation and identity awareness, as well as improving reading outcomes (Hidayatullah, S., 2023; Suryani, A., 2023; Widiastuti, I., & Cahyono, 2024). This is consistent with the tenets of culturally responsive education, which emphasize connecting academic material to pupils' sociocultural backgrounds. Digital Big Books and interactive storytelling platforms have also emerged in response to the post-pandemic educational environment's acceleration of digital and hybrid learning. According to recent research, features like audio narration, animation, and interactive elements might further improve engagement with digital Big Books I., & Lee, V.R., 2022; Permana, R.S.G,(Dubovi, I & Lee, V.R., (2022); Permana, R.S.G; et al, 2022; Towson, J., 2025). However, academics also warn that instructor facilitation and pedagogical design have a major role in the efficacy of digital tools.

Despite these developments, the state of the art shows that the majority of research continues to focus on discrete facets of Big Book use, such as vocabulary development or reading comprehension, without fully integrating multimodal, cultural, and pedagogical factors into a cohesive framework. This suggests that the field is continuing to move toward more comprehensive, multidisciplinary approaches to teaching literacy. Big Books are increasingly recognized as effective resources for promoting literacy among young students through dialogic interaction, multimodal engagement, shared reading, and cultural significance. These advancements are part of a larger shift in literacy instruction toward more inclusive, interactive, and culturally grounded methods that meet the requirements of pupils in the twenty-first century.

Figure 1.

Conceptual Model of Big Book–Mediated Literacy Development

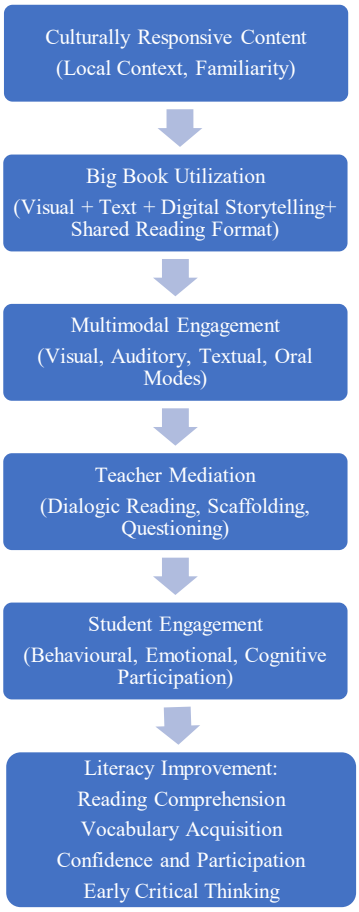

Figure 1. A conceptual model showing how using Big Books promotes the literacy development of Indonesian young learners through teacher-mediated interaction and multimodal engagement, with culturally sensitive content as a moderating element. The model emphasizes the linked, sequential processes that lead to better literacy outcomes.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, descriptive case study research design to investigate how Big Book use promotes literacy development among young Indonesian students. Since the study's goal is to comprehend processes, interactions, and experiences rather than to quantify variables, a qualitative approach is chosen. Particularly for younger students, literacy development is a socially created phenomenon that entails contextual learning, meaning-making, and engagement. Consequently, the researcher can capture these complexities in an authentic classroom environment through qualitative inquiry (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014; Tracy, 2013).

The case study research design is particularly relevant because it focuses on a single classroom where Big Book training is implemented. This methodology allows for a thorough and comprehensive assessment of how instructional media, teacher practices, and student

engagement interact in real-world settings (Lantolf, J. P., et al, 2021; Mol, S. E., & Bus, 2020; Sun, Y., & Yin, 2023). Rather than isolating variables, the study aims to understand how literacy development originates from classroom interactions.

Research Setting and Participants

One English teacher and about 20 pupils, ages 9, participated in the study, which was conducted at an Indonesian primary school. Purposive sampling, which focuses on individuals who can provide rich, pertinent information about the topic under study, is used to select participants. (Braun, V & Clarke, 2021; Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014). The teacher acted as a major informant, offering insights into Big Book implementation, classroom management, and instructional tactics. The main participants whose participation, interaction, and literacy growth are investigated are the students. Because it shows how educational practices are perceived at the learner level, incorporating students' viewpoints is crucial. To offer institutional support and a more comprehensive contextual understanding of literacy practices, school stakeholders, such as a curriculum coordinator, may also be included.

Data Collection technique

This study used a variety of data collection techniques to ensure data triangulation and depth of analysis, thereby representing the complexity of literacy learning. To record teaching and learning activities in real time, classroom observations are carried out. The researcher observes the teacher's use of Big Books, students' reactions, and interactions. This approach is significant because it records real practices instead of self-reported data, offering concrete proof of scaffolding, multimodal interaction, and engagement (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Miles, M.B., et al, 2014; Tracy, 2013).

Participants' viewpoints are investigated using semi-structured interviews. To learn about the pedagogical choices, difficulties, and perceived efficacy of Big Books, the instructor is interviewed. Age-appropriate questions are also used in interviews with chosen students to learn about their motivations, emotions, and educational experiences. This approach maintains focus on research goals while providing freedom to delve further into replies (Creswell, J.W. & Timothy, 2019; Marshall, C., et al, 2021). Examining lesson plans, Big Book resources, and pupils' work are all part of document analysis. This sheds light on how education is planned and how their performance reflects literacy outcomes. By providing context and supporting information, document analysis enhances observations and interviews.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is used to analyze data, as outlined by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke V. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021). Because it enables the researcher to methodically find, examine, and explain patterns throughout qualitative data, this approach was selected. The six stages of the analysis are getting acquainted with the data, creating preliminary codes, identifying themes, evaluating themes, defining and labeling themes, and creating the report. Through this method, the researcher can transition from unprocessed data (such as observation notes and interview transcripts) to significant themes like teacher scaffolding, engagement, and multimodal learning. This study is especially well-suited for thematic analysis since it offers flexibility without sacrificing analytical rigor.

Results

Big Books, Reading Comprehension, and Meaning-Making

Document analysis, pupils' interviews, and classroom observations are used to answer the research question 1. While interviews examine methods like using visuals to understand meaning, observations record how students use textual and visual cues to analyze texts. Analysis of documents (such as worksheets and retelling exercises) provides evidence of comprehension. Both the process (how pupils comprehend) and the outcome (what they comprehend) were analyzed with this triangulated approach. Patterns of inferential reasoning, story comprehension, and vocabulary recognition are the main focus of thematic analysis.

Reading comprehension in the context of EFL learning encompasses more than just decoding written words; it also entails the capacity to use linguistic and contextual resources to interpret, connect, and infer meaning. The main way that Big Books improve reading comprehension is through their multimodal design, which combines rich visual pictures with large, legible text. They can obtain meaning in a variety of ways thanks to these characteristics. For example, learners frequently use images to infer meaning when encountering unfamiliar words, illustrating the role of visual scaffolding in comprehension. Instead of depending only on linguistic understanding, this approach shows how they actively create meaning by combining textual and visual information.

Additionally, Big Books use dialogic and interactive reading techniques to improve understanding. The teacher asks questions, makes predictions, and promotes conversation about the narrative during reading sessions. Higher-order comprehension abilities, such as recognizing major concepts, drawing conclusions, and comprehending cause-and-effect relationships, are supported by these interactions, which help them think beyond literal comprehension. They participate actively in creating meaning through this directed interaction rather than being passive consumers of knowledge.

By presenting stories in an organized and captivating manner, Big Books also foster narrative comprehension. They can repeat stories, recognize important events, and comprehend character behaviors thanks to the expanded language and clear event sequencing. This supports the development of both micro-level comprehension (e.g., vocabulary and sentence meaning) and macro-level comprehension (e.g., overall story structure). Additionally, by enabling pupils to connect new material to what they already know and have experienced, the inclusion of culturally familiar content enhances meaning-making. They are better able to understand the narrative and interact with the text more fully when they can identify elements from their own surroundings, such as well-known locations or characters.

The study used information from pupils' interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis to look at this research issue. During reading exercises, observations are made of how pupils engage with the text and make use of visual signals. While document analysis (such as worksheets and retelling exercises) provides proof of learning results, interviews shed light on pupils' understanding processes and perspectives. Patterns of inferential reasoning, narrative comprehension, and word comprehension are identified through thematic analysis. The overall goal of this research topic is to demonstrate how Big Books, when combined with interactive pedagogy, multimodal input, and culturally relevant content in EFL literacy training, serve as useful instruments for promoting reading comprehension and meaning-making.

Teacher Mediation in Big Book-Based Literacy Development

Based on classroom observation data, the teacher actively mediates the learning process through conversation, guidance, and scaffolding during Big Book-based instruction rather than simply presenting the text. Teacher mediation plays a particularly important role in bridging the gap between students' current abilities and the demands of the text in EFL environments, where learners frequently encounter linguistic difficulties. The main way teacher mediation is implemented is through dialogic reading exercises, in which the instructor engages the class in interactive conversations rather than giving one-sided explanations. The instructor encourages pupils to describe pictures and connect them to the text, poses open-ended questions, and makes predictions during Big Book sessions. These techniques encourage active engagement and stimulate pupils' thinking, enabling them to jointly create meaning.

They gain deeper degrees of comprehension, such as inference and interpretation, through this kind of engagement. Scaffolding, which entails offering pupils short-term assistance to complete activities they are still unable to complete on their own, is another crucial component of teacher mediation. Scaffolding is demonstrated in the context of Big Books when the teacher repeats key words, simplifies complex phrases, models pronunciation, or uses visual aids to enhance comprehension. When children have trouble with unfamiliar words, for instance, the teacher might break the word into smaller parts or relate it to a picture. Over time, learners can gain confidence and independence through this gradual support.

Additionally, teacher mediation creates a supportive and low-anxiety learning environment, which is crucial for encouraging participation among young learners. The shared reading format, when combined with guided interaction, reduces pupils' fear of making mistakes and increases their willingness to speak and engage. This emotional support is crucial for literacy development because confidence and motivation influence their ability to participate in learning activities. Big Books allow the teacher to support lower-level pupils through visual elements while simultaneously challenging more advanced learners through textual analysis and higher-order questioning.

The study used teacher interviews and classroom observations to answer this research topic. Observations document the teacher's real-time application of mediation tools, including interaction patterns, scaffolding techniques, and questioning strategies. Interviews with teachers shed light on their teaching goals, decision-making procedures, and perceived difficulties. Important mediation patterns, including dialogic engagement, scaffolding, and adaptive instruction, are found and explained using thematic analysis. Overall, this study emphasizes how the teacher's role as a learning mediator strongly influences literacy development during Big Book activities, rather than just the instructional content. To turn Big Books into useful resources for literacy development in EFL classrooms, teachers must serve as facilitators, guides, and co-constructors of knowledge.

The study used semi-structured interviews with the teacher and pupils to answer this research topic. While teacher interviews focus on teaching methods, perceived advantages, and difficulties, pupil interviews aim to capture their emotions, preferences, and learning experiences in an age-appropriate way. To find recurrent patterns in perceptions, such as involvement, comprehension support, confidence, and practical limits, the data are subjected to thematic analysis. Overall, this study's question shows that pupils' and teachers' opinions on Big Book use are generally favorable and reinforce one another. These results imply that Big Books are a promising strategy for improving literacy instruction in EFL settings, as they are both pedagogically effective and well-received by classroom participants.

The third finding is based on a thematic analysis, namely, teachers' and pupils' voices on the use of the big book. Four main themes emerge from the analysis that explain how the use of Big Books helps Indonesian young learners develop their literacy: (a) increased pupils' engagement; (b) improved reading comprehension through multimodal support; (c) the crucial role of teacher mediation; and (d) the impact of culturally responsive content.

Increased Young Learners' Involvement with Big Book Activities

The results show that using the Big Book significantly increases pupils' participation in literacy activities. When Big Books were utilized instead of traditional textbooks, pupils were more focused, engaged, and excited, according to observational data. They were drawn in and inspired to participate by the text's huge size and vibrant graphics. Pupils readily offered to read aloud, pointed to pictures, and frequently answered the teacher's questions. This engagement was evident in one observed interaction:

> *I am familiar with this tale, Miss! The tiger is furious! (Pupil 1).*

Many students had very positive things to say about Big Book activities. They characterized the educational process as engaging, enjoyable, and distinct from ordinary classes.

> *I like the big book because the pictures are big and colorful. (Pupil 2).*
>
> *It's enjoyable to read together. I'd like to read once again.* (*Pupil 3*).

These answers show that Big Books foster an engaging classroom where kids are eager to contribute. The materials' aesthetic appeal and interactive features seem to lower anxiety and boost readiness. This implies that Big Books foster a more engaging and dynamic learning environment, which is crucial for younger students. According to interview data, they considered Big Book sessions "fun" and "easy to understand," further supporting their increased enthusiasm for reading activities.

Improved Reading Comprehension through Multimodal Support

The second major conclusion emphasizes how Big Books use multimodal components to promote reading comprehension. Pupils were better able to comprehend the story because of the combination of text and visual representations, especially when it came to a foreign language. They were able to deduce word meanings from illustrations during observations. For instance, students frequently used visuals to determine the meaning of new words before consulting the teacher. This illustrates how important visual scaffolding is for understanding. In the interview, the teacher also attested to this:

> "*They learn more quickly when they see the pictures. They don't always need to be translated. Document analysis of their worksheets revealed that most students correctly answered comprehension questions, particularly those that required identifying primary ideas and sequencing events. This implies that Big Books support both basic comprehension and early interpretive skills.*

The Role of Teacher Mediation in the Development of Literacy. Another important finding is that teacher mediation is essential to maximizing the effectiveness of Big Books. The teacher employed a number of strategies, including scaffolding, repetition, questioning, and prompting, to foster understanding. For instance, she frequently used guiding questions such as these: •

> *"What do you anticipate happening next?"*
>
> *"What makes the character depressed?"*

These questions prompted them to think critically and engage more thoroughly with the material. By clarifying challenging terms, demonstrating pronunciation, and promoting peer interaction, the teacher also offered scaffolding. Observation data reveal that pupils' confidence in their responses increased over time, suggesting that teacher support contributed to both confidence and comprehension. This result implies that the usefulness of Big Books depends on how teachers mediate the learning process; they are not enough on their own.

The Impact of Culturally Appropriate Content on Education.

The results also show that pupils' comprehension and engagement are improved by culturally relevant Big Book content. They found it easier to understand stories with recognizable situations, such as local animals or traditional settings. When the narrative connected to their daily experiences, the pupils' interest increased. For instance, when a story featured a local folktale theme, they were able to connect new information to what they already knew, which improved their comprehension. The teacher observed: "*They participate more and comprehend better when the story is relevant to their lives."* This research emphasizes the importance of cultural relevance in literacy instruction, as it fosters meaningful learning and increases students' engagement with the text. Overall, the findings show that using Big Books has a good impact on young students' reading development through:

- √ raising participation and engagement,
- √ enhancing understanding by integrating text and images, improving learning via teacher-mediated communication, and
- √ improving comprehension with culturally appropriate material.

These interrelated elements imply that the implementation of instructional materials in engaging and relevant learning contexts is just as important to literacy development as the resources themselves.

Assistance with Comprehension

Pupils often said that the illustrations made the story easier for them to understand, particularly when they came across new vocabulary. "*I look at the picture if I don't know the word." "I can understand because the picture tells the story."* This highlights the importance of multimodal input in promoting comprehension by suggesting that learners use visual cues to make meaning. Instead of relying just on teacher explanations, they actively created meaning via interpretation and observation.

Self-assurance in Participation

Pupils' confidence also rose through Big Book activities. Many pupils said they felt more at ease reading aloud and responding to questions.

> *"We read together, so I don't fear speaking."*
>
> *"I see the picture, so I can respond."*

This suggests that the shared reading approach lowers stress and fosters a welcoming atmosphere where students feel comfortable participating. The steady development of confidence is facilitated by the combination of teacher direction and visual support.

Communication and Cooperation

During Big Book sessions, they emphasized the value of interaction. They took pleasure in answering the teacher's questions and debating the story with their peers.

"We discuss the narrative together."

"My friend clarifies things for me."

These responses show that learning is a group activity rather than a solitary pursuit. Peer engagement encourages participation and aids in conceptual understanding.

Connection to Personal Experience

When Big Book stories featured well-known cultural themes, they could relate the content to their personal experiences. This narrative is identical to my village.

"This animal is familiar to me; I've seen it before." (Pupil 5).

This demonstrates how culturally relevant content enhances pupils' engagement and comprehension by activating prior knowledge. They are more likely to join when they can identify with the narrative.

Teacher's Voices on Using Big Books

The teacher's voice offers crucial insights into how Big Books are applied, viewed, and assessed in classroom practice, supplementing students' viewpoints. A number of important themes—including instructional efficacy, pedagogical tactics, pupils' reactions, obstacles, and professional reflection- emerged from semi-structured interviews and thoughtful remarks.

Perceived Efficiency in Improving Reading

The teacher consistently emphasized that Big Books are useful resources for promoting early literacy development, especially for enhancing vocabulary and comprehension. *"Big Books help them understand the story faster because they can see the pictures and the words clearly*." She saw that pupils were more adept at understanding concepts without heavily depending on translation, suggesting that Big Books promote more organic language learning. This view is consistent with classroom observations, which showed increased participation and comprehension.

Encouraging Dialogic and Interactive Learning

The teacher emphasized that, unlike traditional materials, Big Books allow for more involved instruction. "*When I use Big Books, I can ask more questions and students respond more.*" The class starts to participate more. All pupils could concentrate on the same subject at once thanks to the text's and the images' large format, which facilitated group reading and debate. The teacher also reported using strategies such as:

- √ posing open-ended queries,
- √ promoting forecasts, and asking pupils to explain pictures. A move toward dialogic and student-centered learning is reflected in these methods.

Assistance with Differentiation and Scaffolding

The importance of Big Books in scaffolding learning for a range of skill levels is another significant takeaway from the teacher's perspective.

"While stronger students can read the text, weaker students can still follow by looking at the pictures." This implies that Big Books offer a variety of entry points, enabling the teacher to support students with varying skill levels on the same task. While expanding questions for more advanced pupils, the teacher explained how to help struggling learners using repetition, modeling, and visual cues.

Evidence of Enhanced Student Involvement

During Big Book sessions, the teacher observed discernible shifts in the children's attitudes and behaviors. They are more enthusiastic. Even quiet pupils want to respond. The teacher claims that Big Books made the classroom more lively and encouraged pupils to interact and share their thoughts. This enhanced participation was especially noticeable throughout the debate and narrative stages.

Cultural Relevance's Significance

Additionally, the teacher stressed the importance of utilizing Big Books' culturally relevant information. *"They comprehend the story better and are more engaged if it is relevant to their lives."* She observed that using local surroundings, including well-known animals or everyday activities, made it easier for pupils to relate to the subject matter. This underscores the importance of contextualizing literacy instruction.

Implementation Difficulties

Despite the advantages, the teacher recognized several difficulties when using Big Books: *"Not all topics have Big Books available, and sometimes preparation takes time."* Among the main obstacles were Limited access to appropriate Big Book resources and the time needed to prepare and adjust. To create culturally appropriate information, creativity is required. She added that using Big Books effectively necessitates being adept at controlling pupils' attention and interaction.

Professional Development and Reflection

The teacher considered how Big Books affected their own instructional methods: *"As a teacher, using Big Books increases my creativity and interactivity."* This shows that by promoting more thoughtful and creative instructional approaches, Big Books not only impact pupils' learning but also aid in teacher growth.

Discussion

This study provides a thorough understanding of how Big Book use promotes literacy development among Indonesian young learners by integrating pupils' and teachers' perspectives with established theoretical frameworks. The findings show that literacy development occurs as a socially mediated, multimodal, and experiential process in which engagement, interaction, and cultural relevance all work together to promote meaningful learning. The convergence of pupils' and teachers' viewpoints reinforces the findings and provides a comprehensive understanding of classroom literacy activities. A key finding of this study is the importance of participation in literacy learning. Children characterized Big Book exercises as "fun" and "interesting," with the teacher noting that "even quiet students want to answer." These opposing viewpoints demonstrate how Big Books foster a highly engaging learning environment that encourages participation. From an emergent literacy standpoint, such enjoyment is critical to early literacy development since pleasant emotional experiences with texts promote motivation and sustained reading engagement (Wilkinson & Silliman, 2000; Hargrave, A. C., & Sénéchal, 2000; Neumann, 2020). The correlation between teacher observation and student perception suggests that involvement is not only observable behaviourally but is also strongly experienced by learners, underscoring its significance as a driver of literacy development.

The findings further emphasize the necessity of multimodal meaning-making for comprehension. Pupils acknowledged using visual cues to understand unfamiliar words, as

evidenced by comments such as *"If I don't know the word, I look at the picture."* Similarly, the teacher stated that children "understand faster because they can see the pictures and the words clearly." These voices collectively demonstrate how Big Books serve as multimodal scaffolds, allowing them to use visual and textual information to generate meaning. This is consistent with multimodal literacy theory, which holds that meaning emerges from the interaction of several semiotic modes (Justice & Ezell, 2020; Mol & Bus, 2020; Zipke, 2021).

Such multimodal support is especially important for improving understanding and lowering cognitive load in the EFL context, where verbal input may be difficult. (Sénéchal & Young, 2021; Sun & Yin, 2023; Suryani, 2023; Tuerah, 2021). The importance of interaction and scaffolding in literacy development is another aspect emphasized in the perspectives of both teachers and pupils. As the teacher explained how to utilize questioning techniques to promote involvement, they reported feeling more confident and "not afraid to speak because we read together." These results are consistent with sociocultural theory's tenets, especially the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory, which holds that learning happens through guided interaction (Dayu, D.P.K & Setyaningsih, 2022; Harsiwi, N.E & Yunarni, 2021; Inderawati, R., et al, , 2022; Rofiah, K., et al, , 2021).

Pupils are given the chance to actively participate in meaning-making when teachers employ dialogic reading strategies, such as posing open-ended questions and encouraging predictions. Peer interaction also contributes to the co-construction of knowledge, as evidenced by pupil remarks such as *"My friend helps me understand."* This illustrates how learning literacy is a collective process influenced by social contact rather than an individual one. The inclusion of voices also emphasizes how crucial participation and self-assurance are as results of encouraging teaching methods. The shared reading environment and the teacher's scaffolding are closely related to students' greater willingness to speak and engage.

Big Books accommodate a range of competency levels, as evidenced by the teacher's remark that weaker pupils can follow along with visual aids while stronger pupils interact with the text. This illustrates the adaptable nature of scaffolding, in which training is tailored to pupils' needs and progressively fosters independence. The reciprocal reinforcement between pupils' responses and the teacher's techniques indicates that confidence is not an innate quality but rather is built through contact and support. Additionally, both teacher and student perspectives emphasize the importance of cultural relevance in improving understanding and engagement. Comments from students like *"This story is like my village"* support the teacher's belief that learning is more relevant in familiar surroundings.

Both sociocultural and emergent literacy views, which emphasize the significance of cultural context and prior knowledge in meaning-making, can be used to interpret this conclusion. Deeper comprehension results from learners' improved ability to interpret and internalize information when they can relate to the material. (Mayer, 2021; Suryani, A., 2023; Widiastuti, I., & Cahyono, 2024). In the Indonesian context, incorporating local knowledge into Big Books promotes a sense of identity and belonging, in addition to literacy development. Simultaneously, the instructor's voice raises significant issues regarding real-world challenges and teacher agency. The teacher draws attention to problems such as scarce resources and limited preparation time, while the students focus mostly on their educational experiences.

This viewpoint emphasizes that the successful adoption of Big Books necessitates not just suitable resources but also teacher proficiency, innovation, and institutional support. From a sociocultural standpoint, the teacher's role as a mediator is shaped by both opportunities and limitations, and teaching practices are shaped by contextual circumstances. By recognizing that effective literacy education depends on the interaction of pedagogy, resources, and context, this

understanding deepens the conversation. When teachers' and pupils' perspectives are combined, it becomes clear that the process of developing literacy through Big Books is dynamic and interrelated. Learning outcomes are shaped by a combination of mutually reinforcing factors, including engagement, multimodal support, interaction, scaffolding, and cultural relevance.

Multimodal characteristics, for example, increase engagement, fostering dialogic interaction and improving comprehension. Similarly, by relating new information to learners' experiences, culturally relevant content improves comprehension and engagement. This interconnection emphasizes the necessity of comprehensive methods for literacy training and validates the conceptual framework presented in this study. Crucially, the findings' trustworthiness is strengthened by the congruence of instructor and student perspectives. Pupils directly demonstrate how these activities are perceived and assimilated, while the teacher offers insights into instructional tactics and classroom dynamics. The confluence of these viewpoints demonstrates that Big Book-based instruction is successful both in theory and in practice because it aligns with learner experiences and pedagogical goals. In summary, this comprehensive debate shows that, when used in an interactive, multimodal, and culturally sensitive context, Big Books are effective instruments for promoting literacy development. The synergy of instructional materials, pedagogical techniques, and learner involvement is what makes this approach successful, as demonstrated by the combined voices of teachers and pupils. These results add to the increasing amount of research supporting learner-centered, theoretically grounded, and contextually grounded approaches to early literacy training, especially in EFL contexts.

Conclusion

The study found that Big Books increase pupils’ engagement, improve reading comprehension through visual-textual integration, and promote active participation through dialogic interaction. This study makes a significant contribution by emphasizing the importance of teacher mediation. The findings suggest that Big Books' performance is mostly driven by how teachers scaffold learning through questioning, prompting, and interactive reading practices, rather than by their visual appeal. This underscores the sociocultural view that literacy development is facilitated by supervised interaction and social involvement. Furthermore, the study shows that multimodal features such as images, text, and oral interaction greatly help meaning-making processes, especially in EFL environments where learners rely on visual cues to improve comprehension. Another noteworthy conclusion is that culturally relevant information improves pupils' motivation and knowledge. Big Books that incorporate familiar cultural contexts help pupils connect prior knowledge to new content, making literacy instruction more meaningful and relevant. This is consistent with current perspectives on culturally sustainable pedagogy and emphasizes the significance of contextualizing teaching materials in a variety of educational settings. Overall, this study shows that Big Book-based training is a comprehensive approach to literacy development that incorporates engagement, interaction, multimodality, and cultural relevance. These aspects work together to provide a supportive learning environment that promotes both foundational and higher-order literacy skills among young learners.

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EFL teacher agency in the era of digital transformation: A multiple-case study in Vietnam

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26622

Received: 02/10/2025 Revision: 07/05/2026 Accepted: 11/05/2026 Online: 25/05/2026

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to explore how EFL teachers in Vietnam enacted their agency in the digital transformation era. Drawing on the ecological model of teacher agency, this study employed a qualitative multiple-case design with the participation of three teachers and the data sources of semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.The study shows that the teachers' agency was influenced by their past experiences, current conditions and aspirations for the future. Their early challenges with digital tools, professional identities, and the Covid-19 pandemic hindered their technological adoption while peer support and reflective practices enabled them to develop their digital competence. The teachers adapted their textbooks, utilized digital platforms (e.g., Quizlet, Padlet, Kahoot) and shifted their roles from knowledge transmitters to facilitators in their teaching practices. The adaptations made by the teachers also created more active, collaborative, self-directed and learner-centered practices among the students. These findings illustrate important implications for teacher agency in the era of digital transformation, highlighting the active roles of teachers in adopting technologies to improve students' learning outcomes.

Keywords: teacher agency, digital transformation, ecological model, EFL teachers

Introduction

In recent years, the rapid development of digital technology has drastically reshaped the practices of teaching, learning, and institutional management (Alenezi, 2021). Teachers, therefore, have to quickly adapt their pedagogical roles, improve their pedagogy, and adopt innovative technological approaches to enhance learning outcomes (Major et al., 2020).

In the digital transformation era, EFL teachers are expected to integrate digital platforms into their lessons and maintain students' level of engagement in their learning while adhering to departmental curricula and institutional policies (Biesta et al., 2015; Luu, 2023). This educational shift provides interesting insights into the concept of teacher agency in digital technology integration (Biesta et al., 2015). Edwards (2015) similarly asserts that the digital era has redefined teachers' roles in education, resulting in significant innovations in their

CITATION | Ho, T. N. U. (2026). EFL teacher agency in the era of digital transformation: A multiple-case study in Vietnam. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *6*(2), 19-29. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26622

teaching practices.

To conceptualize how EFL teachers at Ton Duc Thang University enacted their teacher agency in digital technology integration, the researcher decided to conduct this study.

Literature Review

Definition of teacher agency

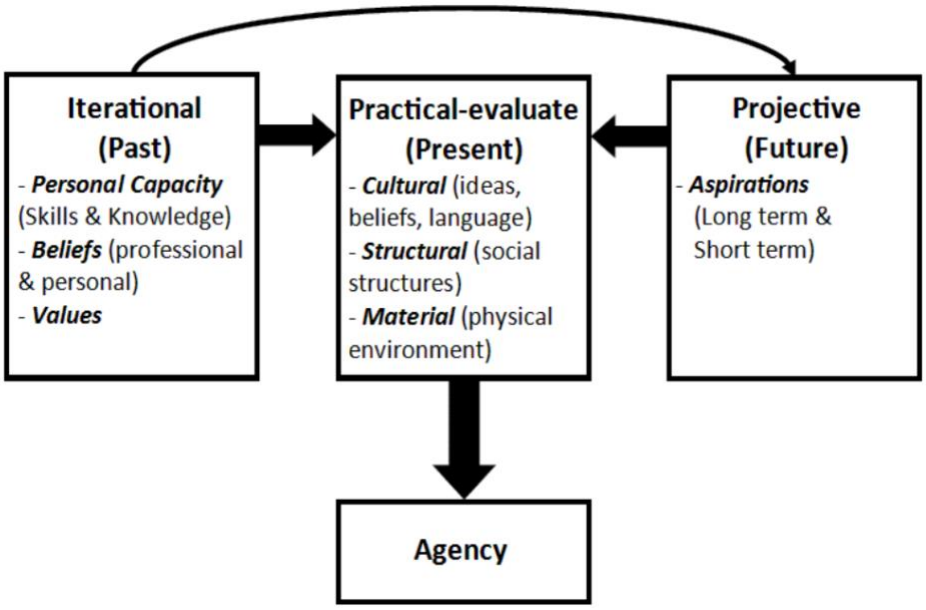
Teacher agency is defined as a teacher's ability to make educational changes to their practice through social interaction (Priestley et al., 2015). According to Lasky (2005) and Jenkins (2019), a teacher's intention, professional identity, and personal circumstances are crucial components of their agency, which are inextricably linked. Emans et al. (2025) identified three factors that influence teacher agency, namely teachers' motivation, attitudes, and structural resources. Jenkins (2019) therefore argues that the notion of teacher agency provides valuable insight into the driving force behind their striving for prompt modifications to teaching strategies.

Models of teacher agency

One of the most common models of teacher agency is the ecological model proposed by Priestley et al. (2015). This model shows how teacher agency is defined in terms of three major constructs: relevant histories (past experiences and identity), future (intentionality), and present (resources, constraints, and possibilities). The model emphasizes that agency is not a personal characteristic but a product of an active process that involves both the person and their environment. In other words, the model illustrates how teachers work with structural conditions to enact their pedagogical goals. This ecological model is briefly summarized below.

Figure 1.

The ecological model of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015)



Aside from the ecological model, other models focus on various aspects of teacher agency. The psychological model introduced by Bandura (1997) highlights the internal characteristics, such as self-belief, motivation, and perceived control, in determining teacher agency. With this model,

it is postulated that teachers with high self-belief are more likely to act and persevere in the face of challenges. The sociocultural model, on the other hand, promotes the action of professional collaboration, discourses, and institutional histories, policies, and norms to understand the agency of teachers in their professional endeavors (Lasky, 2005; Priestley et al., 2015). In more recent times, the structural-interactionist model has been added, elaborating on how agency is negotiated within power relations and as part of policy. There are both structural constraints and enabling perspectives on agency within institutional structures and in the learning paths taken by teachers. This model draws attention to features of professional autonomy and voice in curriculum reform (Poulton, 2020).

This study adopted the ecological model of teacher agency (Priestley et al., 2015) as a theoretical framework because it comprehensively captures how teachers enact their agency in the era of digital transformation based on their past experiences, future aspirations, and present conditions, which align with the aim of the study - to understand how teachers adapt and innovate digital technology.

Digital transformation

Digital transformation in EFL education has been characterized by a significant pedagogical change from traditional teaching styles to the integration of digital technologies (Zhang, 2023). As Vial (2019) describes, transformation involves revolutionary changes made possible by computing, communication and connectivity that transform instructional designs, students' interaction, and teachers' scaffolding methods. Godwin-Jones (2018) claimed that digital technologies provided greater instructional support and increased engagement to support differentiated instruction in the classroom and increase EFL learners' engagement. Zhang (2023) emphasized that access to technology, attitude, and skills with technology were critical in developing strategies to integrate technology in teachers' instruction, which is closely linked to their digital competencies. Zou and Wang (2024) emphasized that digital transformation in EFL education, in addition to the technology itself, requires a marked change in educator's psychological and pedagogical approaches.

Roles of EFL teachers in the age of digital transformation

In the age of digital transformation, teachers have been evolving from traditional transmitters of knowledge to active facilitators of learning (Luu, 2023). This transition has reformed their instructional practice and professional identity, as noted by Ng et al. (2023) who claim that teachers are now expected to be digitally competent, possessing the ability to use new technology to enhance engagement, relevance, and usefulness for learning. Moreover, Pham and Nguyen (2024) emphasized the vital roles of educators in maximizing the usefulness of ChatGPT in supporting learners' language acquisition and autonomy. Nguyen (2026) further highlighted the shifting roles of teachers in education in the digital age, indicating the teachers' needs for adoption of AI tools to enhance students' self-regulated learning. Essentially, these findings mean teachers are not only mentors but also act as instructional designers and digital pedagogues who can effectively use online platforms and AI technologies in virtual or blended classrooms.

However, teachers also face certain challenges in adopting digital technologies. These challenges include inadequate training, lack of functionality of digital tools, and pressure to prioritize entertainment over educational engagement (Selwyn, 2022). As digital transformation is in progress, teachers adapt to new technologies and also adjust their pedagogical approaches that support digital engagement and active learning.

Research Questions

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

How do EFL teachers in Vietnam enact their agency in the era of digital transformation?

Methodology

Pedagogical Setting and Participants

The research site chosen for the study was a public university located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

The participants were three EFL teachers from different departments at the site. As the study employed a qualitative case study design, the number of participants was reasonable for an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon in a particular context (Yin, 2018). According to Creswell (2013), qualitative case studies require a small number of participants, typically from three to five cases, for detailed analysis.

The participants were selected through purposive sampling to meet the following criteria: they were Vietnamese teachers teaching EFL courses, had experience using AI tools in their teaching, and were willing to participate in the study. These criteria helped ensure that the data collected from participants were relevant and informative for the study. To reach them, emails were sent to the teachers' groups at the university, explaining the purpose of the study. Four recipients responded to the invitation via email, but one later declined to join the study for personal reasons. As a result, three participants across different age ranges (20s to 30s) officially participated in the study.

Design of the Study

This study employed a qualitative design with multiple case studies. A case study design is a thorough investigation of a specific case aimated to providing detailed information about a phenomenon in an actual environment (Yin, 2018). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), this research design helps researchers gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences and practices in reality. For this reason, this design was well-suited for the study, as its aim was to explore how teachers enact their agency in the context of digital transformation at the research site.

Data Collection and Analysis

Two main research tools were used in the study, namely semi-structured interviews and classroom observations.

First, semi-structured interviews were used, as this tool is considered one of the most effective instruments for gathering comprehensive information about participants' experiences and viewpoints (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). In this study, interviews were conducted with the three teacher participants to explore their past experiences, current teaching practices, and future intentions regarding the adoption of digital technologies. The interview questions were formed based on three major constructs of the ecological model of teacher agency developed by Priestley et al. (2015), as discussed in the Literature review. The interviews included eight open-ended questions to investigate teachers' teaching practices and how they demonstrated agency. Each interview session lasted 25-35 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese to allow participants to express their ideas more clearly and comfortably.

For data analysis, the researcher applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic

analysis. The six phases include (1) getting familiarized with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining themes, and (6) writing up the report. In detail, the researcher began by reading the interview transcripts multiple times to understand the participants' responses. The researcher then systematically developed the initial codes for the research question. Next, the researcher analyzed the codes and created groups that contained possible themes. The following phase involved reviewing themes that required refinement to gain accurate data representation. Then the researcher established theme definitions, or main ideas, from the interview content. The researchers finally presented the results in a theme-based organization, using relevant interview excerpts as supporting evidence.

Second, classroom observations were conducted to provide a clear picture of how teachers exercised their agency in practice. Observations are used to obtain first-hand evidence of how participants behave in their natural environments, providing essential contextual details that support other data sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Yin (2018), the use of multiple observations allows researchers to establish the credibility of qualitative findings because this instrument enables them to detect patterns in the participants' real practices. For this reason, in this study, the researchers conducted classroom observations to examine the teachers' instructional methods, which would serve as an additional source of evidence to support the interview findings. Accordingly, the researcher conducted three observation sessions in each teacher's class, each lasting five periods (four hours and ten minutes). During these observations, the researcher recorded field notes on the teachers' teaching methods and how they used AI platforms to organize classroom activities.

To assess trustworthiness, triangulation was used by comparing teachers' interview responses with classroom observations. Moreover, member checking was used to confirm participants' responses after data analysis had finished.

Findings

Iterational dimension: Past histories and experiences

The teachers' responses from the interviews showed that their early experiences, professional values, and personal pedagogical beliefs strongly influenced their agency during the era of digital transformation.

The teachers shared their initial hesitation in using digital tools in their teaching practice for a variety of reasons. T1 reported that he was resistant at first to using digital platforms due to his prior familiarity with traditional teaching, with "*merely chalk and blackboards.*" However, because the department required the use of the LMS and Google Classroom, he had to learn to use the tools and gradually developed proficiency with them. T2, in contrast, admitted a generation gap and explained that her students were all "Gen *Z*" and generally better at using technology than she was, which made her uncomfortable using digital platforms in class. T3, on the other hand, pointed out that his previous experiences with technology as a part of his postgraduate study had eased the transition into his teaching practice*:*

> *"I found using online forums and other digital platforms very useful during my Master's program, so I believed that technology can also really help with learning."* (T3)

The teachers also related their current digital practices to their professional histories and identities. For one teacher, the transition to digital pedagogy was a complete change of his identity as a teacher:

> "*I have had more than 15 years of teaching experiences with textbooks and a blackboard.*

The transition into the digital age completely changed me as a teacher" (T1).

Another teacher mentioned his early struggle with teaching using digital tools, which resulted in his more reasonable decision on choosing the tools in his lessons:

> *"In my first lesson with digital tools, I was so ambitious to use too many apps for different purposes, which confused the students and stressed me out afterwards. After that, I knew that I had to be more selective when choosing the tools for my lesson*" (T3).

Interestingly, this teacher also explained his drive towards the adoption of digital technologies. It was the Covid-19 pandemic, in his opinion, that caused a significant change in his agency:

> "*The COVID-19 pandemic forced me to make use of digital tools in my online classes during lockdown back then. I still keep the habit of using them now for their benefits and convenience"*(T3).

The findings also indicated that the teachers' adoption of digital platforms was to adjust and modify their existing teaching practices. As one participant shared:

> "*In the past, I always started my lessons with a short paper vocabulary quiz. Now I do the same activity on Quizizz"* (T1).

Another teacher similarly described a shift in the use of brainstorming in writing lessons, stating:

> "*In writing lessons, I would have the students work in groups, and I previously gave them large sheets of A3 paper to brainstorm. It is now more convenient with Padlet. The students can post their ideas directly on the platform, where everyone can see them and provide immediate feedback*" (T2).

T3 further provided one striking example of his adaptation of groupwork games. In his sharing, he used to organize games in which students worked in groups and wrote answers on mini boards, competing to be the first group to write the correct answer.

Practical-evaluative dimension: Present conditions

Although all three teachers demonstrated awareness of their departments' policies, they expressed a sense of flexibility in adapting lessons and teaching practices. One teacher justified:

> "*We are required to follow the syllabus, but I do think just following it is not effective, so I often select the core outcomes to teach and add other extra activities"* (T1).

Another participant also concurred with this, stating that: "*I have to teach from the textbook, but I often change the tasks and how they are done" (*T2).

One example given by this teacher was the Reading exercise. She shared that the reading comprehension questions in the books were mostly True/False, but the actual test consists of multiple-choice questions in the Reading section. The solution, according to this teacher, was to redesign the book's questions while keeping the same reading text. The other teacher also admitted to skipping certain textbook tasks, describing them as "*unnecessary*" and "*extra*" (T3). From these findings, it can be seen that the teachers all made appropriate decisions for their teaching practices based on the present conditions.

Observations of the classrooms provided further evidence of this finding. The participant teachers consistently modified the tasks in the department-provided textbooks and handouts, replacing them with various activities. For instance, in one lesson, T2 replaced the book's matching exercises with Quizlet Live activities to promote vocabulary learning and review. She first presented the words to students with picture flashcards, then had the students practice matching them individually, followed by collaborative group work on their devices. Another

example is from T3, who replaced the textbook's unit opener activity with a game-based activity. In this sense, instead of introducing the topic of the unit and letting the students work in small groups to discuss a quotation on the page, the teacher decided to skip this activity in favor of a game-based activity, where students worked collaboratively to guess the hidden words from pictures that introduced the key vocabulary for the lesson topic.

Peer support was also a key factor for teachers' enactment of their agency in present conditions. For example, one teacher noted,

> "*I didn't know about Padlet until a colleague recommended it and showed me how to use it step by step. Once I tried it in class, I realized how helpful it was, and ever since I've had the habit of using it in my writing lessons*" (T2).

Adding to the point, another teacher mentioned the value of informal sharing:

> "*During breaktime, we teachers often gather at the teacher's room, and sometimes we share about useful platforms we often use. Many of the tools I use now started from my colleagues' recommendations*" (T1).

It was also shown that the teachers' selection of digital tools was based on the current learning objectives and their pedagogical intentions. As one participant explained:

> "*When I plan a lesson, I first consider what I want students to achieve. For vocabulary, I often choose Quizlet, and for brainstorming, I prefer Padlet*" (T2).

Another participant similarly stated a preference for game-based applications such as Blooket, Kahoot, and Gimkit when teaching vocabulary. He explained that their interactive design supports repetition and review, which could enhance the students' retention of the words (T3):

> "*I like to use Blooket, Kahoot, and Gimkit for review when teaching vocabulary; the students see and repeat the words many times, so they can learn and better remember them"*.

Strikingly, the popularity of digital technologies substantially modified the roles of teachers and students. As one teacher stated, "*Digital tools have changed me from a lecturer to a facilitator*" (T1).

Another teacher shared the same view, explaining, "*with digital apps, I don't need to explain everything step by step. I just need to monitor and guide my students only when they get stuck*" (T2). The last teacher also added that his talking time had decreased considerably since he integrated digital technologies into his classrooms. He described his role as "*motivate, monitor, and give feedback when students need it*" (T3). In his opinion, the students took on a more active role in their learning compared to traditional classrooms. In fact, he had his students prepare for lessons at home using his materials on the Edpuzzle platform. He created slides, videos, and other media that covered the lesson content, and students were supposed to review the materials before the lesson. He also included quick-check activities so students could review and confirm their understanding before class.

The shifts in roles were further confirmed by classroom observations, which showed that students worked collaboratively in pairs or groups, both through digital platforms and during in-class activities. In certain games and quizzes on platforms such as Kahoot, Gimkit, or Blooket, students had numerous opportunities to work in groups to complete tasks. These activities encouraged collaboration, discussion, and peer support as they negotiated answers and shared strategies to achieve success.

Projective dimension: Future aspirations

The interviews indicated that the teachers' agency was strongly shaped by their intentions, hopes, and future goals. All of the teachers claimed that they have aspirations for creativity and confidence in their use of digital technologies in the future. One teacher stated,

> "*I used to be a little bit nervous when using digital technologies in my teaching, but I am becoming more confident in using digital technologies. I hope to have full confidence in every lesson"* (T1).

Another teacher added the elements of efficiency and creativity in using digital platforms, stating:

> "*Thanks to digital tools, I can now design a lesson plan in less than an hour. In the near future, I would like to be faster and more creative when designing my lessons*" (T2).

The teachers also shared their aspirations for their students' future learning, envisioning technology as a means to foster their independence and the development of lifelong skills.

> "*I hope that digital platforms can shape my students to be independent learners. By engaging with the digital platforms, they will have opportunities to learn and explore independently outside the classroom*" (T3).

Another teacher believed that education in the future might be entirely digital, completely replacing conventional classrooms:

> *"I see the possibility that within the next couple of years we could enter 100% online learning where neither teachers nor students have to be present in the classroom every day.*" (T1)

Last but not least, the teachers expressed a strong desire for ongoing professional development, especially in emerging technology. One teacher said:

> *"I am curious about AI and its potential to support teachers in their teaching practice, so I would like to explore more of it and keep up with its emerging trends to enhance my teaching practice*" (T2).

Another also mentioned the need for teachers to be "*digitally competent"* in the future so that they would not fall behind their students (T1). He noted: "*Technology is advancing so quickly, so I feel like we have to be one step ahead of our students."*

These insights indicate that the teachers highly value digital competence and consider professional development essential for education in the technology-driven world.

Discussion

The findings of this study largely confirm the key concepts of teacher agency presented in previous studies, while also offering new insights into teachers' enactment of agency in the digital transformation of EFL education.

First, in line with the ecological model presented by Priestley et al. (2015), the findings revealed that teachers' agency was shaped by the interplay of their past experiences, present conditions, and future aspirations. The teachers' reluctance and confidence in using digital tools were largely shaped by their biographical trajectories, which are connected to the iterative dimension of agency discussed in previous research (Jenkins, 2019). However, this study also highlights how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the transition, an underexplored topic in earlier literature.

Secondly, consistent with Lasky's (2005) sociocultural framework and the practical–evaluative dimension of agency by Priestley et al. (2015), it was found that the teachers made situated decisions under cultural and structural constraints. The participants reorganized the mandated syllabus and materials to better suit their pedagogical intentions, consistent with previous findings that teacher agency is driven by institutional structures and policies (Priestley et al., 2015; Poulton, 2020). However, this study also captured new ways in which informal peer support, such as sharing tools during breaktime, prompted teachers to take agency. This is an interesting finding because it extends previous studies that highlighted only professional collaboration.

Thirdly, this study's findings on the projective dimension align with prior assertions that the digital age has significantly influenced teachers' enactment of agency in their teaching practices (Biesta et al., 2015; Edwards, 2015). Similar to the findings of Ng et al. (2023), the teachers in this current study identified their roles in fostering students' independence through technology in their practice. Some teachers even envisioned completely online classrooms in the future, moving beyond blended learning. This extends the research of Zou and Wang (2024), which focused on teachers' psychological and pedagogical preparation for the digital transformation. In addition, the teachers' interest in exploring AI features as part of their teacher identity in this study offers a new insight into a form of agency that was not widely discussed in prior research.

Last but not least, the results confirmed previous research showing that teachers are becoming facilitators rather than knowledge providers in the digital age (Ng et al., 2023). The findings of this study were consistent with this claim, indicating that teachers now focus on guiding, monitoring, and providing feedback rather than simply lecturing. The students also become more engaged and independent learners, which supports previous research on learner autonomy and engagement (Godwin-Jones, 2018; Zou & Wang, 2024). However, the study also adds new insights: the teachers related this role to their developing professional identity, while the students demonstrated teamwork and pre-class preparation of lessons using digital tools.

Conclusion

The aim of the study was to investigate how EFL teachers at Ton Duc Thang University enact their agency during the era of digital transformation. Grounded in Priestley et al.'s (2015) ecological model of teacher agency, the findings showed that teacher agency is constructed through the interplay of teachers' past experiences, current conditions, and future aspirations.

In particular, early experiences, professional identities, and even the Covid-19 pandemic led teachers to adopt digital tools. They also attempted to adapt the textbook to support their digital teaching practices, selected suitable digital platforms such as Quizlet or Padlet to support their learning objectives, and built confidence and competence in digital literacy through informal peer support. The teachers anticipated becoming more confident, efficient, and creative in using digital tools in the future, with some envisioning full online classrooms or improvements in their teaching with the emergence of new AI features. These changes also reshaped teachers' roles in the classroom: teachers became more active facilitators and guides in their teaching. In other words, the digital transformation of education is changing teaching practices in EFL contexts.

However, this study does have three main limitations. First, the small sample of three teachers from a single setting limits the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts or universities. Second, although classroom observations were conducted, they were limited in number and scope and thus may not be representative of the whole range of teachers' digital

teaching practices. Third, the study focused mainly on teachers' views, without insights from students, which made the findings less comprehensive.

Given these limitations, three recommendations are offered for future studies. First, larger-scale studies should be conducted across institutions and contexts to validate and extend the findings. Second, mixed-methods studies should use more instruments to ensure the reliability of the findings. Moreover, it is recommended that students' perspectives be included to yield more comprehensive findings of the topic.

Acknowledgments

The authors gratefully appreciate the teacher participants and the students of Ton Duc Thang University (TDTU) for their support and contributions to this research.

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Biodata

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YouGlish as a Tool for Enhancing English Pronunciation: Students' Perceptions at a University in Hanoi

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26623

Received: 01/07/2025 Revision: 09/04/2026 Accepted: 20/04/2026 Online: 24/05/2026

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the university students' perceptions of using YouGlish, an innovative ICT tool, to enhance their English pronunciation. Using a mixed-methods approach, the current research explores students' overall perceptions of the tool, including its benefits and challenges. Data were collected within a group of 150 first-year students through a structured survey, supplemented by in-depth interviews with randomly selected respondents. The results highlight YouGlish's potential to enhance learners' pronunciation accuracy, raise their awareness of diverse English accents, and support autonomous learning. However, challenges related to technical issues, such as Internet connectivity and inconsistent video quality, as well as diverse accents, were also reported. Despite these limitations, the study concludes that YouGlish is a valuable resource for fostering engagement and motivation, offering learners an interactive, context-rich, and practical approach to mastering English pronunciation.

Keywords: ICT tools, learning pronunciation, authentic language use, university students, perception.

Introduction

It is undeniable that pronunciation is a foundational skill in spoken language, essential for effective communication (Levis & McCrocklin, 2018). Due to developments in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), there has been an increasing interest in integrating technology into classrooms to support effective learning, including the use of technological media in L2 pronunciation teaching and learning (Rahmati et al., 2021). In the process of teaching and learning pronunciation, software and websites are commonly used, and YouGlish stands out as a valuable tool for improving English pronunciation. This tool facilitates pronunciation learning by showing students how English words are pronounced through YouTube videos from native speakers. Its accessibility and diverse pronunciation models support individual learning preferences, making it a practical and effective tool for enhancing students' pronunciation. To successfully adopt YouGlish in learning and teaching, it is crucial to consider students' perceptions, as they are the ones who use it directly in their learning. This led to the present study, which aims to investigate students' perceptions of the integration of YouGlish in enhancing English pronunciation at a university.

CITATION | Nguyen, T. M. H., & Nguyen, M. N. (2026). YouGlish as a Tool for Enhancing English Pronunciation: Students' Perceptions at a University in Hanoi. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *6*(2), 30-41. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26623

Literature Review

Pronunciation

Samad and Adnan (2017) define pronunciation as the process of learning how to articulate words clearly. Similarly, Szpyra-Kozłowska (2014) advocates the essential role of pronunciation in language learning, emphasizing that it can help people express their thoughts and ideas. Without proper pronunciation, misunderstandings in communication may happen. Moreover, many people are nervous and hesitant to speak because of poor pronunciation. Therefore, mastering pronunciation skills enables people to speak clearly and increases confidence. Many students reported that mastering pronunciation is one of the most challenging tasks (Samad& Adnan, 2017). In fact, students cannot fully express their ideas in English. Therefore, they feel nervous because they can easily make mistakes. Limitations in how to pronounce words correctly negatively affect the process of mastering a language. Wrembel (2002) points out that instruction on pronunciation is necessary because it can help students improve their pronunciation skills. Vo (2022) also mentions that regular pronunciation practice can help students produce English words correctly. Additionally, Rao (2014) emphasizes the importance of technology in enhancing pronunciation. To teach pronunciation effectively, Goodwin (2012) suggests that teachers should set achievable goals, make instruction clear, and use a variety of techniques and technologies.

YouGlish and L2 Pronunciation Learning

In reality, many websites help students improve their pronunciation, including YouGlish. It is a YouTube-based website where students can hear authentic speech through videos, creating effective and engaging learning experiences (Saed et al., 2021). Moreover, this website also provides different English accents with exact pronunciation, stress, and word use (Fu & Yang, 2019; Sukmawati et al., 2024). Additionally, as noted by Mahmood (2024b), it has several nearby words that can aid learners in suitable contexts and reinforce the ability to use the appropriate word with proper pronunciation. While learning with YouGlish, students can not only be exposed to language in authentic contexts but also control the speed of the videos' pronunciation to effectively support their understanding of all aspects of pronunciation. This platform can enhance students' engagement and motivation rather than passively consuming content. Exposure to authentic language allows learners to recognize natural speech patterns, different accents, intonation features, and colloquial expressions, ultimately facilitating more effective oral communication (Ly et al., 2024).

Several studies have explored the effects of YouGlish on English pronunciation processing. Fu and Yang (2019) show that this tool contributes to improving verbal communication skills, particularly in pronunciation, intonation, and lexical choice. Besides, according to Syafiq et al. (2021), the use of YouGlish also strengthens other aspects such as grammatical structures, vocabulary, fluency, and content proficiency. A study by Quispe-Vargas et al. (2024) found that YouGlish can help students improve their pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and communicative interaction. A significant improvement in those aspects is found with an average increase of 45.26 points between pre-test and post-test scores. It can be concluded that YouGlish has a positive impact on students' learning of English pronunciation. Moreover, YouGlish is considered an effective method for improving learners' pronunciation competence. Previous studies have generally reported positive impacts of video-based tools on pronunciation learning, particularly in terms of exposure to authentic speech and learner engagement. However, some studies report inconsistent findings on the effectiveness of video-based tools such as YouGlish. While many learners benefit from authentic input, others may struggle with

fast speech, the variability of authentic accents, differences in learners' ability to process natural speech, or limited contextual understanding. In addition, there is an ongoing debate about the extent to which exposure to authentic video input alone can improve pronunciation, as some researchers argue that without guided feedback, learners may not make meaningful progress. These mixed observations suggest the need to further explore learners' perceptions of such tools in specific educational contexts, particularly among EFL learners in Vietnam. Moreover, the existing literature primarily examines the general use of YouGlish but fails to examine it in the tertiary education context in Vietnam. To bridge this gap, this study aims to gain insights into tertiary students' perceptions of integrating YouGlish to enhance English pronunciation at universities.

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose of the study, the research aims to answer the following research question:

What are students' perceptions of using YouGlish in enhancing their English pronunciation?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study involves 150 freshmen aged 18-20 from a public university in Hanoi during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. Each class consists of about 25 students who are at the pre-intermediate level of English proficiency. At the time the study was carried out, first-year students were enrolling in language practice courses. In each course, one session per week consists of two lessons totaling 100 minutes.

To help students develop pronunciation awareness, the instructor introduced YouGlish. This free online pronunciation resource allows learners to search for words and hear authentic pronunciations in real video contexts. Students used YouGlish both during class sessions under the teacher's guidance and as self-practice at home. In class, YouGlish was employed for pronunciation modeling, sound discrimination tasks, and word stress identification. Outside class, students were assigned weekly pronunciation homework using YouGlish to practice self-directed listening and imitation. Each week, one session of two 50-minute lessons was held.

All participants voluntarily took part in the research and were informed of its purpose. In addition, the authors obtained informed consent from participants before they completed the survey and participated in the interviews. The participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and would be used only for research purposes. All participants' personal information was removed from the data.

Design of the Study

The study adopted a mixed-method approach to address the research questions. As cited by Salmons (2016), this strategy is commonly employed to explore perceptions because it offers rich, detailed data about participants, facilitating a deeper understanding (Dörnyei, 2007). Questionnaires and interviews were chosen as data-collection tools. Given that the questionnaire is a useful instrument for collecting factual information and gathering respondents' perceptions and preferences (Cohen et al., 2011), it was used to evaluate the key research focus. Additionally, the study involved interviews. It is regarded as a useful data-collection tool in gathering more data (Cohen et al., 2011).

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research, questionnaires and interviews were piloted to identify any issues (Dörnyei, 2007). Firstly, an English teacher from the university was

invited to help with the checking of questionnaires and interview questions. Then, a group of 10 randomly selected students participated in the piloting phase to identify potentially unclear or confusing words or phrases. After receiving constructive feedback from both colleagues and students, the authors refined and finalized interview questions and questionnaires.

Data collection & analysis

To explore students' perceptions of using YouGlish for pronunciation improvement, the questionnaires adapted from Mahmood (2024a) were used. The five-point Likert scale questionnaire, consisting of two sections, was employed. The first part includes questions about participants' personal backgrounds, while the second section focuses on students' perceptions and preferences towards the use of YouGlish. Data were collected at the end of a 10-week longitudinal course, during which participating students were invited to complete the questionnaire anonymously. Additionally, the use of semi-structured interviews helps further explore students' perceptions of using YouGlish to improve their pronunciation. The data were also gathered through 10-minute semi-structured interviews with 10 randomly selected students. The participants were randomly selected to ensure a diverse representation of students with different levels of engagement and learning experiences with YouGlish, thereby enhancing the credibility of the qualitative findings. All the interviews were audio-recorded, and the participating students were pseudonymized. Evidence from the interviews was carefully transcribed, coded, and categorized into thematic groups. The qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, which involves familiarization with the data, initial coding, theme identification, theme review, theme naming, and report production. At the same time, the questionnaires' findings were compared with the interviews' responses to better understand how students perceive the use of YouGlish in enhancing their pronunciation.

Results/Findings

Overall perception

Figure 1.

Frequency of YouGlish Usage

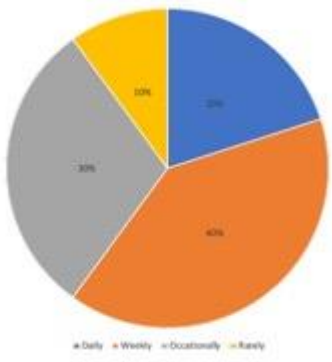
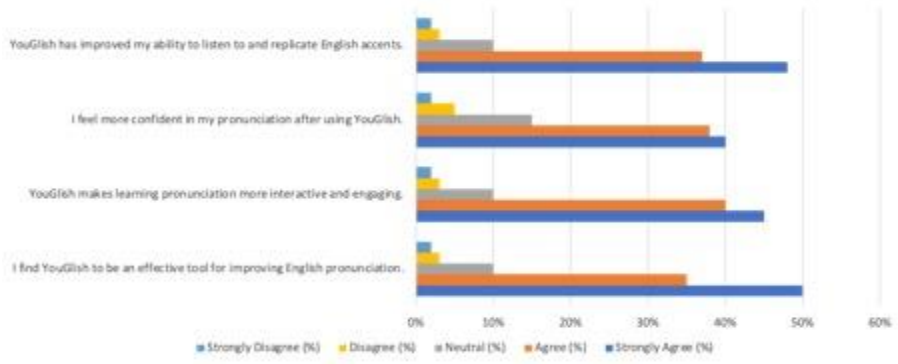


Figure 1 shows how often students used YouGlish for pronunciation practice. 40% of the students reported using YouGlish weekly, indicating it is a regularly used tool for their English pronunciation practice. Furthermore, a substantial portion of respondents (30%) used the platform occasionally, while 20% reported daily use. This data suggests that students exhibit a high level of steady interaction with YouGlish. The 10% of students who reported infrequent

use of YouGlish might be limited by internet connectivity issues or personal preferences for other learning materials.

Figure 2.

Learners' overall perception of using YouGlish



The majority of students expressed positive views about YouGlish, as shown in Figure 2. The survey results show that YouGlish effectively helps students improve their English pronunciation, since 85% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

The data show that students highly value the platform as an essential tool for meeting their basic language-learning needs. YouGlish's educational approach creates a motivating learning environment that sustains student interest in language practice.

The data also indicates that 78% of students gained greater confidence in their pronunciation abilities through YouGlish. One participant mentioned that YouGlish improved their confidence in both pronunciation and accent.

> *[S12] YouGlish helped me realize that my sounds are different from those of native speakers, and it allowed me to practice and repeat them more. Now, I feel confident in my pronunciation and accent.*

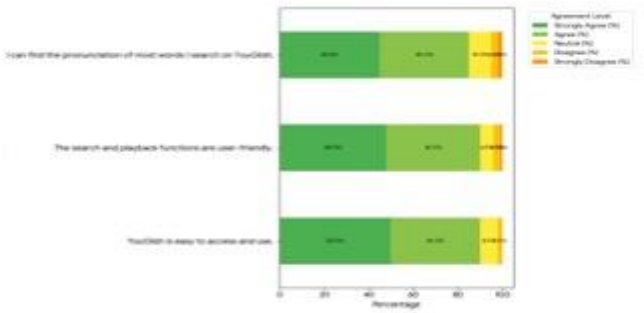
Finally, the data indicates YouGlish's effectiveness in developing specific auditory and productive skills. A total of 85% of students believed that the platform enhanced their ability to listen to and replicate English accents. This result is particularly important as it illustrates YouGlish's capacity to expose learners to diverse spoken English contexts, thereby improving their understanding and production of authentic accents.

Benefits of YouGlish

Usability

Figure 3.

Students' attitudes towards usability



The result in Figure 3 demonstrates a very positive perception of YouGlish's usability. As shown in Figure 3, a significant majority agreed or strongly agreed that YouGlish is easy to access and use. This high level of agreement indicates that the platform's design and accessibility meet user expectations, facilitating a smooth entry into its features.

Furthermore, the core functionalities of YouGlish were also highly rated. An identical 90% of students (48% Strongly Agree + 42% Agree) found the search and playback functions to be user-friendly. This result was supported by the respondents' interview responses. These answers were written by the code. S2 means a comment from student number 2.

> *[S2] I really like YouGlish because I really need an application that supports and makes it easy for my learning process.*

Regarding content availability, 85% of students reported being able to find the pronunciation of most words they searched for on YouGlish. This suggests that the platform largely meets users' needs for comprehensive pronunciation examples. Similar feedback was also gathered during the interviews.

> *[S7] I rarely encounter a word that YouGlish can't provide pronunciation examples for.*

Helpfulness

Figure 4.

Students' attitudes towards helpfulness

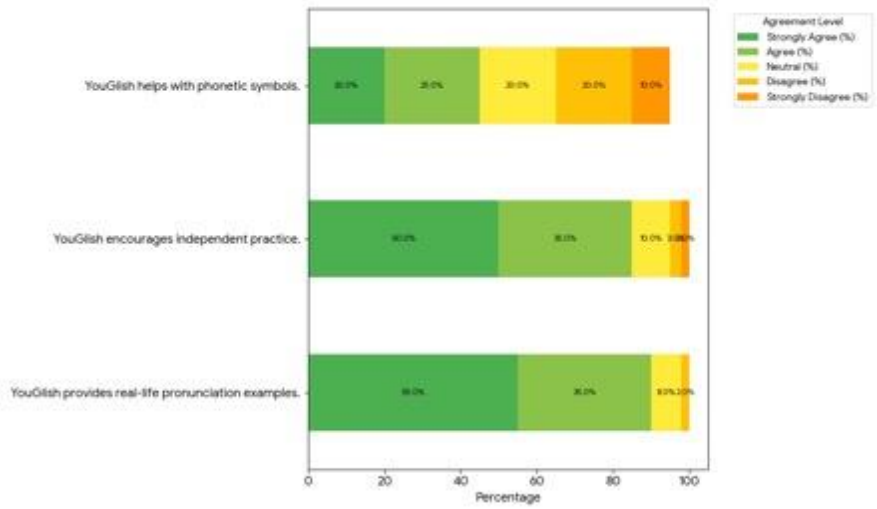


Figure 4 shows the effects YouGlish has on the learning process. The results indicate that students enhance their ability to hear different accents using this tool and simultaneously develop their skills in understanding spoken language in authentic situations. The tool helps students understand word pronunciation through real-life examples, with 55% strongly agreeing and 35% agreeing. One participant stated:

> *[S11] YouGlish provides excellent training in listening to different accents, which has improved my ability to understand various speakers.*

The tool served as a powerful motivator for independent English learning, as 85% of participants (50% Strongly Agree + 35% Agree) reported feeling motivated to practice English independently. The interviewees provided important information that supported the positive effects of YouGlish.

[S11] The visual representation of native speaker pronunciation in video clips makes new words easier to understand for me when I learn them.

[S3] Since starting YouGlish, I have increased my independent practice of pronunciation.

The results showed that YouGlish had a different effect on students' ability to read phonetic symbols.

While YouGlish provides phonetic transcriptions in both Modern IPA and Traditional IPA, only 25% of students agreed that YouGlish helps them read phonetic symbols. A notable 30% (20% Disagree + 10% Strongly Disagree) disagreed, and 20% remained neutral.

[S10] I tried to use the phonetic symbols feature a couple of times, but it was just too complex.

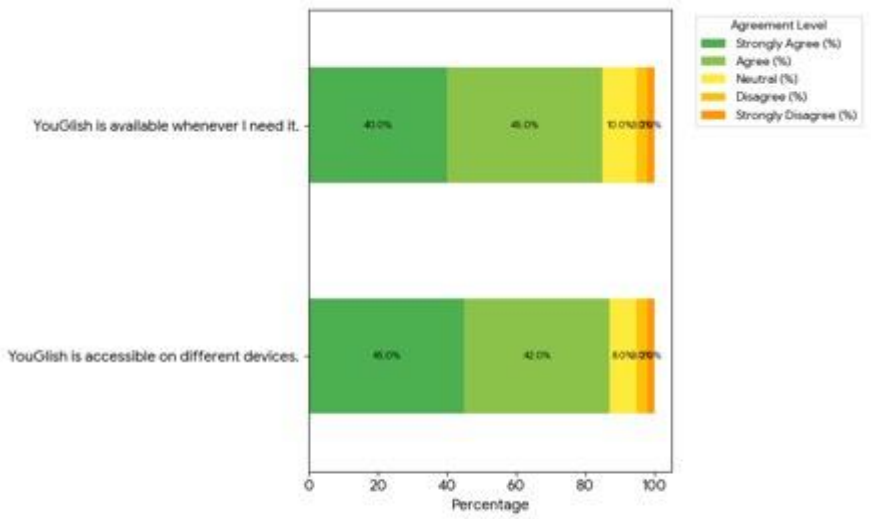
This result suggests that learners were less engaged with this specific feature or found less value in it. Students may struggle with phonetic symbols and find them difficult to grasp or less appealing than YouGlish's more interactive features.

Overall, the data confirm that students see YouGlish as an effective resource for enhancing their pronunciation. This result suggests students encounter difficulties with phonetic symbols which they find less effective than the interactive features of YouGlish.

Accessibility

Figure 5.

Students' attitudes towards accessibility



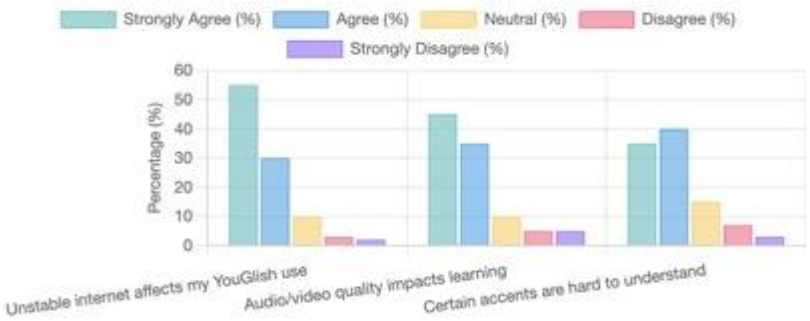
As presented in Figure 5, accessibility emerged as a major advantage of YouGlish. YouGlish is accessible across all devices, according to 87% of students who use smartphones and computers, and tablets. The platform supports different devices that effectively meet the diverse technological environments of modern learners. Furthermore, the survey reveals that 85% of participants found YouGlish easily accessible whenever they needed to use it. The platform demonstrates high accessibility because students can easily fit pronunciation practice into their daily schedules at any time and from any location.

[S5] The best thing is that it's always there when I need it. I don't have to worry about when or where I can access it.

Challenges in using YouGlish

Figure 6.

Challenges in using YouGlish encountered by students



The most common issue that users encountered stemmed from their internet connectivity problems. Unstable Internet connections created a major obstacle for 85% of users. This concern was further emphasized during interviews.

> *[S1] It is about the signal. To use YouGlish, you need an internet connection. For example, if the signal is weak, it buffers a lot.*
>
> *[S3] For now, the main issue is the signal because YouGlish cannot be used offline.*

Although the survey implied YouGlish was usable anywhere and anytime, interviews unveiled problems that made its use less effective.

> *[S1] I cannot access YouGlish if the internet connection is unstable.*

Furthermore, 80% of respondents experienced learning disruptions due to inconsistent audio/video quality, suggesting that the technical fidelity of otherwise valuable real-life examples can be an impediment.

> *[S6] Sometimes the video clips themselves are low resolution, and the sound isn't clear.*

The survey results showed that 75% of participants struggled to understand certain accents, especially those from unfamiliar regions, suggesting a need for improved listening skills or additional support for accent diversity on the platform.

> *[S9] I love that YouGlish has different accents, but some of them are really hard for me to understand. I think I need help from teachers to use it better.*

Therefore, improving internet stability, media quality, and accent support could substantially enhance YouGlish's learning experience and accessibility.

Discussion

This research was designed to investigate students' perceptions in a Vietnamese tertiary education context regarding the use of YouGlish for learning English pronunciation, addressing a gap in the existing literature. The main outcomes align with previous literature on YouGlish and provide further insights into its role as a digital tool for language learning. Students' frequent use of YouGlish to practice pronunciation was consistent with Saed et al. (2021)'s finding that YouGlish encourages active engagement in learning. Similarly, the overall positive perception among respondents, who found YouGlish helpful for improving English pronunciation, aligns with Fu and Yang's (2019) findings. Furthermore, this study supports

Mahmood's (2024a) conclusion that YouGlish boosts learner confidence when communicating with native speakers. Additionally, studies by Fu and Yang (2019), Sukmawati et al. (2024), and Topal (2023) highlighted the same benefit of YouGlish: improving the ability to listen to and replicate English accents through immersion in real-life contexts. In terms of usability, the 85% rate of locating word pronunciations shared by students in this study further supports YouGlish's viability, as there appears to be ample content available, and it serves its function as a video dictionary or YouGlish dictionary (Saed et al., 2021). The research data further highlight the impact of YouGlish on student learning outcomes. The agreement that YouGlish helps learners understand pronunciation through real-life examples supports its function of allowing learners to hear words in authentic contexts (Saed et al., 2021). The positive perceptions of YouGlish may be attributed to its ability to provide authentic pronunciation models in meaningful contexts. Unlike traditional pronunciation exercises that focus on isolated sounds, YouGlish exposes learners to real-life speech from diverse speakers and in various communicative situations. This contextual exposure may help students better understand how words are pronounced naturally in connected speech.

However, the study results show that phonetic symbols remain challenging for students to understand. This differs from Mahmood (2024b) regarding the enhancement of YouGlish's phonetic transcription. Users fail to recognize the provided features as valuable despite their availability. Students also experienced multiple obstacles despite the broad range of positive perceptions they reported. Internet connectivity issues stood out as the main challenge because they affect all streaming platforms and determine how well a tool functions with continuous online access. Students reported interruptions in learning due to inconsistent audio and video quality. Additionally, some students struggle to understand certain accents due to unfamiliarity with regional speech variations. The research reinforces the findings of Fu and Yang (2019), Sukmawati et al. (2024), and Topal (2023), which indicate that mere exposure to different English accents is insufficient to master them.

Overall, while YouGlish's user-friendly interface supports independent practice, the transition from recognizing isolated sounds to mastering global English accents requires more than simple exposure; it demands a shift from passive usage to active, scaffolded integration. To address identified challenges such as technical disruptions, inconsistent video quality, and the difficulty of navigating regional accents, pedagogical practices in Vietnam must evolve. Rather than treating YouGlish as a mere digital dictionary, instructors should adopt evidence-based strategies to make it a structured training platform. For instance, "Accent Spotting" tasks can help students compare phonological shifts across regional filters, while "Shadowing Techniques" use the platform's speed control (0.5x) to help learners deconstruct the complexities of connected speech. Furthermore, to mitigate technical barriers such as unstable internet, teachers can adopt "flipped classroom" models in which students export transcripts or save favorites during periods of high connectivity for offline study. By integrating these specific learning strategies, educators can help students overcome the inherent obstacles of digital learning, ultimately enhancing YouGlish's capabilities as a vital component of modern language teaching.

Conclusion

This research, which explores university students' perceptions of the effectiveness of YouGlish for learning English pronunciation, indicates positive results. In fact, the participating students perceived YouGlish as an effective tool for improving their pronunciation, which is crucial to better articulation. However, they also noted some drawbacks that impede the use of YouGlish,

namely, technical difficulties with Internet connectivity and unfamiliarity with regional accents. This underscores the integral role of teachers in supporting learners' pronunciation learning. While technology can help students gain exposure to authentic input, explicit feedback and guidance from teachers remain of great importance in facilitating learners' pronunciation learning. Therefore, integrating technological resources with traditional teaching methods is essential for comprehensively supporting EFL learners' pronunciation development.

The study has examined specific cases involving participants from a public university in Hanoi, Vietnam. Thus, it cannot cover all other circumstances of YouGlish usage in higher education. This limitation should be addressed by future research, which could employ broader, more diverse samples and incorporate objective measures to better understand how technology affects EFL pronunciation learning.

Acknowledgement

The authors would like to extend their heartfelt appreciation to all individuals who supported the successful completion of this study. Special thanks are extended to the first-year students who participated enthusiastically and devoted their time to this research. Their cooperation was instrumental in making this study possible.

We are also deeply grateful to the faculty and administrative staff of the Faculty of English Language, School of Languages and Tourism, for their invaluable support and assistance in facilitating access to classes and resources.

Finally, we would like to extend our appreciation to our colleagues and academic mentors for their thoughtful feedback and guidance throughout various stages of this project.

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Tertiary English Lecturers' Perspectives on Technology Integration in Vietnamese Language Classrooms– A Case Study in Vietnam

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26624

Received: 07/07/2025 Revision: 08/05/2026 Accepted: 11/05/2026 Online: 24/05/2026

ABSTRACT

This research examines the incorporation of technology within foreign language teaching in Vietnam, assessing its advantages and existing obstacles. A mixed-methods approach was employed, gathering data from 50 English lecturers at the tertiary level during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. The study used questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with fifteen participants chosen for specific reasons, and a review of relevant academic literature. The findings indicate the advantages of using technology in language teaching. Specifically, instructors reported a decreased workload, while students showed increased engagement and improved learning outcomes. In addition to these benefits, the study shows significant challenges, such as inadequate access to necessary learning resources and limited digital literacy among the participants. This study specifies how workload pressure constrains lecturers' transition from basic to advanced tools in Vietnamese universities.

Keywords: technology, foreign language education, educational technology, Vietnam, tertiary education

Introduction

Digital tools have reshaped how languages are taught and learned across a wide range of educational settings. In foreign language instruction, the change has been particularly visible: where teaching once depended almost entirely on textbooks and teacher-fronted delivery, lecturers can now draw on online corpora, multimedia content, and collaborative platforms to give learners more frequent and varied contact with the target language (Chapelle & Sauro, 2017). Authentic materials and real communicative tasks, once logistically difficult to arrange, have become considerably more accessible in technology-enabled classrooms.

Vietnam offers a valuable national context for analyzing how these broader trends translate into concrete institutional and pedagogical realities. Beginning in the early 2000s, the Vietnamese government has consistently emphasized investments in digital infrastructure and the integration of information and communication technology (ICT) into its broader educational reform initiatives (Nguyen et al., 2025). Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) has

CITATION | Vuong, T. H. Y., & Nguyen, T. H. (2026). Tertiary English Lecturers' Perspectives on Technology Integration in Vietnamese Language Classrooms– A Case Study in Vietnam. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *6*(2), 42-56. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26624

formalized this commitment through successive national policy frameworks, with foreign language education identified as a priority area, and English occupying a particularly prominent position within it. As a fundamental component of the national curriculum, it has grown in importance alongside Vietnam's expanding engagement in regional commerce and international collaborations. Consequently, universities face substantial demands to produce graduates proficient in English. Many institutions have therefore integrated technology as a pragmatic strategy to achieve this objective. Nevertheless, progress has been inconsistent. Le et al. (2023) document several recurring difficulties in Vietnamese English classrooms: unequal access to devices and digital resources, limited ICT skills among teaching staff, weak institutional support, and financial constraints affecting both lecturers and students. Taken together, these conditions reveal a persistent gap between what national policy sets out to achieve and what individual teachers can realistically implement, and it is this gap that motivates the present study.

Literature review

Theoretical Framework of Technology Integration in Education

Two theoretical frameworks inform this study. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), developed by Venkatesh et al. (2003), identify perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, and behavioral intention as the key factors shaping technology adoption in educational settings. Both models have been widely applied in educational technology research, though they have also attracted criticism for focusing primarily on individual user attitudes while giving less attention to the institutional and structural conditions that shape adoption outcomes (Kirkpatrick & Liddicoat, 2019). This investigation further employs Vygotsky's social constructivist perspective, specifically the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). The central tenet posits that optimal learning occurs through collaborative engagement with more expert individuals (Lantolf & Thorne, 2016). In technology-enhanced language instruction, digital resources tend to support learning by creating structured opportunities for meaningful interaction rather than simply providing passive exposure. Read together, these two theoretical strands address complementary questions: the adoption frameworks help account for why teachers and students may or may not use digital tools, while the constructivist perspective addresses how those tools, once in use, can be organized to support language learning.

Global Perspectives on Technology in Foreign Language Teaching

Studies on the use of technology in foreign language teaching show varied results across countries. In many developed countries, interactive whiteboards, mobile applications, and online platforms have been associated with improvements in language learning outcomes (Godwin-Jones, 2019), and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) has extended learner access to materials and real communicative opportunities beyond the classroom. Research from developing nations presents a more circumspect perspective. Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat's (2019) investigation, focusing on Thailand, Malaysia, and the Philippines, identifies three persistent challenges: inadequate infrastructure, insufficient teacher training, and limited financial

resources for sustained technology implementation. The success of strategies used in well-resourced environments doesn't automatically apply to settings with different structures. This is especially true for the Vietnamese university context studied here.

The Vietnamese Context: Educational Technology Landscape

Vietnam's educational technology landscape has undergone considerable transformation since the Doi Moi reforms began reshaping the country in the 1990s. During this period, government spending on digital infrastructure, teacher professional development, and the procurement of technological resources has increased significantly. Moreover, the National Education Development Strategy 2021–2030, as outlined by the Ministry of Education and Training (2020), explicitly identifies technology integration as a crucial strategy for improving both the quality and accessibility of education. These initiatives have yielded tangible infrastructure improvements, particularly at urban universities, though progress has been inconsistent across the system.

Recent research reveals varied progress patterns. Urban areas have successfully adopted technology, whereas rural areas face challenges including poor infrastructure, limited financial resources, and insufficient technical support (Nguyen & Cao, 2023). The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated technology adoption across the Vietnamese education system, as institutions moved rapidly to online and blended learning formats. The period under consideration demonstrated technology’s capacity to facilitate educational continuity amid major disruption; however, it also revealed substantial disparities in digital access, including unequal access to network infrastructure, computers, and internet connectivity (Luu & Pham, 2021). The digital divide, a concern that predated the pandemic, was exacerbated during this time. Consequently, the issues it illuminated continue to shape contemporary discussions regarding equitable and sustainable technology implementation.

Several studies in Vietnam have examined the effects of technology in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning outcomes and student engagement. However, there are not many research on this topic. Pham (2022) found that PowerPoint and Kahoot were beneficial, increasing motivation and participation among secondary school students, who reported that technology made lessons easier to understand. Nguyen (2021) noted that combining learning management systems with social media platforms improved collaboration and self-confidence among university students. However, the ability to apply these findings more broadly is limited by reliance on self-reported data and by the research being conducted in relatively affluent urban areas. Furthermore, Nguyen and Nguyen's (2024) investigation into adult education revealed that EFL learners were predominantly driven by professional aspirations, while concurrently encountering pragmatic challenges, such as time constraints and deficiencies in fundamental language skills. While technology generally fosters engagement when integrated in structured, well-supported ways, contextual elements, encompassing learner attributes and institutional provisions, seem to significantly influence the outcomes. This study aims to fill a gap in understanding how university instructors perceive and respond to these conditions in their teaching.

Technology Integration in Foreign Language Education: Opportunities and Benefits

Technology provides tangible advantages for foreign language instruction. Adaptive platforms and intelligent tutoring systems can tailor content, pacing, and feedback to individual learners. They potentially address the diverse learning preferences and proficiency levels present within a single classroom (Hubbard, 2013). Furthermore, online platforms and multimedia resources provide access to authentic language and cultural materials that are frequently absent from conventional classroom settings. This availability helps develop communication skills and cultural understanding (Kern, 2014). Interactive technologies, such as gamification and multimedia presentations, generally foster active learning by offering immediate feedback and enhancing student motivation (Prensky, 2001). Furthermore, online forums, collaborative platforms, and video conferencing enable students to engage with peers and native speakers from diverse nations. O'Dowd and Lewis (2016) propose that these instruments may contribute to the development of intercultural competence and global awareness, both of which are increasingly prioritized in modern educational contexts.

Challenges and Barriers to Technology Integration

Despite opportunities, integrating technology presents challenges that can hinder its practical effectiveness. A major challenge is inadequate infrastructure, particularly in developing countries. Unreliable internet and a lack of necessary hardware hinder the effective use of technology in education (Warschauer & Matuchniak, 2010). Furthermore, the absence of requisite digital skills among both instructors and students constitutes another obstacle, thereby exacerbating implementation challenges (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Economic constraints compound these difficulties. The costs of hardware, software licensing, maintenance, and technical support are often difficult for institutions with limited budgets to sustain (Cuban, 2001). As technology continues to change, institutions face ongoing financial demands, rather than one-time costs. Moreover, using technology without considering instructional design principles can lead to difficulties in teaching. Bax (2003) claims that technology alone does not ensure enhanced results, as successful integration requires meticulous planning, appropriate strategies, and continuous assessment. To use technology effectively in teaching, educators need to develop skills in instructional design, technology management, and digital teaching methods

Research Questions

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

1. What are the key opportunities and challenges faced by Vietnamese university English lecturers in integrating technology into language teaching?
2. How do digital literacy, institutional support, and infrastructure impact the effectiveness of technology integration in English instruction at the tertiary level in Vietnam?

These research questions are designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of both the practical aspects of technology integration and the broader factors that shape its implementation. The study's conclusions have broader applicability and may offer valuable

insights for other developing nations facing similar challenges in educational technology. The emphasis on foreign language instruction further underscores its relevance for countries seeking to bolster multilingual proficiency through technology-enhanced pedagogical methods. This research contributes empirical data to the existing educational technology literature and may guide subsequent research endeavors, policy formulation, and implementation methodologies. The findings are intended to be of practical use to educators, administrators, and policymakers by providing a grounded analysis that can inform the development of more effective and equitable approaches to technology integration in Vietnamese higher education.

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The data were collected from 50 tertiary-level English lecturers from the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University and the Faculty of English at Hanoi Pedagogical University No 2. Data collection occurred during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year. To ensure fair representation across gender, age, teaching experience, and institutional affiliation, participants were chosen using stratified random sampling. The sample included 32 females (64%) and 18 males (36%), *aged* 25 to 55 years. Participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 25 years. This experience was divided into three career stages: early career (2–8 years, n = 18, 36%), experienced (9–17 years, n = 20, 40%), and expert (18–25 years, n = 12, 24%).

All participants met three inclusion criteria: current employment as a tertiary-level English lecturer, a*t least* 2 years of teaching experience, and use of at least 1 educational technology tool in the preceding academic year. Participants varied considerably in digital confidence, from those familiar only with basic tools to those experienced with more advanced platforms, and this variation was a deliberate feature of the sampling strategy. From the full survey sample, 15 participants were purposively selected for semi-structured interviews. Selection was guided by three criteria: variation in career stage, institutional affiliation (seven from Hanoi Metropolitan University and eight from Hanoi Pedagogical University No. 2), and self-reported digital confidence (low, moderate, or high). This method ensured that the interview data accurately reflected the demographic and experiential diversity of the larger sample.

Design of the Study

This study used a mixed-methods design, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data simultaneously (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). A 45-item questionnaire administered to all 50 participants served as the primary data strand, yielding a broad descriptive picture of technology use patterns, perceived benefits, challenges, and digital literacy levels. Semi-structured interviews with 15 purposively selected participants were embedded within this primary framework and explained and contextualized the quantitative patterns that the survey data alone could not account for or address. This design was appropriate for the study's aims because technology integration in language education involves both measurable attitudes and context-specific practices that numerical data alone cannot capture.

Data collection & analysis

The survey included 45 questions, organized into six main sections: demographic information, current technology use, perceived benefits, obstacles to integration, self-assessment of digital skills, and institutional support. Items were used on a five-point Likert scale. Cronbach's alpha

coefficients, which ranged from 0.82 to 0.91, indicated strong internal consistency across the subscales. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, means, and standard deviations, were used to analyze the quantitative data. Furthermore, inferential statistical methods, specifically chi-square tests and one-way ANOVA, were used to examine observed patterns and assess group differences. From February to April 2025, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the fifteen selected participants. Each interview, which lasted about ten to fifteen minutes, was recorded and then transcribed word-for-word. The questions were open-ended, focusing on participants' encounters with technologies, the support systems provided by their institutions, and the obstacles they perceived in the integration process. A third data strand consisted of document analysis: policy documents from MOET, institutional digital resource inventories, and relevant academic publications were examined to provide contextual background and to corroborate or qualify patterns emerging from the survey and interview data. Documents were selected for relevance to the research questions and analyzed using directed content analysis, organized around the same six thematic areas as the questionnaire. Interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis framework, proceeding from initial familiarization with the data through coding, theme development, review, and final write-up. Coding was conducted inductively, with multiple rounds of review to ensure that themes accurately represented participants' accounts. Triangulation was achieved by systematically comparing findings across all three data sources at the level of individual themes. Where the quantitative and qualitative evidence converged, this was taken as corroborating support. When the results differed, the reasons for these differences were examined, such as the differences between what people said they thought and how they behaved in the classroom. This comparison of information from different sources helped to confirm the overall validity of the findings.

Findings

The results are presented in relation to the two research questions.

Table 1

Demographic Summary of Study Participants

Characteristic	Category
Gender	Female
	Male
Age	25-35 years
	36-45 years
	46-55 years
Teaching Experience	2-8 years (Early career)
	9-17 years (Experienced)
	18-25 years (Expert)
Institution	Hanoi Metropolitan University
	Hanoi Pedagogical University No 2

Table 1 summarizes the demographic profile of the 50 participants, drawn from two Hanoi institutions during the second semester of the 2024–2025 academic year: the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Hanoi Metropolitan University (n = 26, 52%) and the Faculty of English at Hanoi Pedagogical University No. 2 (n = 24, 48%). The sample comprised 32 females (64%) and 18

males (36%), a distribution consistent with the typical gender composition of English-teaching faculty at Vietnamese universities. The participants, aged 25 to 55, were grouped by teaching experience. This experience was divided into three categories: early career (2–8 years, n = 18, 36%), experienced (9–17 years, n = 20, 40%), and expert (18–25 years, n = 12, 24%). All study participants met the inclusion criteria: they were currently employed as university English lecturers, had at least two years of teaching experience, and had used at least one educational technology tool in the previous academic year. The participants showed a wide range of digital skills, from basic to advanced, with some very skilled in using complex platforms. Therefore, the study included the full range of digital skills. As a result, the study's design enabled a more thorough understanding of the diverse experiences related to technology integration within the specific group under study.

Table 2

Current Technology Use in Foreign Language Teaching

Technology Category	Item	Percentage	Number
Basic Technologies	PowerPoint presentations	94%	47
	Online dictionaries & translation tools	86%	43
	Audio & video materials	78%	39
	Learning Management Systems	65%	33
Advanced Technologies	Interactive whiteboards	34%	17
	Mobile language-learning apps	28%	14
	AI tools (ChatGPT, chatbots)	22 %	11
Usage Frequency	Daily use	36%	18
	Several times per week	42%	21
	Less frequently	22%	11

Table 2 summarizes how the 50 participants used technology. A significant majority, specifically 82%, reported regularly using technology in their teaching. Conversely, 18% indicated infrequent or limited technology use, a finding that aligns with the study's selection criterion, which mandated prior experience with educational technology. Regarding fundamental tools, PowerPoint was employed by 94% of the participants, followed by online dictionaries and translation tools (86%), audio and video resources (78%), and learning management systems (65%). Adoption rates for more sophisticated technologies were considerably lower: interactive whiteboards were used by 34% of participants, mobile language-learning applications by 28%, and AI tools, including ChatGPT and language-learning chatbots, by 22%. In terms of frequency, 36% used technology daily, 42% several times

per week, and 22% less often. Interview data help account for this disparity. Participants consistently noted that learning to use new applications demands time that is difficult to find alongside existing teaching commitments. The survey results support this finding, with 82% of participants identifying time constraints as a major obstacle (Table 3). This pattern indicates that the difference in using basic and advanced tools is due to structural workload pressures, rather than a general dislike of technology.

Table 3

Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Technology Integration

Category	Item	Percentage	Number
Benefits	Technology enhances student engagement	88%	44
	Technology improves learning outcomes	84%	42
	Accommodates different learning styles	76%	38
	Provides access to authentic materials	72%	36
Challenges	Time constraints for learning new technologies	82 %	41
	Inadequate technical infrastructure	78%	39
	Limited access to devices/equipment	72%	36
	Insufficient technical support	68%	34
	Digital literacy limitations	64%	32

Questionnaire data showed broad agreement on the benefits of technology integration. Using five-point Likert-scale items (Cronbach's alpha: 0.82–0.91), 88% of participants agreed or strongly agreed that technology fosters student engagement, 84% believed it improves learning outcomes, 76% saw it as accommodating diverse learning styles, and 72% agreed that it provides access to authentic language materials.

Thematic analysis of the interview transcripts revealed three prevalent benefit themes. The most frequently cited advantage was technology's potential to enhance lesson interactivity; specifically, multimedia presentations, gamification features, and online exercises were reported to boost student engagement and motivation, as evidenced by observable changes in classroom conduct. A second theme pertained to personalized instruction, with participants emphasizing technology's capacity to adapt to varying learning speeds, provide tailored feedback, and help identify students who require supplementary assistance. Third, access to authentic materials was consistently cited as a practical gain, with several participants noting

that digital resources expose students to current, real-world language use in ways that textbook materials alone cannot. Conversely, participants acknowledged that the advantages of technology are not inherently guaranteed. Several interviewees reported that using tools without enough teaching support often reduced their effectiveness. Moreover, students showed better results when new technologies were introduced gradually and aligned with clear learning goals. The results indicate that the usefulness of a teaching tool depends significantly on how it is used. In contrast, infrastructure problems were the most common obstacle in both datasets. 78% of respondents cited inadequate technical infrastructure as a significant obstacle, while 72% cited limited access to necessary devices and equipment, and 68% reported insufficient technical support. The agreement between the survey and interview results suggests that physical and systemic limitations, rather than attitudes, are the main obstacles to the widespread use of technology in these settings.

Limited digital literacy presented a further notable challenge. Sixty-four percent of participants indicated a deficiency in the technical proficiencies required for successful technology integration, while 82% reported a consistent struggle to allocate adequate time to acquiring new tools. The data suggests that heavy teaching loads hinder opportunities for professional growth.

Interview responses offered additional insights into these difficulties. Infrastructure deficiencies were specifically identified as a significant impediment. Participants at both institutions reported unreliable internet connections and frequent power outages. These issues made it difficult to plan and deliver technology-based lessons effectively. Financial constraints were also frequently cited, with participants noting that limited institutional budgets restricted access to premium educational software and made equipment maintenance difficult to sustain.

Levels of institutional support varied considerably across participants. Some described strong backing from their administration, while others reported a lack of understanding or engagement from institutional leadership. This variation suggests that the organizational environment plays a meaningful role in shaping what individual lecturers can do with technology in practice.

Table 4

Digital Literacy Self-Assessment Scores

Skill Area	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)
Basic computer operations	4.2	0.8
Email and communication tools	4.0	0.9
Presentation tools (PowerPoint)	3.9	0.9
Learning management systems	3.2	1.0
Interactive tools (Kahoot, Quizizz)	2.8	1.1
Mobile language learning applications	2.6	1.2
Educational software programming	2.1	1.2

Note: Likert scale: 1 = Not confident → 5 = Very confident

Table 4 reveals the self-assessment scores for digital literacy, with participants rating their skills highest in basic computer operations (M = 4.2, SD = 0.8) and lowest in educational software programming or customization (M = 2.1, SD = 1.2).

Table 5

Digital Literacy Confidence and Training Needs (n = 50)

Category	Item	% of Participants	Approx. Number of Lecturers
Confidence Levels	Confident with basic technologies	**76 %**	38
	Confident with advanced educational technologies	**34 %**	17
Professional Development Needs	Interested in training on educational technology	**88 %**	44
	Top-requested: Learning Management Systems (LMS)	**72 %**	36
	Top-requested: Interactive teaching tools	**68 %**	34
	Top-requested: Mobile language learning apps	**64 %**	32

Table 5 indicates robust interest in professional development, with 88% of participants preferring training programs focused on integrating educational technology. In terms of prioritization, the most frequently cited training needs included learning management systems (72%), interactive teaching tools (68%), and mobile applications designed for language acquisition (64%). Furthermore, the participants uniformly highlighted the need for continuous support rather than isolated training events. Interview data revealed widespread concern about the pace of technological change, with many lecturers reporting difficulties adapting to new tools and platforms. One participant noted that new applications and platforms appear so frequently that it becomes difficult to justify the time needed to learn a tool that may soon be superseded. This response implies that, for certain lecturers, the inherent rapidity of change functions as an impediment to their involvement in professional development initiatives. In terms of Institutional Support and Resources, analysis revealed considerable variation across participating institutions and within institutional contexts. The survey results showed that 58% of respondents thought the institution's support was either good or acceptable. In contrast, 42% of the participants found it insufficient or unsatisfactory. A comparison of Hanoi Metropolitan University and Hanoi Pedagogical University No. 2 revealed similar challenges, despite their different organizational cultures. Both institutions, as public universities located within the Hanoi metropolitan area, typically offered superior infrastructure compared to other institutional settings. Even in these relatively well-resourced settings, participants pinpointed areas needing improvement, specifically continuous technical support and thorough training programs.

The interview data indicated that the success of technology integration was significantly influenced by the existing institutional culture and by the administration's support. Lecturers in institutions where senior management prioritized educational technology, as shown by resource allocation, technical support, and clear institutional policies, demonstrated more consistent and effective adoption. Those working in environments with limited administrative engagement described ongoing difficulties, even where personal motivation and technical capability were not in question. This pattern is consistent with Fullan's (2007) argument that sustained institutional change depends on leadership commitment rather than individual initiative alone. Student-related factors also influenced integration outcomes, but the effects were more varied. 84% of participants agreed that students generally respond positively to classroom technology use. Interview data, however, revealed a more complex picture: students from lower-income households frequently lacked reliable access to devices or internet connectivity at home, making technology-dependent tasks and blended learning formats difficult to implement equitably. Within the classroom settings, student attitudes toward digital tools exhibited considerable variability. Certain students demonstrated a strong affinity for technology-driven activities, whereas others favored traditional instructional methods. Participants noted that they felt reluctant initially, but this attitude gradually lessened when new tools were introduced gradually and clearly linked to specific learning goals. Chi-square analyses and one-way ANOVA revealed no statistically significant disparities between the two institutions concerning any student-related parameter.

The barriers identified in this study, such as limited device access, variable digital proficiency, and unequal home internet connectivity, appear consistently across both institutional settings rather than being concentrated in one. These findings indicate that the difficulties are systemic and that resolving them requires coordinated policy responses rather than leaving solutions to individual lecturers to arrange within their own classrooms. This uniformity implies that these issues are fundamentally systemic and, consequently, their resolution requires coordinated policy interventions rather than ad hoc measures implemented by individual instructors in their classrooms.

Discussion

The findings of this investigation indicate a variable implementation of technology in English language teaching at Vietnamese universities. While basic resources such as PowerPoint presentations, online dictionaries, and video materials are commonly used, the use of more advanced applications, including AI language tools and data-driven assessment platforms, remains limited. This pattern is consistent with findings from comparable contexts. Kirkpatrick and Liddicoat (2019) identify similar disparities in the use of basic and advanced technology across institutional tiers in other Southeast Asian higher education systems. Nguyen et al. (2025) show that simply using familiar tools does not necessarily lead to a deeper integration of teaching methods in Vietnamese universities.

The results indicate that existing professional development programs and institutional support structures are insufficient to promote a transition among lecturers from basic initial technology adoption. This divergence between lecturers' generally positive attitudes toward technology and their limited application of sophisticated tools is not unique to this specific context. Ertmer and

Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) distinguish between first-order barriers, which include infrastructural limitations, access issues, and time constraints, and second-order barriers, which encompass beliefs, self-efficacy, and uncertainty about pedagogical application, suggesting that successful integration requires progress in both domains. The present study found evidence of both types. Infrastructure deficits were widely reported in the survey data, while interview responses indicated that many lecturers were uncertain about how to use advanced tools effectively to support their teaching goals. Single training workshops, which remain the dominant professional development model in both participating institutions, are unlikely to address either type of barrier in any sustained way.

Modular professional development programs grounded in the TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) framework may offer a more effective alternative, particularly when combined with classroom-based mentoring, peer collaboration, and reflective teaching portfolios developed over time. The TPACK framework is useful in this context because it identifies the three distinct knowledge bases, including technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge, that teachers need to integrate technology effectively, and it provides a principled basis for designing professional development that addresses each dimension systematically. Applying TPACK as a diagnostic and design tool may therefore inform the development of more targeted professional development experiences for both pre-service and in-service teachers. This kind of sustained, context-sensitive training may help lecturers build the technical competence and pedagogical judgment needed to use digital tools effectively in the classroom.

Infrastructure constraints are a second major barrier. Unequal access to stable internet connections, up-to-date hardware, and licensed software, particularly between urban and rural institutions, or between public and private universities, limits consistent technology use. Nguyen et al. (2025) report similar disparities within Vietnamese higher education. Addressing this requires investment in campus-wide network infrastructure, centralized digital platforms, and dedicated technical support. At the policy level, the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) could establish national standards for digital infrastructure and direct targeted funding or public–private partnerships to institutions that fall short of those benchmarks.

Institutional leadership shapes technology integration outcomes in concrete ways. Fullan (2007) argues that sustained change in educational organizations depends on strategic commitment at the leadership level, and the interview data in this study support that position. Participants associated more effective technology use with specific institutional conditions: dedicated budget allocations for equipment renewal and software licensing, formal recognition of digitally innovative teaching in staff performance evaluations, and cross-departmental coordination that distributed technical support across faculties rather than concentrating it in a single unit. Lecturers who reported that these structures were in place showed greater confidence in their use of technology and fewer practical obstacles in day-to-day teaching. People without institutional support or guidance reported ongoing difficulties, regardless of their personal drive or technical abilities.

Policy reform must go beyond infrastructure. Embedding digital competence into lecturer evaluation criteria, curriculum design requirements, and accreditation standards would create structural incentives for more consistent engagement with technology. A national open educational resource (OER) repository could also help reduce unequal access to quality teaching materials across institutions. Variation in lecturers' digital literacy further contributes to these difficulties. The gap between basic and advanced users suggests that existing professional development initiatives do not adequately address diverse needs. Tiered training

programs—differentiated by proficiency level and covering basic ICT skills, pedagogical application of technology, and instructional design—may prove more effective than uniform provision. Mentorship schemes and communities of practice can support sustained development over time, consistent with Koehler and Mishra's (2009) case for job-embedded professional learning.

Student-related factors also affect integration outcomes. Differences in learners' access to devices and familiarity with digital tools can impede participation when technology is introduced without adequate preparation. Orientation sessions on digital learning skills, low-bandwidth alternatives for online tasks, and gradual tool-introduction plans can reduce cognitive overload and improve equity of access.

The evidence indicates that potential exists, but only under conditions of more personalized and communicative English teaching in Vietnam—providing access to authentic materials, supporting collaboration, and connecting learners to broader language communities. Realizing that potential, however, depends on addressing infrastructure, professional development, institutional culture, and policy simultaneously. Neither top-down mandates nor individual teacher initiative alone will be sufficient; coordinated reform across all four areas is likely to be needed.

Conclusion

This study examined technology integration in English language teaching at two Vietnamese universities, drawing on questionnaire data from 50 tertiary-level lecturers, semi-structured interviews with 15 participants, and analysis of relevant policy and institutional documents. The findings show that while lecturers broadly recognize the value of educational technology, practical adoption remains concentrated at the level of basic tools, with advanced applications, including learning management systems, AI tools, and interactive platforms, used by a minority. The main challenges are poor infrastructure, a lack of digital skills, and insufficient institutional support. These issues affect both educators and learners, creating a cycle of problems. Addressing these challenges requires structural changes, including ongoing, tailored professional development, fair investment in infrastructure, and institutional policies that create consistent conditions for using technology across all departments, rather than relying on individual instructors to handle integration independently.

The research has several limitations that bear on how the findings should be read. A sample of 50 participants from two Hanoi universities is adequate for a concurrent embedded mixed-methods design, but it does not capture the full range of tertiary English-teaching contexts in Vietnam. Rural institutions, private universities, and disciplines outside foreign language education are not captured here, and findings may not generalize to those settings. Future research should examine technological integration across a broader range of institutional types and educational levels, and longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable for tracking how integration practices develop or stall over time.

Acknowledgments

The authors acknowledge the contributions of the 50 English lecturers who participated in this

study at Hanoi Metropolitan University and Hanoi Pedagogical University No 2. We also thank the institutional review boards for their ethical guidance and approval.

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Vietnamese EFL Learners' Perceptions of Abilities and Challenges of Learner Autonomy

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26625

Received: 21/02/2026 Revision: 30/04/2026 Accepted: 23/05/2026 Online: 24/05/2026

ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy is a common requirement for all Vietnamese university students. However, to become a successful English autonomous learner, the students are required to perform several tasks, namely setting learning objectives, making learning plans, taking advantage of useful learning resources, having high learning motivation, adjusting their learning strategies, and interacting with others. The present survey study used one online questionnaire to investigate Van Lang University's English amajor's perceptions of abilities and challenges of learner autonomy in English learning. Convenience sampling strategy was employed to include 57 students, who confirmed several abilities and very few challenges of learning autonomously. The reported learner autonomy level ranged from moderate to high, with the strongest ability in using the Internet (M= 3.84) and the weakest in self-evaluation (M= 3.51). The results have practical implications for local EFL lecturers and students. The lecturers are recommended to provide explicit training in self-evaluation strategies and material selection. Students are advised to utilize all mental, physical, and psychological resources to study English more effectively.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, EFL learning, perceptions

Introduction

The emergence of numerous instructional technologies facilitates students' English learning both in and out of the classroom. Encouraging learner autonomy in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has become a quintessential task (Dang, 2010; Ngo, 2020). Despite various definitions of this term, learner autonomy is commonly understood as students' ability to take control of their learning, adjust learning strategies, maintain high learning motivation, and use all available learning resources effectively (Le & Nguyen, 2022). In other words, EFL learners need to be mentally, physically, and psychologically prepared for their autonomous learning (Benson, 2011).

As English is treated as only a foreign language in Vietnam, fostering learner autonomy is not an easy task (Le & Huynh, 2019; Duong & Vo, 2024). While many previous studies in Vietnam

on learner autonomy illustrated that Vietnamese EFL learners acknowledge several advantages (i.e., language proficiency, learning motivation, learning strategies, and social interactions), their perception of abilities and practical challenges of learner autonomy in a university context seems to be underexplored.

This paper includes five main sections. After the Introduction, Section 2 reviews important literature on learner autonomy. Section 3 describes the research methodology. Section 4 reports main findings and discussion. Section 5 recapitulates the results and concludes with implications, limitations, and recommendations for further studies.

Literature Review

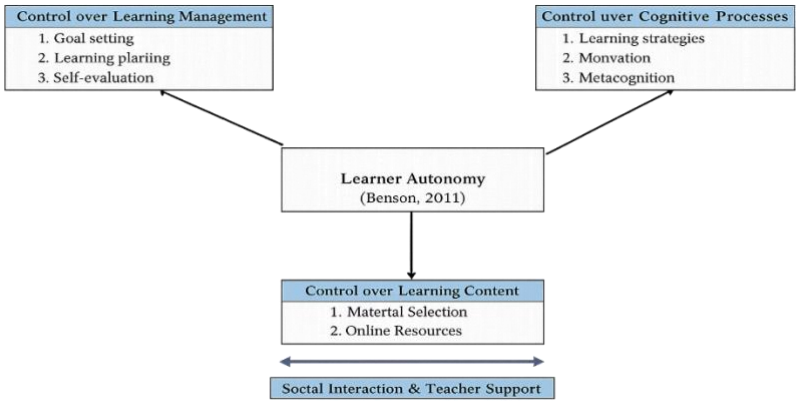
Learner Autonomy in English Education

The term "learner autonomy" has been defined in several ways across socio-cultural, political, and educational settings (Ngo, 2020). Holec (1981) defined it as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3). Wenden (1991) refined the definition by viewing it as learners' ability to control their learning strategies, knowledge, and attitudes for effective learning. According to Oxford (2003), learner autonomy is not just about learning in isolation but about learning in interaction with others as a socially responsible learner. While Holec's (1981) definition focuses on individuality, Benson's (2011) combines it with social and contextual elements. It is one's capacity to control learning situations, behaviors, and psychology. Later, Le and Nguyen (2022) summarized that learner autonomy should be understood as the combination of learners' ability to regulate all learning activities, both inside and outside the classroom, to seek support from others, and to enhance their self-confidence in learning management. In this study, learner autonomy is defined as learners' ability to take charge of their learning, to develop their learning strategies, to maintain motivation for learning, and to make use of all useful resources for learning (teachers, friends, parents, learning materials, etc.).

Being an autonomous learner is a demanding task (Tran & Vuong, 2023). They should be able to and ready to set learning objectives, make learning plans, and use learning resources effectively (Duong & Vo, 2024). They can select suitable learning topics, perform language tasks, adjust learning strategies, work independently and collaboratively in learning (Wenden, 1991). They are mentally, physically, and psychologically prepared for autonomous learning (Benson, 2011). The following diagram describes the key conceptual framework of learner autonomy used in the study.

Figure 1

A Conceptual Framework of Learner Autonomy (adapted from Benson, 2011)



Learner autonomy, therefore, is a multifaceted construct in language education. It comprises four key dimensions: "technical" (learning activities inside and outside class), "psychological" (students' readiness to take charge of learning), "political" (conditions for autonomous learning), and "social" (social interactions and collaboration in language learning).

Vietnamese EFL Learners' Perception of Learner Autonomy

Previous studies demonstrate that Vietnamese EFL learners tend to have a positive perception of learner autonomy in English studies. When they have stronger beliefs in their learner autonomy, they can be more motivated to learn and improve their English proficiency (Le, 2018; Ngo, 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023; Phuong & Vo, 2019; Tran et al., 2020). Other studies tend to examine the reasons for such a positive perception. For example, learners can attribute their learner autonomy abilities to their teachers' pedagogical approaches (Le & Huynh, 2019). As noted by Nguyen et al. (2022), besides teachers' role, other factors include learners' perceptions of learner autonomy, effective learning strategies (e.g., use of learning materials and cooperative learning), and learning conditions (see also Tran and Duong, 2018). Differently, Ho et al. (2023) and Trinh and Nguyen (2022) highlighted the significance of parental contributions to learner autonomy. Meanwhile, teachers' instruction and appropriate technological applications can foster learner autonomy in specific language skills, such as reading comprehension (Duong & Vo, 2024).

While Vietnamese EFL learners' positive perception of learner autonomy is apparent, they may differ in their perceptions of self-study strategies (Duong & Nguyen, 2021). They can have opposing views on their own learner autonomy and different levels of willingness (Duong & Nguyen, 2023). In particular, university students appear to be better prepared for learner autonomy in English study (Ngo & Luu, 2023).

Learner autonomy is also challenging in Vietnamese EFL contexts. Vietnamese EFL learners' passive learning styles inhibit them from autonomous learning (Le & Huynh, 2019; Tran, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2023). Compared with teacher- and context-related challenges, student-related ones are much clearer. They tend to rely on teachers' instruction and have low English proficiency to become effective autonomous learners. The low level of learner autonomy among Vietnamese EFL learners is also found (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023). There exist several obstacles to learner autonomy in Vietnamese EFL contexts (Tran & Duong, 2020), namely inconvenient learning conditions, students' poor learning habits, teachers' dominant roles, ineffective use of

learning materials, and ineffective cooperative learning. Duong and Nguyen (2021) identified additional obstacles, namely, students' fear of sharing learning difficulties in class with the teacher and their limited attention to time management in learning. Trinh and Nguyen (2022) and Le et al. (2023) confirmed that Vietnamese EFL learners' unwillingness to learn autonomously and heavy reliance on teachers' guidance in the classroom are major hindrances to their learner autonomy. Similarly, Le and Nguyen (2022) and Tran and Vuong (2023) identified common barriers to students' learner autonomy as low English proficiency, diffidence, and ineffective learning strategies. Briefly, mainly adapted from Le and Huynh (2019), the present study focuses on three groups of learner autonomy challenges, namely (1) student-related, (2) context-related, and (3) teacher-related.

Overall, a vast majority of Vietnamese studies have found that many Vietnamese EFL learners appreciate the usefulness of learner autonomy in their English learning. Learner autonomy is perceived to positively influence English proficiency, learning strategies, motivation, and social interactions between teachers and students. However, Vietnamese EFL learners' perception of their own abilities and the challenges of learner autonomy needs further exploration. Learner autonomy in Vietnamese EFL contexts, especially in higher education for English majors, remains challenging, particularly due to student-related variables (i.e., low English proficiency, low motivation, low self-efficacy, reliance on teachers' instruction, ineffective use of learning materials, and ineffective cooperative learning). As a result, it is useful to research Vietnamese EFL learners' perceptions of their abilities and the challenges of learner autonomy.

Research Questions

The present survey study aims to investigate Vietnamese EFL learners' perceptions of their abilities and challenges related to learner autonomy at Van Lang University. The following research questions are addressed:

1. What is the students' perception of their ability for learner autonomy in English learning?
2. What are students' perceptions of the challenges to their learner autonomy in English learning?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at the Faculty of Foreign Languages, Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City. Convenience sampling, a nonprobability sampling method when participants are available and willing to participate (Creswell, 2012), was used to include 57 English majors (N=57; 17 male/40 female, 29.8%/70.2 %). It was used for many contextual reasons. In reality, these undergraduates were studying in the same faculty, which facilitated efficient data collection within time and resource constraints. Additionally, including available English majors may contribute to the existing Vietnamese findings. Most of them were 20 years old (29 students, 50.9%) and had studied English for over 10 years (20 students, 35.1%). Most of them were second-year students (33 students, 57.8%). Such demographic information was used to give the background for the interpretation. The following table reports the demographic information of the respondents.

Table 1

The demographic information of the respondents

Variable	Value	N	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	17	29.8
	Female	40	70.2
Age	18 years	9	15.8
	19 years	11	19.3
	20 years	29	50.9
	Over 20 years	8	14
English learning experience	Below 3 years	6	10.5
	3-5 years	14	24.6
	6-10 years	17	29.8
	Over 10 years	20	35.1
Undergraduate level	First year	17	29.8
	Second year	33	57.8
	Third year	6	10.5
	Fourth year	1	1.8
Valid		57	100

Instruments

One online questionnaire was used to investigate the students' perception and practices of learner autonomy. It was adapted from the main conceptual framework of learner autonomy (Benson, 2011) and from Vietnamese EFL learners' challenges in learner autonomy (Le & Huynh, 2019).

The questionnaire has three main parts. Part 1 collects respondents' information on age, gender, English-learning experience, and undergraduate level. Part 2 is a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It aims to collect respondents' perceptions of their learners' autonomy in English learning. Part 3 uses a similar Likert scale to collect respondents' perceptions of the challenges of learner autonomy in English learning.

Regarding the Likert-scale content, Part 2 consists of 6 items based on the framework by Benson (2011). Item 1 aims to collect the students' perception of their ability to set learning objectives. Item 2 aims to collect students' perceptions of their ability to develop learning plans. Item 4 aims to collect the students' perception of their ability to self-evaluate their English learning progress. These reflect the control over learning management. Item 3 aims to collect students' perceptions of their ability to study using Internet resources. This reflects the control over learning content. Item 6 aims to collect students' perceptions of their ability to understand the lecturer's instructions on English self-study. This reflects the control over cognitive processes. Item 5 aims to collect students' perceptions of their ability to collaborate with friends in learning English. This reflects the social support. Moreover, the scale includes one open-ended question to elicit further student opinions.

Part 3 contains 10 items, adapted from Le and Huynh (2019, pp. 142-144). Because of different research objectives and participants, the present study's scale includes only student-related and context-related challenges (lecturer's instruction is one of them). Items 1 to 5 belong to the student-related challenges. The respective purposes are to collect students' perceptions of the lack of language knowledge, the lack of language skills, the dearth of motivation, reliance on the lecturer's instruction, and extrinsic motivation for high scores. Items 6 to 10 belong to the context-related challenges. The purposes are to collect students' perceptions of the lack of

instructional technology in class, the lack of opportunities to use English outside class, the lack of school policy to promote English learner autonomy, the limited instruction on English learner autonomy, and the limited extra English learning materials.

Data collection & analysis

The original questionnaire was carefully proofread before its actual implementation. This helps ensure each item can represent typical traits of learner autonomy ability, adapted from Benson (2011), with three core dimensions: "control over learning management", "control over cognitive processes", and "control over learning content", in addition to "social support". The challenges of learner autonomy, adapted from Le and Huynh (2019), were examined to confirm that learner autonomy is influenced not only by individual factors but also by context-related factors. The questionnaire was revised to align with the current research context and objective. This original questionnaire was created in Google Forms, translated into Vietnamese, and delivered to a small group of volunteer students (N=13). The internal consistency reliability of the two scales was 0.852 and 0.887, respectively, both exceeding 0.6.

Table 2

Reliability statistics of the original questionnaire

Scale	Cronbach's alpha	N of items
1	.852	6
2	.887	10

The final questionnaire was delivered online to the school email addresses of the accessible student groups (N=109). It was closed one week later. The final number of questionnaire respondents was determined. The questionnaire results were analyzed by SPSS. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) of each scale item were extracted and presented in tables to answer both research questions. Further opinions were summarized and added wherever possible.

Results and Discussion

Research Question One

Most of the respondents affirmed that they could use Internet resources for English autonomous learning (Item 3: M=3.84, SD=.841). The second-highest ability is understanding the lecturers' instructions in English class (Item 6: M = 3.75, SD = .851). The third-highest ability is cooperating with friends for English self-study (Item 5: M = 3.74, SD = .917). The fourth-highest ability is setting learning objectives (Item 1: M = 3.56, SD = .802). The fifth-highest ability is making weekly learning plans (Item 2: M = 3.53, SD = .804). The lowest ability is self-evaluation of English learning progress (Item 4: M = 3.51, SD = .917). Moreover, among these 57 response samples, only one respondent added the ability to imitate English sentence patterns, pronunciation, lexical use, and language-use strategies.

Table 3
The statistics of the students' perception of their ability to learn English autonomously

No	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I am able to set up my long-term and short-term English learning goals.	3.56	.802
2	I am able to plan for my English learning every week.	3.53	.804
3	I am able to self-study English via Internet after class.	3.84	.841
4	I am able to self-evaluate my English learning progress.	3.51	.869
5	I am able to collaborate with my friends for English self-study.	3.74	.917
6	I am able to understand lecturers' instruction on English autonomous learning.	3.75	.851

In general, their perceived ability in English autonomous learning is not exceptionally remarkable. Three noticeable abilities are self-study via the Internet, understanding lecturers' instructions, and collaborating with friends. Based on the framework by Benson (2011), this suggests that students tend to focus on "control over their cognitive processes", "control over learning content", and "receive social support" rather than "control over learning management".

These findings are in agreement with the following studies (Tran, 2020; Trinh & Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Le et al., 2023). Vietnamese EFL learners tend to rely heavily on teachers' instruction in English. Because of low English proficiency and limited English use outside class (Le & Nguyen, 2022; Tran & Duong, 2020; Tran & Vuong, 2023), as well as passive learning styles (Oxford, 2003), they are inclined to pay close attention to lecturers' instruction in class more than others. The results also underpin the studies (Dang, 2010; Ngo, 2020) that concluded that current instructional technologies can facilitate EFL learners' autonomy outside the classroom. The boom of technological advances greatly facilitates the practice of English learner autonomy. They can preview learning materials before and after class, self-study key lessons, and refine their learning strategies. The ability to collaborate with friends in English learner autonomy agrees with (Le, 2018; Tran & Duong, 2020; Nguyen et al., 2022). Vietnamese EFL learners can be encouraged to socially interact with others in class (mostly friends) to support their learner autonomy. By interacting with others, they can improve their English knowledge and skills, learn strategies, and gain a better understanding of how to use learning resources both inside and outside the classroom. Despite an unremarkable mean, the perceived abilities to set learning objectives, develop learning plans, and self-evaluate learning progress remain noteworthy. As explained by the studies (Tran & Vuong, 2023; Duong & Nguyen, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2022; Ngo & Luu, 2023), motivated and self-directed Vietnamese EFL learners who are autonomous in their learning can take the initiative in their learning process. They can clearly identify their learning goals and plan their English learning. However, as Duong & Nguyen (2021) explain, their fear of sharing learning problems with teachers in class, low English proficiency, lack of suitable learning and assessment strategies, and poor time management skills can create barriers to their self-evaluation of English learning after class.

Research Question Two

However, most students were reluctant to admit they faced several challenges in studying English independently. Regarding the student-related variables, most students did not think they were totally passive learners who relied too much on the lecturers' instruction (Item 5: M=2.60, SD=1.083). They were reluctant to state that they lack motivation to learn English autonomously (Item 4: M= 3.23, SD= 1.282). The same tendency was evident in the extrinsic

learning motivation for high English exam scores (Item 3: M=3.32, SD=1.072) and the dearth of language knowledge needed to learn English autonomously (Item 2: M=3.33, SD=1.075). The most remarkable challenge in this group is the lack of language skills for English learner autonomy (Item 1: M=3.44, SD=1.053).

Table 4

The statistics of the students' perceived student-related challenges

No	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
1	I lack the language skills to become an autonomous learner.	3.44	1.053
2	I lack language knowledge to become an autonomous learner.	3.33	1.075
3	I just want to pass English exams with high scores.	3.32	1.072
4	I lack motivation to learn English autonomously.	3.23	1.282
5	I want to rely on lecturers' English instruction.	2.60	1.083

Similarly, most students were reluctant to affirm the following context-related challenges of their English learner autonomy. First, they were neutral about the dearth of opportunities to use English outside class (Item 6: M=3.05, SD=1.315). Second, they were also hesitant to confirm the limited instructions in class (Item 7: M=3.04, SD=1.017). Third, they were neutral about the discouraging school policy on English learner autonomy (Item 8: M=3.00, SD=1.086). Finally, they did not think that technology (Item 9: M=2.95, SD=.915) and extra materials (Item 10: M=2.88, SD=.1087). Only one respondent offered further insight into the challenge. This student added the challenges related to inconsistent materials use outside of class. When using materials for English autonomous learning, it is necessary to have effective strategies for selecting the best materials.

Table 5

The statistics of the students' perceived context-related variables

No	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
6	I have very few opportunities to use English outside class.	3.05	1.315
7	Instructions on English autonomous learning are limited.	3.04	1.017
8	Autonomous learning is discouraged in my school.	3.00	1.086
9	Technology is insufficiently provided in my English classes.	2.95	.915
10	Extra materials for English autonomous learning are limited.	2.88	1.087

It is obvious that the students did not address all student- and context-related challenges related to their English learner autonomy. The seemingly prominent challenge is the lack of language skills to become autonomous learners. This can agree with the results of the first research question: The students do not pay much attention to their control over learning management (self-evaluation, setting learning objectives, and planning learning).

As a result, these results are different from past studies (Le & Huynh, 2019; Tran, 2020; Tran & Duong, 2020; Duong & Nguyen, 2021; Le & Nguyen, 2022; Trinh & Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023; Le et al., 2023; Tran & Vuong, 2023). It could be explained by many reasons. First, several respondents had more than 10 years of English-learning experience. This might make it convenient for them to learn English autonomously. Second, the autonomy of English learners among these students is relatively high (as shown in the first research answer). As explained by the studies (Le, 2018; Phuong & Vo, 2019; Tran et al., 2020; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023), Vietnamese EFL learners who are more experienced in learning English and are autonomously interested in English can better handle learning problems and be better prepared for learner autonomy. This might lead to a low level of challenges, as mentioned. As shown in the

questionnaire responses, the respondents may have sufficient motivation for autonomous English learning. This helps them prepare for English learner autonomy. Third, the facilitating conditions for English learner autonomy at the university are obvious. They are the lecturers' instructions on English autonomous learning, the supportive school policy, and available instructional technology and extra materials for English learner autonomy. This aligns with the following studies (Nguyen et al., 2022; Duong & Nguyen, 2023; Ngo & Luu, 2023), which confirmed that current Vietnamese EFL contexts offer several conducive conditions for autonomous learning. The findings do not reflect the impact of parental contributions on students' English-learner autonomy (Ho et al., 2023; Trinh & Nguyen, 2022) due to differences in research objectives. The contribution of the findings on the perceived challenges of learner autonomy in English learning is the dearth of language-material use strategies. The students need to develop their methods for selecting the best materials for learning outside class and for reflecting on the quality of the materials' content.

Conclusion

The present study revealed that the English-majored students at Van Lang University are willing to learn English autonomously. They perceived that they could take advantage of Internet resources, lecturers' instruction, and collaboration with others (lecturers and friends). They also recognized the importance of setting English-learning goals, creating learning plans, and self-evaluating learning progress. Therefore, there were no striking challenges of English learner autonomy among these students, except for their language skills and the ability to select the best materials for English learner autonomy.

Pedagogically, local EFL lecturers can encourage students to practice English autonomous learning by instructing them on how to select the best language-learning materials and develop their language skills. Useful websites and apps for English learning can be introduced. They can also share useful learning resources and give online assignments in their E-learning classes (with instructions). The students are encouraged to take advantage of all mental, physical, and psychological resources to support their English-language learner autonomy. They can cooperate with their peers to accomplish learning tasks. They can also interact more with the lecturers during their studies for further learning support.

The study has two key limitations. First, because of convenience sampling and limited time resources, the sample size is limited. The results cannot be generalized to the entire student population at this university. Second, only one questionnaire was employed; therefore, no in-depth information about the abilities and practical challenges of learner autonomy was given. As a result, future studies can include more participants and triangulate the data to yield more meaningful findings.

Acknowledgments

I appreciate all questionnaire respondents for their invaluable time and meaningful participation. I also thank all reviewers for their constructive feedback and support. Their contributions are expected to greatly improve the quality of this study.

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Biodata

Duong Thanh Hung Duc is a current lecturer at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He has been teaching reading comprehension skills to English majors at Van Lang University for approximately 13 years. He is interested in studying language testing and MALL.

Appendix

The Questionnaire

Dear all students,

The following survey aims to collect some information about your learner autonomy abilities and the challenges in English study. All your personal information is kept confidential and used for academic purposes only.

Thank you and best regards!

Part 1: Personal Information

1. **Age:**

☐ 18 years
☐ 19 years
☐ 20 years
☐ Over 20 years

2. **Gender:** ☐ Male ☐ Female

3. **English learning experience:**

☐ Below 3 years
☐ 3-5 years
☐ 6-10 years
☐ Over 10 years

4. **Undergraduate level:**

☐ First year
☐ Second year
☐ Third year
☐ Fourth year

Part 2: Perception of learner autonomy abilities in English

5. Do you agree with the following statements?

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree
5 = Strongly Agree

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
5.1. I am able to set up my long-term and short-term English learning goals.					
5.2. I am able to plan for my English learning every week.					
5.3. I am able to self-study English via Internet after class.					
5.4. I am able to self-evaluate my English learning progress.					
5.5. I am able to collaborate with my friends for English self-study.					
5.6. I am able to understand lecturers' instruction on English autonomous learning.					

6. Do you have any other learner autonomy abilities? If yes, please specify.

_____

Part 3: Perception of challenges in learner autonomy abilities in English

7. Do you agree with the following statements?

1 = Strongly Disagree
2 = Disagree
3 = Neutral
4 = Agree

5 = Strongly Agree

Statements	1	2	3	4	5
Student-related challenges					
7.1. I lack the language skills to become an autonomous learner.					
7.2. I lack language knowledge to become an autonomous learner.					
7.3. I just want to pass English exams with high scores.					
7.4. I lack motivation to learn English autonomously.					
7.5. I want to rely on lecturers' English instruction.					
Context-related challenges					
7.6. I have very few opportunities to use English outside class.					
7.7. Instructions on English autonomous learning are limited.					
7.8. Autonomous learning is discouraged in my school.					
7.9. Technology is insufficiently provided in my English classes.					
7.10. Extra materials for English autonomous learning are limited.					

8. Do you experience any related challenges? If yes, please specify.

_____

Navigating the AI Turn: Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education

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https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26626

Received: 20/04/2026 Revision: 25/05/2026 Accepted: 26/05/2026 Online: 27/05/2026

ABSTRACT

As generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) revolutionizes the teaching and learning of language, the discipline faces two challenges: to avoid the traps of superficial technological replacement and to proactively defend academic integrity and learner autonomy. This paper addresses this conflict by asking two important questions: (1) pedagogical conditions that favor the development of profound language skills in AI rather than superficial language skills; (2) organizations can promote responsible use while cultivating critical thinking. To address these questions, this paper proposes the Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education (FRAILE). This unifying model incorporates recent empirical research to offer a comprehensive structural response to the AI disruption. This presentation introduces a new AI Task Typology to enable cognitive engagement within the FRAILE.

Keywords: GenAI, academic integrity, critical thinking, teacher development, AI literacy

Introduction

The integration of technology into language learning is not new. The first computer-assisted language learning (CALL) systems emerged in the 1960s in university laboratories (Li et al., 2025). Over the last few decades, technology has evolved dramatically from simple drill-and-practice software to complex networked platforms and intelligent tutoring systems that provide highly tailored, adaptive instruction (Hariyanto et al., 2025). However, artificial intelligence has quickly and profoundly revolutionized language education, particularly since the advent of ChatGPT in November 2022. There has been no other technology developed of such consequence.

The rapid rise of ChatGPT has transformed generative AI from a distant possibility into an immediate reality in language education. It is the fastest-growing online application in history, with over 1 million users in its first week and 100 million in its first two months (Reuters, 2023). Artificial intelligence (AI) was rolled out in language classrooms around the world at an unprecedented pace, not as a top-down institutional initiative, but as a grassroots, student-led movement. Instead of looking forward to a potential future, teachers were examining how

CITATION | Pham, V. P. H., & Renandya, W. A. (2026). Navigating the AI Turn: Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *6*(2), 70-85. DOI: https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.26626

generative AI tools were affecting student writing, translation, grammar checking, vocabulary acquisition, and exam preparation, regardless of the school's approval of their use.

Wang et al. (2025) demonstrate that generative AI (GENAI) has emerged as a potent force in language education, with substantial potential for language learning, instruction, assessment, and research. The rapid expansion of research in this field is illustrated by a comprehensive review of 43 empirical studies on GENAI that were published in SSCI-indexed journals from 2022 to 2024. The review places a particular emphasis on the motivational, speaking, and writing outcomes of higher education learners in the EFL context. However, the existing literature collectively suggests that the field still lacks cohesive frameworks to support practitioners, curriculum developers, and institutional policymakers in responsibly integrating AI (Wang et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025).

This paper addresses this lacuna by engaging in a progressive inquiry that encompasses two interrelated research questions: the ethical and pedagogical challenges, the necessary responses for professional development, and the contributions of AI to language learners..

Research Questions

RQ1: To what extent and under what pedagogical conditions does the integration of AI tools really advance language skill development beyond surface-level performance outcomes in EFL/ESL contexts?

RQ2: How can language educators and institutions encourage responsible AI use without sacrificing the genuine pedagogical benefits of AI, such as the development of learner critical thinking, authentic voice, and academic integrity?

Methodological Orientation: Critical Integrative Synthesis

To address the research questions and develop the Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education (FRAILE), the paper critically and integratively synthesizes current scholarship on generative artificial intelligence in language education. This is a strength in a fast-moving field, as this approach does not just attempt to summarize findings but rather seeks to identify patterns, tensions, and voids in new studies and translate them into a direct response from instructors and schools (Torraco, 2016). The synthesis is not intended as a formal systematic review, but rather to aid in the development of a framework and conceptual clarity. The objective is to explore the literature on the educational promise of AI, the threats to academic integrity and critical thinking, and the classroom conditions that make it truly beneficial.

Scope and Selection of Literature

The literature reviewed in this paper focused on the pedagogical benefits and ethical and pedagogical concerns of generative AI in language education. The evaluation was intentionally restricted to three factors. Initially, it focused on research published from the end of 2022 to the beginning of 2026, such as the post-public-release period for ChatGPT and the rise of educational research on GenAI. Secondly, the quality of the sources was of tremendous importance. Empirical studies, systematic reviews, and important conceptual contributions published in high-quality peer-reviewed academic journals (e.g., Elsevier, Springer Nature, Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell, and SAGE) were given priority. This ensured that the discussion was based on academically rigorous, reliable, and up-to-date research. This ensured that the discussion was based on reliable and up-to-date research. Third, the review has largely been limited to the EFL and ESL contexts, especially at the secondary and higher education

levels, because these are the most relevant to the issues discussed in this paper and form the major evidence base.

Analytical Logic of the Synthesis

The synthesis was carried out in three interconnected phases. In the first phase, patterns in the literature were found. Two main ideas kept coming up. AI was shown to improve pupil engagement, feedback, grammatical accuracy, and writing fluency. However, the issues discussed in the literature are rather consistent: threat to academic integrity, loss of authentic voice, cognitive outsourcing, reduction of critical engagement, and over-reliance.

The next stage was to interpret these patterns in the light of existing theories of education. Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development helped us understand the difference between AI as a tool to help us (Vygotsky, 1978) and AI as a replacement for human thinking. Sweller's Cognitive Load Theory provides a framework for understanding how AI can facilitate learning while also removing the need for cognitive effort (Sweller, 1988). The SAMR model was then applied to distinguish simple AI use that merely substitutes for the learner's work from more advanced uses that enable deep revision, critique, and transformation (Puentedura, 2006).

The third phase focused on transforming these empirical and theoretical insights into a pragmatic framework for language education. This has led to the development of the AI Task Typology, which classifies AI-supported activities according to the degree of cognitive engagement involved, and the more extensive FRAILE framework, which encompasses classroom practice, assessment design, teacher development, and institutional accountability. In the final phase, the UNESCO AI Competency Framework for Teachers enabled the integration of pedagogical approaches with institutional capacity building (UNESCO, 2024).

Purpose of This Approach

This necessary integration is not meant to be a complete review of all existing research. Instead, it seeks to synthesize the most relevant recent evidence that is both pedagogically useful and theoretically informed. The benefit of this method is that it links empirical evidence to practical educational decision-making, thus offering language educators and institutions a more solid foundation for responsible practice in the age of AI (Torraco, 2016; UNESCO, 2024).

Review of Literature

This section reviews the literature on two related themes: (1) the opportunities and challenges of AI for the development of language skills, and (2) the threats to academic integrity, critical thinking, and learner autonomy. The reviewed studies show a common pattern in fast-moving fields of research, namely a descriptive accumulation of research, mostly in EFL higher education contexts in East Asia, with most of the studies based on self-reported data from small samples (Wang et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025; Liu et al., 2025). This paper is based on the convergence of the inequalities.

Theme 1: AI for Language Skill Development — Promise and Limitations

An increasing corpus of empirical studies validates that AI tools—when utilized intentionally and under the guidance of instructors—can significantly enhance language skill development, especially in writing. Nguyen and Pham (2025) examined the use of ChatGPT in an IELTS writing course in Can Tho, Vietnam. Employing a quasi-experimental pre-test/post-test design with 32 students, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group across all IELTS writing components. Mahapatra (2024), in a mixed-methods intervention study at an

Indian university, similarly reported significant positive effects of ChatGPT as a formative feedback tool on the academic writing skills of undergraduate ESL students. Polakova and Ivenz (2024) found improvements in writing conciseness and passive-voice use following ChatGPT-mediated feedback sessions involving 110 EFL students. Asadi et al. (2025), in Thinking Skills and Creativity (Elsevier), documented that integrating ChatGPT with teacher feedback yielded favorable results for EFL writing skills, especially when the feedback modalities were intentionally sequenced.

Yuan and Liu (2025), in Computers in Human Behavior (Elsevier), found that Chinese EFL learners using AI tools exhibited markedly greater engagement, enjoyment, and motivation than their non-AI counterparts. Pham and Huynh (2025) reported substantial improvements in motivation, goal-setting, and self-regulated learning behaviors among Vietnamese high school students who used AI tools. Lo et al. (2024), in a systematic review of 70 ChatGPT studies in Smart Learning Environments (Springer Nature), found that 41.4% of the studies focused on writing and only 7.1% on speaking, with no studies specifically addressing listening, indicating a concerning pedagogical constraint.

A major gap remains: The focus on surface-level writing parts does not examine how AI can support deep argumentative reasoning, disciplinary voice, or long-term writing development. In a review of AI-powered writing instruction in the ECNU Review of Education (SAGE), Xiao et al. (2025) found that while ChatGPT improved sentence-level quality and structural clarity, its capacity for fostering original, culturally embedded argumentation is limited and understudied.

Theme 2: Over-Reliance, Academic Integrity, and Critical Thinking Erosion

While evidence for AI's instructional benefits is growing, a concurrent body of research underscores the risks posed by uncritical use of AI to learner autonomy, intellectual development, and academic integrity. Werdiningsih et al. (2024), in a qualitative case study conducted at an Indonesian university and published in Cogent Arts & Humanities (Taylor & Francis), found that ChatGPT was appreciated for alleviating writing uncertainties and clarifying vocabulary; however, it also elicited apprehensions about the authenticity of student work. AI suggestions were sometimes too complex or insensitive to different cultures, and students knew that passing off AI-generated content as their own voice was risky.

Khan et al. (2025), in a qualitative study of 43 Indian EFL learners published in Cogent Education (Taylor & Francis), identified substantial issues related to excessive dependence, the decline of critical thinking, and risks to academic integrity. Students said that AI-generated answers didn't always fit the way Indians normally write. Gerlich (2025), in Societies (MDPI), documented that excessive reliance on AI tools results in "cognitive offloading," a phenomenon characterized by a significant decline in students' analytical reasoning abilities. Critical thinking was found to be the primary moderator between AI use and over-reliance, as students with higher levels of critical thinking used AI outputs more judiciously and did not accept them uncritically (Hou et al., 2025).

Wang et al. (2025) conducted a scoping review of 43 empirical studies published in SSCI journals between 2022 and 2024 and found that the main issues identified in the literature were overreliance, academic integrity, and critical thinking, with 46.5% of studies lacking well-defined theoretical frameworks. Nazim and Alzubi (2025) in PLOS ONE reported that 278 EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia considered institutional policies and ethical frameworks important but lacking safeguards.

Research gaps

The literature reviewed under the above themes describes a domain of rapid empirical accumulation and considerable structural disintegration. There are two main gaps that directly shape the reasoning of this paper.

First, the documented Surface-Depth Paradox in language acquisition assisted by AI. Current empirical evidence indicates that generative AI tools provide consistent, statistically significant benefits in surface-level language performance, particularly in grammar accuracy, writing fluency, and vocabulary range (Nguyen & Pham, 2025; Mahapatra, 2024; Polakova & Ivenz, 2024). But the field lacks a systematic understanding of the pedagogical conditions necessary to foster deeper cognitive engagement. Research reveals that attention remains focused on quantifiable, discrete elements of writing, and the role of AI in supporting original, culturally relevant argumentation and higher-order reasoning remains poorly understood (Xiao et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). This gap calls for scrutiny of the carefully designed conditions that raise AI from a mere expedient to a transformative educational paradigm.

Second, there is an important safeguard in academic integrity and critical thinking. Institutional responses are often defensive and reactive, although the risks of "cognitive offloading" and identity erosion in AI-driven writing are well documented (Gerlich, 2025; Khan et al., 2025). Students are using AI extensively, with as many as 86% using it in some contexts, but few are aware of AI policies at their institutions (Digital Education Council, 2024). Moreover, teachers often mention the lack of clear ethical guidelines and institutional safeguards as a major challenge for responsible implementation (Nazim & Alzubi, 2025). This gap of high usage and low awareness of the policies calls for a shift from "AI policing" to "AI aware" pedagogical and assessment design.

Take all these holes, and you get that the value of AI as a tool for teaching languages is not in the technology itself. Rather, it is created or compromised by the quality of human decisions over task design and ethical oversight.

RQ1: AI-Enhanced Language Learning — Affordances, Conditions, and the Surface-Depth Problem

What AI Consistently Delivers

In a variety of EFL and ESL contexts, AI tools have demonstrated consistent, reproducible benefits across quantifiable aspects of language performance. Of particular importance is the sequencing finding of Asadi et al. (2025) that AI feedback is not equivalent to teacher feedback but can be improved with careful planning. This leads to an important pedagogical point: AI should be a spur to reflection, not the ultimate arbiter of knowledge.

Li et al. (2025), in a comprehensive scoping review of 144 peer-reviewed articles from the Web of Science, Scopus, and ERIC databases published in Computers & Education: Artificial Intelligence (Elsevier), show that the evidence base in this area is mainly short-term, single-institution studies. This concentration is not only a limitation on research but also a worrying pedagogical constraint, in which the superficial advantages of AI in writing are equated with greater communicative language proficiency.

The Theoretical Lens: Scaffolding Versus Substitution

You need to work through three theoretical frameworks to understand why AI is so much better at making shallow progress than deep learning progress. Vygotsky's (1978) Zone of Proximal

Development (ZPD) suggests that effective learning occurs when learners receive mediated assistance on tasks slightly beyond their independent abilities. AI at its best is a dynamic scaffold. In a systematic review published in Smart Learning Environments (Springer Nature), Lee et al. (2025) have confirmed that generative AI can provide structured support for writing, speaking, and reasoning, helping learners refine ideas and evaluate arguments. On the other hand, when AI is used to do the cognitive work for the learner, rather than support the learner, it circumvents the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and creates cognitive overload: measurable output without productive struggle (Gerlich, 2025).

This analysis is supported by Sweller's (1988) Cognitive Load Theory (CLT). "When it produces content, selects words, and organizes arguments simultaneously, AI eliminates much of the work learners have to do. The best way to teach is to preserve the germane load, which occurs when AI detects an error and asks the student to fix it on their own. The SAMR model (Puentedura, 2006) operationalizes these differences at the task level. In a systematic review published in Discover Computing (Springer Nature), most AI integrations were at the Substitution or Augmentation level, whereas those at the Modification and Redefinition levels were significantly less prevalent (Bao et al., 2025). Redefinition is illustrated in a Vietnamese EFL study in which 130 university students participated in AI-mediated inquiry-based reading projects. The students developed multimedia infographics and podcasts, resulting in notable improvements in higher-order thinking skills and enhanced learner confidence (Duc, 2026).

AI's Structural Limitations: Culture, Discipline, and Rhetoric

Most of the time, generative AI is trained on English corpora from Western native speakers. These corpora hold ideas of what constitutes good writing that do not always align with the rhetorical traditions of learners from non-Western backgrounds. Xiao and colleagues (2025) found that students repeatedly noted concern about culturally insensitive comments. Werdiningsih et al. (2024) found that Indonesian EFL students believed AI suggestions were not rhetorically consistent with their academic and cultural contexts, resulting in grammatically correct but culturally inappropriate text. According to Wang et al. (2025), the field's focus on ChatGPT may lead to the privileging of certain cultural-linguistic norms at the expense of the diversity that real language education ought to celebrate.

A Framework: AI Task Typology by Cognitive Engagement

Drawing on ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978), CLT (Sweller, 1988), and SAMR (Puentedura, 2006), the following framework organizes AI-assisted language-learning tasks by cognitive engagement level.

Table 1

AI task typology by cognitive engagement

Level	SAMR	Learner Role	Example	Educational Value
1 — Substitutive	Substitution	Passive recipient	Submitting essay to AI for grammar correction without engaging with explanations	Low; high dependency risk
2 — Augmentative	Augmentation	Active selector	Using AI vocabulary suggestions, then independently selecting and contextualizing options	Moderate; appropriate as supplement
3 — Scaffolded Revision	Modification	Critical evaluator	Using AI to generate counterarguments, then revising one's own position in response; comparing AI and teacher feedback	High; promotes metacognitive engagement
4 — Transformative	Redefinition	Inquiry co-creator	Designing AI-mediated cross-cultural dialogue projects; using AI to generate competing perspectives for critical synthesis	Very high; requires teacher design expertise

The point is that Levels 1 and 2, where most of the AI is currently being used, only offer the small improvements that have been written about. Levels 3 and 4 are the real places AI could make a difference. This is not essentially a problem of technology. Levels 1 and 4 differ in the teacher's decisions about how to teach, not in the AI tool.

RQ2: Academic Integrity, Critical Thinking, and the Ethics of AI Use

Reframing the Problem: From Detection to Design

The main reaction of schools to AI in language education has been defensive, with schools using AI detection tools, changing their plagiarism policies, and warning students against misusing AI. These measures help with the symptoms, but they do not get to the root of the problem. Academic integrity in the age of AI isn't just about catching the cheaters. It's about how to teach. Assessment tasks that rely exclusively on outputs readily produced by generative AI are insufficient for measuring the competencies that language educators seek to assess.

This distinction is precisely articulated by Corbin et al. (2025) in Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education (Taylor & Francis) as "discursive changes" that do not alter the mechanics of assessment, but instead focus on communicating policies on AI use. Instead, what is needed are "structural changes". These changes would change both what is being tested and how. Recent survey data show that students are already using AI extensively, but institutions are still

not providing enough guidance. In the Digital Education Council Global AI Student Survey 2024, 86% of students reported using AI in their studies, 54% reported using it at least weekly, and only 5% reported being fully aware of institutional AI policies (Digital Education Council, 2024).

AI Literacy as a Language Learning Competency

One of the key points of this part is that AI literacy, or the ability to critically evaluate AI outputs, create effective prompts, understand the limits of AI, and make decisions based on ethics, should be considered a language learning skill in itself. Wang et al. (2025) explicitly argue that prompt engineering is an important but under-studied component of AI literacy. They say that students who can write good prompts get qualitatively different, more useful AI outputs for learning than students who just ask for vague requests.

An autoethnographic study published by Hsu (2025) proposed the SUPER framework for the ethical and effective use of ChatGPT in academic writing. The framework consists of 5 key ideas: Support Not a Substitute (AI should help brainstorm, not do the whole thing); Unique Perspective (the writer's own voice should be the main focus of the work); Prompt Engineering (writing clear, iterative, and context-specific prompts); Ethical Use (following institutional rules and revealing AI's contributions); and Reflection (regularly asking whether AI is a help or a hindrance to one's intellectual effort). The framework is particularly useful because it considers the psychological aspects of using AI, which students often turn to as a means of escaping writing anxiety, and it offers clear instructions for converting this motivation into an effective learning strategy.

A systematic review by Lee et al. (2025) found that pedagogical framing was the primary determinant of AI's impact on critical thinking in EFL environments. Integrating AI into tasks, such as asking learners to analyze AI-generated content to identify inaccuracies, assess cultural relevance, and compare it with human perspectives, led to significant improvements in critical thinking.

From AI Policing to AI-Aware Assessment Design

The best answer to integrity and critical thinking problems is to change the way assessments are structured to require personal, contextualized, iterative, and reflective engagement that AI will not easily replicate. In a qualitative study, Khlaif et al. (2025) surveyed 61 faculty members in Education Sciences and identified four major reasons for the re-designing of assessments in the artificial intelligence era: to maintain academic integrity, to prepare learners to work in the AI-mediated professional contexts, to adapt to technological developments, and to conform to institutional policy.

There is substantial empirical evidence supporting many task design principles for language teachers. The best strategy is probably the oral defense of written work, so that it will be very difficult for AI to replace students' work for a long time. This is because students are required to explain and answer questions about their written work (Corbin et al., 2025). The nature of process portfolios, which involves documenting brainstorming notes, successive drafts, feedback logs, and reflective commentaries, makes it almost impossible for AI alone to fabricate the entire learning journey. Text that is culturally and personally situated cannot be authentically produced by generic AI tools. Werdiningsih et al. (2024) found that Indonesian EFL learners instructed to use knowledge derived from their own culture were much more likely to critically evaluate AI suggestions than to accept them as they were.

Five Design Principles for AI-Resilient Assessment

Based on the evidence examined, five design principles are suggested:

- Principle 1: Make sure the tasks fit with personal and cultural information. Tests should require knowledge, experience, or cultural positioning that AI cannot draw on, such as personal narrative, community-based inquiry, or locally situated rhetorical conventions.
- Principle 2: Make the process and the product accessible. Process portfolios, revision logs, and brainstorming records all demonstrate what you've learned that can't be faked with just one AI.
- Principle 3: Include parts that are spoken. An oral defense or structured discussion of written work necessitates real-time, spontaneous demonstration of comprehension—a type of communicative competence that generative AI cannot replicate on a learner's behalf (Corbin et al., 2025).
- Principle 4: Use comparative critique as a way to teach. When students compare their own writing to AI-generated writing, explain why they made the choices they did, and look for differences, they are learning how to use AI and language in real ways.
- Principle 5: Make sure that institutional policy matches how tasks are set up and how teachers are trained. When institutional policies are vague, harsh, or disconnected from professional development support, it becomes harder to redesign assessments.

Implications for Teacher Development and Professional Practice

The Most Critical, Most Underserved Actor

The classroom teacher is the most important and least supported person in the AI-in-language-education ecosystem. Every argument made in the previous sections comes down to one practical truth: the real benefits of AI can only be realized, and the risks to its integrity and critical thinking can only be reduced, by teachers who have the professional skills, institutional support, and confidence in their teaching methods to make principled decisions about how to use AI. UNESCO's AI Competency Framework for Teachers notes that only 7 countries worldwide had developed AI frameworks or programs for teachers by 2022. This shows how unprepared the system is on a large scale.

Teacher AI Literacy: A Multi-Dimensional Professional Competency

Ng et al. (2021), in a seminal framework published in Computers and Education: Artificial Intelligence, delineate AI literacy as comprising four interconnected domains: foundational conceptual knowledge of AI; practical pedagogical integration of AI; critical evaluation of AI tools' pedagogical utility, accuracy, cultural appropriateness, and ethical alignment; and awareness of algorithmic bias, student privacy, equity, and broader implications. These four dimensions are interdependent; a teacher proficient in operating AI tools yet incapable of critically assessing their cultural biases lacks AI literacy in an educationally significant manner.

Du et al. (2025), in a qualitative case study of Chinese university EFL teachers published in Empowering Educators (Springer Nature), identified that effective teachers possess what the researchers term Intelligent-TPACK—an evolving knowledge base that integrates technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge with a focused emphasis on AI ethics. Bahari and Liu (2025), in a comprehensive pretest-posttest experimental study involving 184 EFL teachers, offered unique experimental evidence that structured, theoretically informed

professional development aligned with a multidimensional AI literacy framework yielded substantial, quantifiable improvements in digital competency and professional engagement. Pan and Wang (2025), in the European Journal of Education (Wiley-Blackwell), found that higher AI literacy is significantly associated with ethical, critically engaged, and pedagogically intentional AI integration.

The Global Competency Gap

There is a global structural problem: the gap between what teachers need to know about AI and what they already know. Nazim and Alzubi (2025), in PLOS ONE, found that 278 university EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia were most worried about overreliance. They also found that institutional policies and ethical frameworks were important but lacked safeguards. Ilma and Rohmah (2025), in Cogent Education (Taylor & Francis), found that a gap persists between the Indonesian government's push for digital integration and teachers' actual AI skills. Many teachers said they were aware of AI tools but had little technical knowledge and almost no training in using them in the classroom. Babanoğlu et al. (2025), discovered that although prospective EFL teachers acknowledged AI's potential, they concurrently expressed a sense of unpreparedness for its pedagogical and ethical integration.

Teacher Identity Under Pressure

Du et al. (2025) identified three clusters of identity tension experienced by Chinese EFL teachers in adapting to AI integration: conflicting I-positions (contested pedagogical beliefs on student-centered teaching); new I-positions (redefined responsibilities in lesson design, assessment, and cultivation of AI literacy); and constrained I-positions (obstacles such as the absence of institutional policy, students' uncritical engagement with AI, and limited Intelligent-TPACK). The traditional two-way interaction between the teacher and the student has been converted into a three-way interaction between the teacher, AI, and the student. And this changed the power dynamic and the way grades were handed out. These tensions of identity are not just psychological problems for individuals but structural ones, resulting from the disjuncture between the pedagogical demands posed by AI and the institutional resources available to meet them.

A Reform Roadmap for Language Teacher AI Education

A three-tier roadmap is suggested based on UNESCO (2024) and the requirements of language education:

Tier 1: Pre-Service Education: Programs should focus on teaching pedagogical reasoning about AI rather than tool use. This requires basic knowledge of conceptual AI, domain-specific AI literacy for language education (e.g., the cultural appropriateness of AI feedback, development of AI-integrated tasks at appropriate SAMR levels), ethics-informed design practice, and supervised practicum experiences in teaching AI-integrated lessons.

Tier 2: In-Service Professional Development: Programs must be ongoing (not one-time events) and grounded in the four-dimensional AI literacy framework of Ng et al. (2021). They should also be members of communities of practice where teachers exchange task designs integrated with AI, critically evaluate AI tools, and formulate ethical guidelines that are agreed upon by all. It needs administrative support (clear guidance on the curriculum, protected time, etc.)

Tier 3: Institutional Policy: Schools should develop AI use policies focused on how AI can support learning, rather than simply banning it. They also need to develop assessment frameworks that account for AI and ensure that all teachers and students have the technology they need to use AI responsibly.

Conclusion: Implications for Research, Practice, and Policy

The four arguments presented in previous Sections concerning pedagogical scaffolding, academic integrity, assessment validity, and teacher development are interrelated issues. They are different parts of the same basic problem: how to use AI in ways that really help language teaching and learning. The Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education (FRAILE), shown in Figure 1, brings these four areas together into a clear, useful model that operates at three levels that support one another.

Figure 1.

The FRAILE Framework: Framework for Responsible AI Integration in Language Education

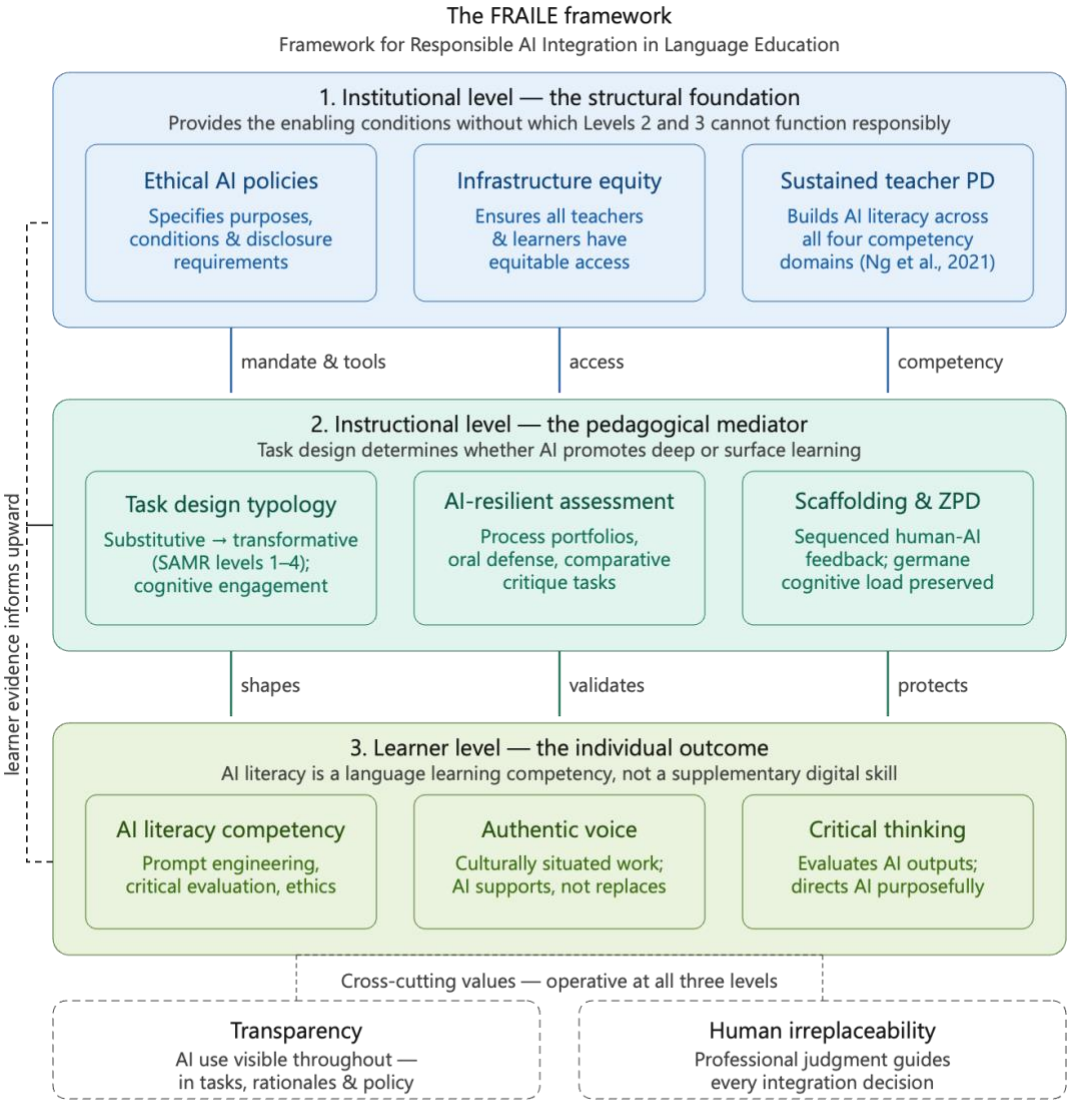

Figure 1 shows that FRAILE's three levels are neither hierarchical nor sequential; they must grow simultaneously. At the institutional level, the authority, access, and skills are available to design at the instructional level. The instructional level creates, monitors, and protects learner outcomes. Evidence of those outcomes is fed back to inform both institutional policy and

instructional practice. At all three levels, two general principles apply: transparency and irreplaceability of humans. These principles guarantee that AI integration is human-centric and guided by critical analysis.

This paper has addressed two central questions of AI in language education. The findings for RQ1 suggest that AI consistently enhances surface-level language performance (e.g., grammar accuracy, writing fluency, vocabulary range) across a range of EFL and ESL contexts. However, these benefits are largely realized at the Enhancement levels of the SAMR model and are highly dependent upon instructor scaffolding. For the moment, the promise of AI for deep, critical, and culturally authentic language development continues to rely on pedagogical design conditions that are not yet widely adopted in the field. The AI Task Typology introduced here identifies four levels of cognitive engagement, from Substitutive to Transformative, and offers language educators a functional design lexicon for moving AI use towards achieving authentic educational transformation.

In relation to RQ2, the field's focus on AI detection tools is symptomatic rather than root-cause oriented. This evidence suggests a better path: constructing AI-resistant and AI-informed assessments, instilling AI literacy in learners as a pedagogical duty, and preemptively cultivating teachers' professional skills to ethically incorporate AI. The SUPER framework of Hsu (2025), the strategy-graded reliance model of Hou et al. (2025), and the five AI-resilient assessment design principles presented here together provide a practically applicable response.

Implications for Researchers

The field requires a distinct move toward longitudinal, mixed-methods, and cross-contextual research methodologies. There is insufficient evidence to support the causal, developmental, or generalizable claims required for responsible pedagogical guidance (Wang et al., 2025; Li et al., 2025). The current evidence base is largely composed of short-term, single-institution studies of higher-education EFL in East Asia. Research on the integration of AI across contexts in K-12, vocational, heritage-language, and multilingual contexts would increase the generalizability of the evidence base. What is needed urgently is an integrative framework allowing for a constructive dialogue between research on language learning and teacher education.

Implications for Practitioners and Institutions

Develop design tasks for language teachers at AI Typology Levels 3 and 4. Make AI literacy development a primary teaching goal. Use portfolios and oral components to clarify and measure learning. Push for structured professional development. For institutions: Develop AI policies that are guiding, not just restrictive; invest in long-term, theory-based professional development aligned with UNESCO (2024); and prioritize infrastructure equity so that responsible AI integration benefits all learners and teachers, not just those in well-resourced contexts.

The educational value of AI for language learning does not stem from the technology itself, but from the quality of human decisions about when, how, and why to use it. Language teachers are the best people to make those decisions because they know about culture, communication, and the deeply human aspects of making meaning. What they need now from researchers, institutions, and policymakers is evidence, support, and training to become better.

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International Journal of TESOL & Education

ISSN: 2768-4563

Vol. 6, No. 2 (2026): TESOL & Education
Doi: https://doi.org/1054855/ijte.2662
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3233-457X

Publisher: ICTE Press

Address: International Association of TESOL & Education, 5243 Birch Falls Ln, Sugar Land, Texas, USA, 77479

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Country of Publication: Texas, United States
Publisher: ICTE Press, https://i-cte.org/press
Website: https://i-jte.org
Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/@ictepress
Open Access: Yes
ISSN: 2768-4563
Frequency: 4 issues per year
Publication Dates: February, May, August, and November
Language: English
Scope: TESOL, Languages & Linguistics, Education, Pedagogies & Language Teaching, Translation & Interpretation, Cultural studies, Quality Assurance in Education
Article Processing Charges: $70
Types of Journal: Academic/Scholarly Journals
Indexed: Google Scholar, ORCID, Crossref, DOI, Library of Congress, PKP PN, LOCKSS, CLOCKSS, Semantic Scholar, ROAD, EuroPub, J-Gate,
Policy: Double blind peer review
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