



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF TESOL & EDUCATION



August 2022, Volume 2, Issue 4
ISSN: 2768- 4563

5243 Birch Falls Ln, Sugar Land, Texas, USA, 77479
<https://i-jte.org>
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International Journal of TESOL & Education (ijte)

ISSN: 2768-4563

Vol. 2, No. 4 (2022): August 2022, Volume 2, Issue 4

 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.2224>

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3233-457X>



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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.

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Publisher: Asia Association of Computer-Assisted language Learning

Address: 5243 Birch Falls Ln, Sugar Land, Texas, USA, 77479

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TESOL & EDUCATION

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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
TESOL & EDUCATION**

ISSN: 2768- 4563

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Published: 2022-08-25

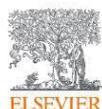
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The effects of task-based instruction on reading comprehension of non-English major students at a university in the Mekong Delta

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22241>

Received: 13/04/2022

Revision: 07/06/2022

Accepted: 08/06/2022

Online: 26/06/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: reading comprehension, task-based instruction, task-based language teaching

Reading is a core of English language learning skills. However, many English as a foreign language (EFL) learners face challenges in learning this skill due to a lack of exposure to authentic texts. Concerning this issue, it is believed that task-based language teaching (TBLT) is an ideal teaching method for successful reading learning. Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine how task-based instruction (TBI) influences students' reading comprehension and their attitudes regarding this teaching approach. The research was carried out at a university in the Mekong Delta, where English is a compulsory subject of all majors. The two groups – the control group and the experimental group were made up of 58 non-English major students. Data about students' reading performance and their attitudes towards the intervention were collected using two instruments: tests and questionnaires. The findings revealed that TBLT had a considerable impact on improving experimental students' reading comprehension. Moreover, students showed their positive views on the use of TBLT in their reading classrooms. Therefore, it is suggested that TBLT should be used as the main teaching approach to English language learning.

Introduction

With the current pace of globalization, English is regarded as an international language and is becoming an official or second language in many countries. Therefore, the ability to understand the language and communicate with other people in English has been the first demand for most people now. Reading is undoubtedly the central core skill for second language students (Grabe, 1991). According to Ökcü (2015), reading allows teachers to use various activities and help learners build their language skills in the long and short term. In other words, students can improve other skills, enhance the source of vocabulary with

different contexts, and come across various grammar structures through reading lessons. To take advantage of reading, learners must develop their reading comprehension skills.

TBLT is considered a model approach for language teaching nowadays in many countries. According to Abraham (2015), students use the target language in the TBLT approach for different natural settings in their classroom. Students are allowed to explore the meaning and express themselves in their own words, becoming active learners. There is always a specific purpose for any reading or other skills with task objectives, but in general, all tasks emphasize meaning and communication and help students complete the goals confidently and successfully (Willis, 1996). TBLT provides students with plenty of practical and meaningful practices in reading lessons, so students can take risks without worrying about conveying their meaning. Besides, students get more opportunities to interact with others in their classes thanks to authentic texts or natural contexts in tasks.

In the Vietnamese context, the purpose of teaching reading comprehension has not been achieved in terms of large extent (Trinh & Ha, 2017). Besides, the traditional way of teaching reading is commonly adopted by English teachers rather than using TBLT (Putri & Ratmanida, 2021). In the study of Tran (2021), students still have difficulties in doing reading comprehension tests as their lack of vocabulary and grammatical understanding. Therefore, students tend to translate words into their mother tongue to get the text's meaning, as in GTM. Additionally, few studies have been conducted to examine TBLT's effects on the reading comprehension of tertiary students. Therefore, the aim of this study is to find out the effects of task-based instruction (TBI) on learners' reading comprehension in university contexts and how students think about it for their language learning.

Literature review

Reading

Reading is viewed as a foundation of other language teaching and learning skills as learners have to read the written forms of words or texts to understand the language. Reading is described as the process of decoding the meaning of printed or written linguistic signals (Nuttall, 1982). The author explains the interaction between the reader's perceptions of the language's linguistic symbols and his language skills, cognitive abilities, and awareness of the world in the reading process. Van Dijk et al. (1983, as cited in Smith et al., 2021) describe that the readers have to combine their existing knowledge with the text's information to build a mental image of the text's meaning. In other words, to understand the written texts, readers often use prior knowledge and experience to compare to what is in the text. Carrell & Grabe (2010) state that people try to use many cognitive processes and knowledge resources to read for different goals, including "scanning, skimming, reading for general understanding, reading to learn, reading to integrate information and reading to evaluate critically" (p.215). Therefore, it is inferred that reading is an active activity that requires readers to consider the meaning of language and know how to tackle difficulties and incomprehension.

Reading comprehension

Comprehending a text is the process of extracting its meaning. The basis for good comprehension includes the awareness of the content of the text and its organization. Therefore, reading comprehension or reading for understanding is defined as a procedure of analyzing the text's visual and semantic aspects and creating a summary of the text's meaning (Carrell & Grabe, 2010). Similarly, Snow (2002) describes that reading comprehension occurs when the process is extracted from interaction and participation with written language. It implies that there should be a strong connection between the reader, the written text, and different types of reading activities that are indispensable in reading comprehension.

According to Grabe (2002), the fundamental objective of reading is to gain comprehension and help students become aware of the main ideas in a text as well as explore the text's organization. Similarly, Pham (2021) states that reading competency's primary goal is to demonstrate the author's meaning rather than comprehending every word in the text. It implies that to get a successful reading process. Readers should have a general understanding of the text's meaning before analyzing specific information. Ahmadi & Ismail (2013) reveal that readers' prior knowledge will be activated during the interaction with the text, and reading comprehension depends on readers' understanding of the next level. It is inferred that the way readers construct the meaning of the text depends on how they integrate their linguistic knowledge and outside knowledge into the written text and how they analyze different aspects of the text.

Task-based language teaching

The term "TBLT" refers to a teaching approach that was originally used in the 1980s and has received much attention and developed in second language teaching and learning. Prabhu (1987) states that TBLT is a teaching method that provides learners with communicative tasks and allows learners to exchange ideas to obtain the target outcomes. Therefore, TBLT has a significant impact on developing communicative competency. For Mckinnon and Rigby (2004, as cited in Nahavandi & Mukundan, 2013), learners will process language more naturally when teachers make it meaningful and comprehensible in the classroom. According to Richards & Rodgers (2001), the planning and instruction in TBLT include different tasks, which are the main features of language teaching. The authors believe that "engaging learners in tasks work provides a better context for the activation of learning processes than form-focused activities and hence ultimately provides better opportunities for language learning to take place" (p. 223). In TBLT, the tasks that learners do in the class reflect what learners experience in real life; therefore, the role of tasks is crucial and needs to be considered.

Tasks

Many linguists and researchers define 'tasks' in different aspects. Long (1985, as cited in Nunan, 2004) argues a task is "a piece of work" that can be done for one's benefit or that of

others, either for free or for some reward. The term task can be more understandable with the definition of Nunan (1998). Based on its syllabus, the task is divided into two terms: real-world tasks and pedagogic tasks. Real-world tasks refer to the activities that students may be asked to complete in real-life, while pedagogic tasks include different activities or exercises that students have to complete in the classroom. Willis (1996) defines tasks as activities in which learners communicate using the target language to achieve the goal. Learners have to comprehend the objectives of the tasks to complete them in a target time, in a meaningful way, and in the target language as well. The main focus of these tasks is communicative purposes; therefore, grammar or structure construction is less paid attention to during the process of doing tasks. Hence, 'task' in English reading classrooms can be defined as a reading activity in which learners can comprehend the meaning, manipulate the language used in the text, and produce the output by the target language with the help of teachers as well as the interaction with others.

Six major types of reading skills are appropriate for reading (Willis, 1996). Firstly, many talks are involved in the listing activity, requiring students to share their ideas. Secondly, ordering and sorting are slightly more challenging than the first activity since students have to sequence the information in a logical order, rank information in particular criteria, group them under given headings, and even classify the information differently. The other task is comparing, in which students compare the information from different sources to classify their similarities or distinctions. Problem-solving is also a challenging task since it activates students' thinking and intellect. The fifth task is sharing personal experiences that motivate students' interaction as they are free to talk and share their experiences. The last task is called creative tasks or projects, which may include a combination of the five previous tasks and take place in pair work or group work of students. In short, those activities give students the confidence to express their ideas or opinions, notice others' expressions and give feedback, or sometimes participate in negotiating, all of which aim at activating the use of target languages purposefully and cooperatively.

The task-based language teaching framework and its implementation in reading classes

Willis (1996) develops a framework for TBLT with three stages, including (1) pre-task – introduction to topic and task, (2) task cycle – task, planning, report, and (3) language focus – analysis and practice.

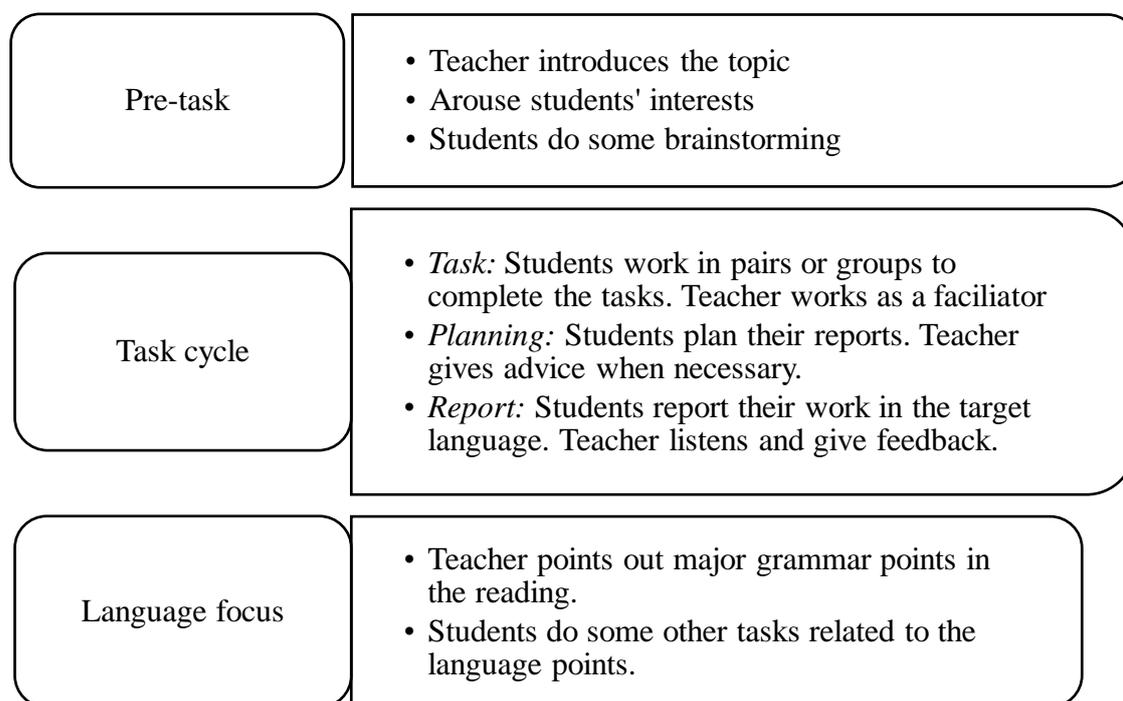


Fig. 1 A framework for task-based reading lessons

Pre-task stage

This stage aims to introduce and identify the topic. The role of the teacher is to assist students in recalling their knowledge of the topic; in other words, students have to do many brainstorming activities. Sometimes if there is an unfamiliar or complex topic, teachers should do lots of preparation to guide learners through introducing related-topic words or phrases, picking out those words in the text, or letting them cooperate with others.

Task cycle

The task cycle stage includes three components – task, planning, and report.

Task

The task component creates great opportunities for students to communicate when they work in pairs or groups to accomplish the task's objectives. The teacher sets out tasks; thus, he or she should ensure that all students can follow the instruction. Besides, the teacher acts as a monitor who saves his or her control and allows students to accomplish the tasks independently. In reading class, the teacher thus works as a facilitator, observes from a distance, helps the students out when they are stuck, and encourages them to pool the target output.

Planning

After doing the task, students have to plan their reports in the planning step. The teacher should inform the purpose of the report, and the form students can use to present and set them

the limit of time to deal with the final product. The teacher is ready to give advice when students need help by responding to their questions, commenting on good points, pointing out errors, or encouraging them to help each other.

Report

At this stage, the teacher's role is that of a chairperson who first introduces the presentation, informs the purpose of listening, decides who will talk next, and gives a conclusion—some types of presentations, including oral presentations, written presentations, and audio and video presentations.

Language focus

The language focus stage allows for a more in-depth examination of some specific language characteristics used in the task cycle. In other words, after focusing on meaning, the teacher will guide students to pay attention to language form and language use that are useful for their further use.

The effects of task-based instruction on students' reading comprehension

Many researchers have stressed the value of TBI in teaching and learning reading comprehension. For instance, Ökcü (2015) examined how TBI affected reading comprehension and new vocabulary learning of 50 students at a preparatory school who were placed into the experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG). The findings showed that TBI improved students' reading comprehension and vocabulary learning even after two weeks of the lesson. Furthermore, it suggested that students' motivation increases as they are active in completing the reading tasks.

The other study that also focused on examining TBLT's significance on students' reading comprehension was by Prasetyaningrum (2018). The author used a collaborative Classroom Action Research design with instruments including an observation checklist, field notes, and reading test to collect data. Twenty-two students in agriculture class studying English were chosen to participate in the experiment. The four main steps in the study were planning, action, observation, and reflection. After implementing TBLT, most students passed the target score, which thus implied that TBLT improved students' reading comprehension ability. Accordingly, TBLT provided students with more opportunities to participate in classroom activities and increase their awareness of studying reading skills.

In recent research, Ardika et al. (2022) used Classroom Action Research to conduct a study on 28 polytechnic students with an aim to examine their reading comprehension performance by TBLT. The researchers utilized an observation checklist and field notes to explore students' reactions to the teaching approach and a reading comprehension test to gather students' reading achievement. The results showed that 78.5 percent of participants passed the passing grade, and 21.5 percent got more grades than that. It proved that students' reading comprehension improved thanks to TBLT. Besides, students gave positive responses to TBLT's benefits that engage students in the activities and raise their consciousness of the

texts' content.

In Vietnamese contexts, Le & Nguyen (2012) examined how TBLT affected 76 non-English major first-year students' motivation to acquire and enhance their vocabulary. The study also aimed at examining students' perspectives on TBLT use in their vocabulary classroom. Three instruments were used in this research: (1) a questionnaire that explored the changes in students' motivation; (2) the pre-test and post-test that evaluated students' vocabulary acquisition; and (3) the interview that collected students' views towards TBL after the treatment. The findings showed that according to students' motivation for vocabulary study, the EG dominated the CG after the treatment, and similarly, the EG's vocabulary achievement was substantially higher than the CG's. Finally, the use of TBL was viewed positively by most interviewed students. Thus, the study suggested that TBL considerably influenced vocabulary teaching and learning.

In the study by Pham & Nguyen (2018), teachers' perceptions of the TBLT and its use in EFL classes at the tertiary level were investigated. 68 EFL teachers have taught English for at least two years and participated in the study. For quantitative data, the questionnaire was used, while semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain qualitative data. The results showed that all teachers had positive perspectives regarding TBLT application and hoped to put TBLT into practice in their teaching practice because of its advantages. However, the participants also mentioned three main challenges they faced in implementing TBLT: students unfamiliar with tasks, time constraints, and teachers' lack of English language proficiency.

In sum, in foreign contexts, the effects of TBLT on students' reading skills, reading comprehension, or other English language skills at the tertiary level have been the subject of numerous research. Most studies received positive results and suggested the implementation of TBLT in language teaching. In Vietnamese contexts, some related studies showed that TBLT had a great impact on teaching English vocabulary or speaking skills, but few studies have looked into how TBLT influences university students' reading comprehension. It is, therefore, necessary to carry out a study to explore the effects of TBLT on the reading comprehension of university students in Vietnamese contexts.

Research Questions

This study tries to seek the answers to the following questions:

1. What are the effects of task-based instruction on the reading comprehension of non-English major students at a university in the Mekong Delta?
2. What are students' attitudes towards the use of task-based instruction in their reading classroom?

Methods

Research design

The main methodology of this study was quasi-experimental research. In the present study, the independent variable was TBLT, while students' reading comprehension was the dependent variable. There were two instruments, t-tests and a questionnaire, to show a complete awareness of the influence of TBI on students' reading comprehension. The t-test was a tool to measure the difference between the two groups' scores after the treatment, and the questionnaire was used to study how students feel about the use of TBI in their reading classroom.

Research site

The study was conducted at Tra Vinh University, which is located in Tra Vinh province, Vietnam, in the first semester of the 2021-2022 school years. It has 13 departments and more than 1000 teachers who are official teachers and contract teachers. The curriculum focuses on teaching four skills in English and language areas to assist students in meeting the requirement of CEFR before graduation. The school has very good learning and teaching condition with many rooms and modern facilities. Each room is equipped with a projector, a big board, a micro, and a recording, thanks to which students have good opportunities to learn English. GTM and CLT are common teaching methods that most teachers use for teaching General English. Therefore, applying the TBLT teaching approach is not only challenging but also necessary for them at this time.

Participants

This study involved a total of 58 non-English major students in two classes. The participants' English levels were quite the same as they were studying in the same English course – General English 3. There were two groups of participants, including 30 students from the control group (CG) who studied reading based on the textbook's design and 31 students from the experimental group (EG) who were taught reading comprehension through TBI. However, one student in CG and two students in EG were not available to do the two tests; thus, the study included 29 students in each group. The participants were chosen first because they had the same level of English and then were taught by the researcher so that the process of researching is easily controlled.

Instruments

In this study, pre-test, post-test and questionnaire were the main instruments to collect data.

Pre-test and post-test

The pre-test and post-test results of the two groups were collected and analyzed to fulfill the first research question. The content and format of both tests were adapted from the reading parts of the Standardized Test – Preliminary English Test (PET). The test was designed to assess two reading aspects: reading for the main idea and reading for specific information. Each test includes three parts with 20 items: part 1 – 5 multiple-choice items, part 2 – 10 true-

false items, and part 3 – 5 multiple-choice items.

After being marked, the scores of the two tests were divided into five levels to see what level of reading English skills the students had, namely very weak (0-2.9), weak (3.0-4.9), average (5.0-6.9), good (7.0-8.9), and very good (≥ 9.0).

A Descriptive Statistic test was run to check whether any differences existed between the mean scores, the maximum, the minimum, and the standard deviation (SD) of the two groups' pre-test results. Then, Independent Samples T-tests were carried out to see if the mean scores of the two groups in both pre-test and post-test differed significantly.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire data was gained from the answers of 29 respondents in the EG to address the second research question. Following the Likert scale questionnaire, all the items were closed-ended sentences with five-point options from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The questionnaire content was adapted from Hadi (2013), who examined EFL learners' perspectives about TBLT in Iran. The questionnaire comprised two sections. The first section consisted of four questions asked about students' general information. The second section included two clusters with 20 items asking about students' affective attitudes and their cognitive attitudes towards TBI in their reading classroom.

The Reliability Statistics test was run to examine the reliability of the questionnaire. Next, a Descriptive Statistical Analysis was chosen to analyze the mean score of students' total responses, and another Descriptive Statistical Analysis was employed to evaluate the distinction between the mean scores of the two clusters. For descriptive statistical analysis, the Frequency (F), Percentage (P), Mean (M), and Standard Deviation (SD) of each item were computed. To see the significant differences between the mean scores of the two clusters, the researcher used a Paired-Samples t-test. Finally, to check how male and female participants viewed the effects of TBI in their reading lessons, an Independent Samples t-test was run.

Research procedure

The study took place during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022 at Tra Vinh University in the Mekong Delta. First, the pre-test was piloted on a sample of students who were not involved in the research for validity and reliability before delivering to the respondents. The questions were adjusted until they were reasonably designed. Then, the revised test was sent to the respondents. After that, a TBI treatment to teach reading comprehension was conducted on the EG while the CG studied reading following the textbook's design. Next, after ten weeks of the treatment, the participants received the post-test.

Some teachers received the questionnaire to read and gave feedback on the content to ensure its validity. Then, learners of the experimental class completed the questionnaire form to analyze the alignment between their perspectives and the practices. Finally, the tests and the questionnaire findings were carefully collected and analyzed.

Results/Findings and discussion

The distribution of pre-test scores of CG and EG is shown in figure 2.

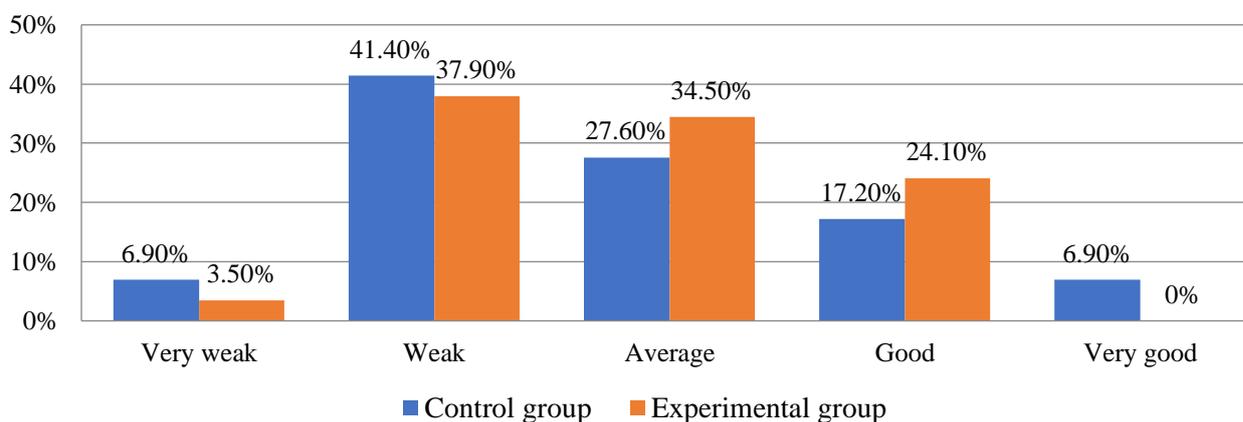


Fig. 2. Distribution of pre-test scores in CG and EG

Figure 2 displays the distribution of the pre-test scores in CG and EG. The chart presents that students in EG had better pre-test scores than those in CG. Specifically, the very weak scores percentage of CG was 6.9%, which is nearly double that of EG (3.5%). However, the weak scores of the two groups are not significantly different (41.4% and 37.9%, respectively). Meanwhile, both average and good scores of CG (27.6% and 17.2%) were lower than those of EG (34.5% and 24.1%). Finally, two students who got very good scores in CG with 6.9% compared to no students in EG achieved that score.

The results above revealed a distinction between the pre-test scores in CG and EG before the intervention. Therefore, the mean scores of the two groups should be calculated and analyzed to see whether they are different. The following t-tests were used to compare the significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups.

Comparison of mean scores of the pre-test

A *Descriptive Statistics Test* was used to examine whether the study's participants in CG and EG had the same level of English reading proficiency before the intervention. The results gained from the pre-test scores of the two groups were calculated, analyzed, and reported in the following table (Table 1).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the two groups on the reading pre-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	29	2.00	9.00	5.31	1.938
Experimental group	29	2.50	8.50	5.25	1.704
Valid N (listwise)	29				

As shown in Table 1, the *Descriptive Statistics* results of the two groups' pre-test scores were displayed. The results indicate a small gap between the mean score of CG ($M=5.31$) and that of EG ($M=5.26$). In detail, the pre-test scores of CG ranged from 2.00 to 9.00, while those of EG ranged from 2.50 to 8.50. Besides, the standard deviation of the pre-test in CG ($SD = 1.93840$) was higher than that in EG ($SD = 1.70410$), which meant that the pre-test scores of the EG were more variable than those of CG. Due to the difference between the mean scores of the two groups before the treatment, an *Independent Samples T-test* was run to check whether the difference was statistically significant or not.

Table 2

Independent Samples T-test of the pre-test of the two groups

Test	Condition	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Pre-test	Control	29	5.31	.108	56	1.9	.914	.05
	Experimental	29	5.26			1.7		

As table 2 illustrates, it is evident to see that the mean scores of the two groups were not statistically different. The Sig. value was 0.516 , which was significantly greater than the alpha value (0.05). Also, the Sig. (2-tailed) value of 0.914 was greatly higher than the alpha value (0.05). Therefore, it is possible to conclude that students in CG and EG shared the same level of English proficiency before the treatment. Therefore, it is satisfactory to conduct the study.

The distribution of post-test scores of CG and EG is shown in figure 3.

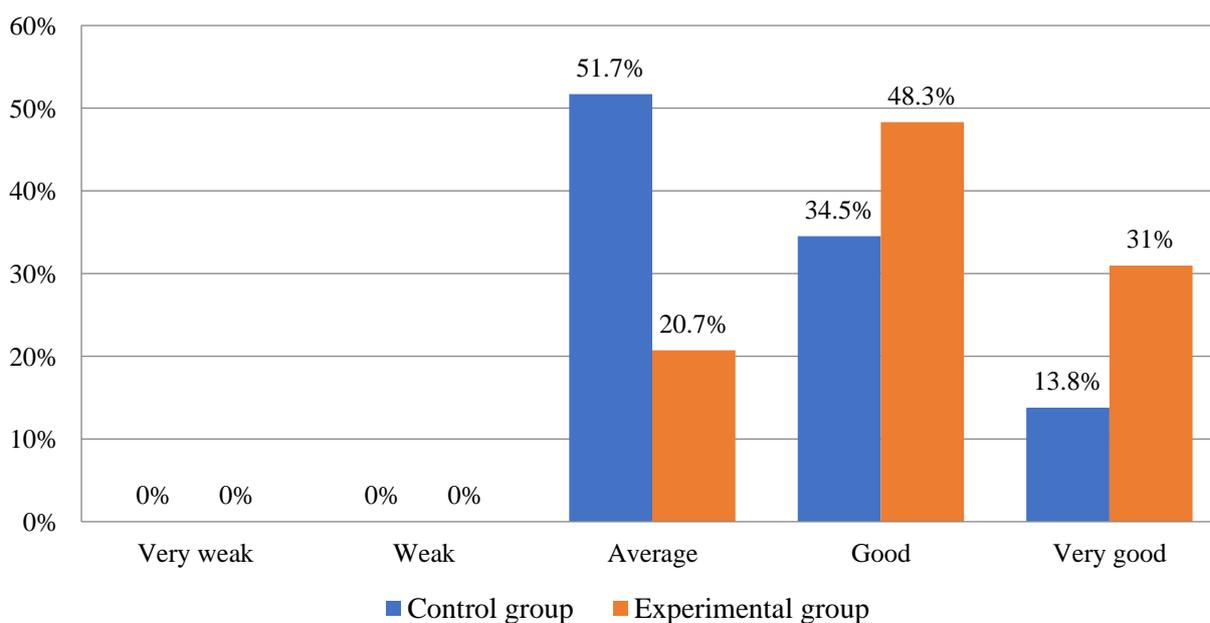


Fig. 3. *Distribution of post-test scores in CG and EG*

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the post-test scores in CG and EG. The participants in both CG and EG got higher scores after the treatment. However, there were still different trends between the two groups. In detail, after a period of studying, there were no students who got very weak and weak scores in both groups. Meanwhile, the proportion of the CG students with average scores was greatly higher than that of EG (51.7% and 20.7%, respectively), opposite to the proportion in the pre-test. The percentage of good scores in both groups increased, from 17.2% to 34.5% in CG and 24.1% to 48.3% in EG. Similarly, there were four students in CG with 13.8%, and nine students in EG with 31% got very good marks after the intervention.

The results above show a distinction between the post-test scores in CG and EG after the intervention. Therefore, the mean scores of the two groups should be calculated and analyzed to see whether they are different. The following t-tests were used to compare the significant differences between the mean scores of the two groups.

Comparison of mean scores of the post-test

A *Descriptive Statistics Test* was used to check if students' reading proficiency level in the two groups was different after the treatment.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of the two groups on the reading post-test

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control group	29	5.00	9.50	6.8966	1.27741
Experimental group	29	5.50	9.50	7.8448	1.18098
Valid N (listwise)	29				

Table 3 shows the results of *Descriptive Statistics* of the two groups after the intervention. The results inform that EG's means score ($M=7.8$) was much higher than that of CG ($M=6.9$). More specifically, the scores of CG were from 5.00 to 9.50 compared to those of EG, from 5.50 to 9.50. The Standard Deviation of CG and EG was slightly different ($SD = 1.27741$ and $SD = 1.18098$). It is clear that students in EG achieved more improvement in reading comprehension than those in CG after studying reading through TBI. However, to ensure whether the mean scores of the two groups were significantly different or not, an *Independent Samples T-test* was run.

Table 4*Independent Samples T-test of the post-test of the two groups*

Test	Condition	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Post-test	Control	29	6.90	-2.93	56	1.3	.005	-.948
	Experimental	29	7.84			1.2		

As shown in Table 4, the Sig. value was 0.758 , higher than the alpha value (0.05). It implies that the values of variables were normally distributed. The mean scores of the two groups in the post-test were statistically different ($t=-2.935$; $df=56$; $p=0.005 < \alpha=0.05$). This finding indicated that the participants' reading performance in EG was greatly higher than that of CG after the intervention. Thus, it is concluded that TBI positively affected students' reading comprehension.

Questionnaire

The reliability of the questionnaire

A *Reliability Statistic Test* was run to examine whether the questionnaire was reliable or not. The questionnaire would be reliable only when the Cronbach's Alpha was 0.7 and over. Table 5 below shows the findings of the analysis.

Table 5

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.873	20

As shown in Table 5, the result from the Cronbach's Alpha was $\alpha=.873$ for the overall 20 items, which suggested that the questionnaire appeared to be sufficiently reliable for the study.

Descriptive Statistically Analysis of the mean scores of students' attitudes

Table 6

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mean	29	3.35	4.60	3.9086	.40775
Valid N (listwise)	29				

A *Descriptive Statistics Test* was run to examine the mean score of participants' attitudes toward the use of TBI in their reading classroom. As indicated in Table 6, the mean score of 29 participants' responses is 3.9 , which is a high level of attitude according to Oxford (1990).

The results revealed that most study respondents had positive attitudes toward the English reading comprehension learning by TBI.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistical Analysis of students' affective attitudes

Items	M	SD
1. TBI motivates me to learn English reading.	4.10	.618
2. The implementation of TBI in reading comprehension is interesting.	3.38	.805
3. TBI creates a comfortable environment that encourages me to use the English language.	4.07	.704
4. I feel free to share and express ideas with friends and teachers.	4.07	.842
5. I do not feel nervous when making English language mistakes.	3.45	.948
6. TBI allows me to discuss and negotiate freely in pairs or groups.	4.38	.622
7. Interacting with friends makes me more confident.	3.90	.724
8. I am interested in doing different types of tasks.	3.79	.819
9. TBI makes me more active in completing tasks.	4.10	.618
10. I have become more confident in reporting in front of the class.	3.69	.891

Table 7 above reveals the results of students' affective attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classroom. The mean scores of 10 items were higher than the median value ($M=3.0$), ranging from 3.45 to 4.38. Surprisingly, most respondents agreed that TBI allowed them to discuss and negotiate freely in pairs or groups with the greatest mean score ($M=4.38$). The same number of students thought TBI motivates them to learn English reading and makes them more active in completing tasks ($M=4.10$). It is suggested that the participants have positive affective attitudes towards the use of TBI in reading classrooms.

Table 8*Descriptive Statistical Analysis of students' cognitive attitudes*

Items	M	SD
11. TBI improves my reading comprehension.	3.86	.639
12. TBI enhances my knowledge through authentic texts.	3.83	.759
13. TBI lessons activate my needs and interests.	3.79	.861
14. I know how to find the information in the text through TBI.	3.59	.907
15. I can improve other skills through integrated tasks.	3.76	.830
16. I can improve my knowledge with the teacher's help and feedback.	4.24	.739
17. TBI provides me with more opportunities to communicate in English.	3.86	.743
18. TBI improves my communicative skills.	3.66	.769
19. Language tasks and activities are meaningful and purposeful.	4.31	.471
20. TBI forms my habit of learning English reading.	3.90	.557

Table 8 shows the results of students' cognitive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classroom. The mean scores of items 11 to 20 were higher than the middle level ($M=3.00$), ranging from 3.59 to 4.31. Particularly, most students admitted that they could improve knowledge from the teacher's help and feedback ($M=4.24$) and believed that language tasks and activities are meaningful and purposeful ($M=4.31$). It is suggested that the participants had positive cognitive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classrooms.

Table 9*Paired-Samples T-test of students' affective and cognitive attitudes*

		Mean	N	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>
Pair 1	Affective	3.9379	29	.44514	.851	28	.402
	Cognitive	3.8793	29	.45070			

In Table 9, a *Paired Samples T-test* was run to compare the significant differences between the mean score of students' affective attitudes ($M=3.94$) and cognitive attitudes ($M=3.88$). The findings revealed that the two mean scores were not statistically different ($t=.851$; $df=28$; $p=0.402$). In other words, the study participants had equal affective and cognitive views on the effects of TBI in the reading classroom.

Table 10*Independent Samples T-test of male and female attitudes*

	Gender	N	Mean	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	SD	Sig. (2-tailed)	MD
Mean	Male	8	3.9	.031	27	.39	.975	.005
	Female	21	3.9			.42		

As shown in Table 10, an *Independent Samples T-test* was run to examine whether the mean score of female and male students' attitudes towards the use of TBI in the reading classroom was different or not. The results showed that the mean score between female and male students was not significantly different ($t=.031$; $df=27$; $p=0.684$). Therefore, it means that female and male students have the same ideas about the use of TBI in studying reading.

In sum, the findings show that non-English major students' reading comprehension was improved through the use of TBI to teach English reading. Besides, most students had positive attitudes towards the use of TBI in their reading classrooms.

Discussion

Students' reading performance

Based on data analysis findings, it was obvious that TBI brought beneficial effects to students' reading comprehension, which was presented clearly through the results of tests.

Firstly, the pre-test findings informed that students in the two groups had poor reading performance before the intervention. Although the mean scores of the two groups differed, it could be seen that they did not have any statistically significant differences according to the result of the Independent Sample T-test.

Secondly, the post-test results revealed that although students in the two groups improved their reading performance after ten-week of treatment, those in EG got better achievement in terms of mean scores and good scores. Moreover, the statistically significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups was so clear, which was demonstrated through the Independent Sample T-test. In other words, TBLT had a considerable impact on EG. Therefore, it could be concluded that the experimental students' reading comprehension has improved thanks to the application of TBLT.

The tests' findings confirmed that TBLT positively affected the reading comprehension of non-English major students. This conclusion is in line with the study of Ökcü (2015), Mesbah (2016), Prasetyaningrum (2018), Kalaiarasan (2019), and Aliia et al. (2019).

Students' attitudes towards the use of TBI

The aim of the survey was to explore how students felt about TBI using two aspects, namely affective attitudes and cognitive attitudes.

With regard to effective attitudes, many students agreed that TBLT increased their motivation and interest in learning reading. Besides, many students affirmed that they become more active and confident in completing tasks, interacting with friends, and even are able to express their ideas. The findings are the same as those of Ökcü (2015), Prasetyaningrum (2018), Le & Nguyen (2012), and Vo & Nguyen (2021), which revealed that TBLT had positive effects on increasing students' motivation.

In terms of cognitive attitudes, the majority of respondents believed that TBLT helped improve their reading comprehension. In addition, students could enrich knowledge from texts, teachers' feedback as well as the interaction between friends. Moreover, many students admitted that TBLT creates more opportunities for them to communicate in the target language, enhancing communicative skills. This finding corresponds to the results of Aliia et al. (2019) and Vu & Nguyen (2021), who suggested TBLT as a practical approach to improving communicative competency.

In conclusion, the questionnaire findings prove that the majority of students were enthusiastic about the teaching approach TBLT as it not only boosts students' motivation but also provides them an ideal learning environment by giving various tasks to improve their reading performance. Moreover, thanks to TBLT, students become more confident in interacting with others, which can also enhance their communicative skills.

Conclusion

This study tried to explore the impacts of TBLT students' reading comprehension and their attitudes towards this teaching method. From the findings of the tests, it could be seen that students' reading performance improved considerably after the intervention. The results showed that the mean scores of the two groups in the post-test were statistically different ($t = -2.935$; $df = 56$; $p = 0.005 < \alpha = 0.05$). Thus, the findings prove that TBLT has a significant influence on improving students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, the questionnaire findings indicated that students expressed positive views on the implementation of TBI in reading learning. Students found TBLT not only helpful but also interesting. Thanks to TBLT, students became more motivated, felt happy to share ideas with friends, and became confident in using the target language to complete tasks, thus strengthening their engagement in the lessons. Furthermore, students accepted that TBLT could improve their reading comprehension, and the interaction and the integration of other skills can also develop students' communicative skills.

Although the study received positive results from the effects of TBI in improving students' reading comprehension and positive attitudes, it still has some unavoidable limitations such as

time limit, a few participants, and a lack of qualitative data. Therefore, further studies should be conducted within a longer length of duration – in two semesters instead of one semester, for example – to ensure the constant effect of the approach over a long time. It is expected that there should be a larger population in further studies to make a generalization about the results. Additionally, further researchers should use both quantitative and qualitative methods with the purpose of obtaining more valid and reliable results.

Acknowledgments

I would like to give my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Assoc. prof. Pham Vu Phi Ho, Ph.D., for giving me valuable instruction, necessary corrections, and helpful comments. Thanks to his patience, advice, support, and extensive knowledge, I could have enough motivation to learn and conduct my study without hesitation. Although busy with work, he always spent valuable time responding to my questions and even offered new ideas for the thesis. It would be impossible to complete the study without his help.

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Biodata

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Using Scaffolding to Improve Online Group Presentation in English Literature Classes: An Action Study at Van Lang University

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Received: 11/01/2021

Revision: 09/06/2022

Accepted: 22/06/2022

Online: 26/06/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

scaffolding, feedback, questioning, digital resources, group-work presentation, English literature

The aim of this study is to examine the use of scaffolding to improve online group-work presentations in English literature classes. Different stages of action research such as planning, acting, observation, and reflection are described in detail. Three scaffolding activities (questioning, feedback, and providing digital resources) were used in this present study. Qualitative analysis reveals that teachers' scaffolding activities were found to be useful in supporting students' online presentation of literary texts. Specifically, it was found that teacher and peer feedback scaffolding played an important role in helping learners better understand literary texts. Another finding is that, on the one hand, questioning encouraged learners to explore different aspects of literary works. Providing resources, on the other hand, has a practical impact in helping learners out of frustration in searching for pertinent facts about the presentation tasks. The study can be a useful source of reference in teaching English literature online, especially in a multimodal learning environment.

Introduction

Scaffolding learners' skills acquisition is not new. However, in Vietnam, there are still very few studies on this issue, especially those related to scaffolding activities to support learners in their step-by-step implementation of English literature presentations. In the Vietnamese context in which English is used as a foreign language (EFL), learners in English Literature classes often encounter challenges in using English to present a prepared talk on a certain topic in English Literature. Apart from possessing good knowledge of the presentation topic, learners need to acquire an adequate level of language proficiency, adequate presentation and literary interpretation skills, adequate interpersonal and collaborative skills, and good psychological qualities. It is even more challenging for learners to perform their tasks in an online learning environment because they also need to develop the ability to use interactive multimedia resources such as PowerPoint presentations, graphics, animations, and videos to verbally

present their assignments (Mahdi, 2022; Fauzi, 2016). In the local context, this issue remains underexplored. Pham et al. (2022) also highlighted the importance of making an effective presentation via MS Teams. In addition, Nguyen (2022) has asserted that computer-based activities should be developed as a helpful way to improve students' speaking and presentation skills. Moreover, research by Phan et al. (2022) focused on investigating students' online learning conditions with the aim of finding the factors affecting their fluency in their speaking skills. This could be considered as a scaffolding to develop students' oral presentation skills. This present study attempts to bridge this gap by investigating the effectiveness of scaffolding in improving online group presentation in English literature classes at Van Lang University.

Literature review

The definition of scaffolding

Scaffolding is the process involving teachers' temporary assistance and guidance that help learners reach a higher stage or level in developing new skills and understanding complex concepts. Without such necessary assistance, learners could not accomplish their learning tasks independently (Gibbons, 2015).

The conceptual framework of scaffolding proposed by Spycher (2017) consists of the following stages: 1) Scaffolding vocabulary, structure, and content; 2) Composing, and 3) Evaluation and feedback. This present study uses these stages as components of the conceptual framework for an online group presentation in English literature classes, except for a slight modification in the composition stage which involves both composing and presenting.

This adapted framework is appropriate for teaching online group presentations because, in each stage, learners may have problems with English communication skills and literary interpretation skills. They can be discouraged and less confident about not being able to use the English language effectively to perform their tasks. The discouragement and lack of confidence might take away their inspiration to explore the literary work. In this case, teachers must help their students prepare, organize, and deliver their presentations. Teachers' support can be in many different forms. This present study explores the effectiveness of the following forms of support or scaffolding.

Types of scaffolding used

The first type is a teacher and peer feedback. It is considered an effective tool to help learners share ideas and knowledge and improve their language skills. This has been documented in earlier research (e.g., Yawiloeng, 2021). Chairinkam & Yawiloeng (2021) stated that peer scaffolding could assist learners in overcoming any problems they may encounter while engaging in English writing activities. Furthermore, peer scaffolding can help learners to reach a higher level of language performance.

The second type of scaffolding used in this study is questioning. Questions have been studied as interactive teaching features in classroom settings but not used as a pedagogical tool to teach the presentation genre to exploit its rhetorical and interpersonal potential. Rafael & Carmen (2015) suggest that questioning should be incorporated into teaching group presentations. Questions could frame the presentation: initially to brainstorm ideas and concepts and thus establish a common ground of shared knowledge, and finally as a comprehension check. Iannelli (2016) emphasized how questioning techniques positively affect students' comprehension of informational text. Questioning is considered a powerful strategy to check students' comprehension of literary works. Different from fact-based questions, which can only be given when students deliver a large amount of information, interpretive questions can also be produced after students have a better understanding of the literary work. This type of question is open-ended, requiring deep thought and critical thinking. Interpretive questions usually start with "why" or "how" to explore the beauty, the themes, and the author's implication. In order to answer these questions, students should combine both their critical thinking and textbooks or other information sources locating, which enables them to remember the lesson and the literary work longer. When students are exposed to these questions, it would be easier for them to find out the tone of the literary work as well as its thematic pattern.

The third type of scaffolding explored in this study was the use of online resources. Despite the fact that there is a significant number of studies dealing with students' perceptions of the use of digital vs. print resources, no study has focused on how students perceive the potentialities of digital collections. As Roig-Marín and Prieto (2021) noted, the only exception is Guzmán-Simón et al. (2017) research into undergraduate students' perspectives on digital competence. Exposure to a large number of online resources might make learners overwhelmed and confused when selecting reliable resources for their presentation. By providing useful information resources, learners are able to access more accurate and useful facts about the work. This is especially meaningful to those who have to memorize accurate facts about authors and their works. With the useful and reliable information resources suggested by the teacher, learners could set their minds at rest when designing their presentations. These sources also serve as a tool for helping students improve their generalization skills, which is essential in making presentations focused.

This present study aims to examine the effectiveness of scaffolding intervention in assisting learners in their online literature presentations. To achieve this aim, the following research questions were employed:

1. How can teacher and peer feedback enhance learners' presenting performance?
2. How can the use of questioning enhance learners' presenting performance?
3. How can the use of relevant online resources improve the quality of learners' PowerPoint presentations?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

This study was carried out at Van Lang University (Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam). The participants were third-year English-majored students in K24N classes taught by the researcher. The total number of students participating in the study is 140. These students have completed the subjects of English language skills and language knowledge, and their English proficiency is at the B2 level according to the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR).

The English literature program at Van Lang University consists of 30 periods, equivalent to 2 credits. The program content has two components: literary theories and selected authors and their works. The theory component takes one credit, including 15 lessons taught directly in class or through online software MS Team and 30 hours of self-study with guidance. The practical component consists of 30 practice periods and 15 hours for students to self-study with guidance. There are two self-study sessions through videos posted by the lecturer on the school's e-learning site, where students are required to watch videos and do exercises. The program is designed to enhance students' sense of self-study and self-exploration.

The objective of the course is to help English majors at Van Lang University acquire basic knowledge of the history of English literature, master basic literary genres, as well as understand selected authors and typical works. Through self-study and class presentations, students will develop the ability to find and analyze information in the study of English literature, increase confidence when presenting their prepared task in class and improve their group-work ability.

In terms of learning materials, the textbooks are internally compiled, mainly focusing on introducing the development stages of English literature over time. This theoretical part only focuses on introducing some typical authors and works corresponding to each period. In each lesson, students are assigned to read at home in advance to prepare for the next class. Corresponding to each literary period, students also learn a typical literary work for that period.

Design of the Study

This study used action research as a method to examine the effectiveness of scaffolding to improve online group presentation in English literature classes at Van Lang University.

The study involved action, evaluation, and reflection. Evidence was gathered to implement changes in practices. Specifically, the following processes were utilized to some extent:

- ✓ Plan a change;
- ✓ Take action to enact the change;
- ✓ Observe the process and consequences of the change;
- ✓ Reflect on the process and consequences;
- ✓ Act, observe, and reflect again.

For the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022, the teacher followed the adapted scaffolding framework to comply with the course syllabus. Students had one week to prepare for their presentation and were encouraged to search other sources for supplementary information. In each 3-hour lesson, the group in charge of the theory part presented in PowerPoint the historical and social elements of British society, as well as the featured authors and their works. After each presentation, questioning and feedback were made by the teacher and their peers so that students could have a better understanding of the literary work. Students related the issues in work to their personal experiences. Students were also encouraged to explore the beauty of the work in terms of entertainment and artistic perspective.

Data collection & analysis

Two data collection instruments were used: (1) students' presentations and their reflections; (2) teacher and peer feedback.

The first instrument is the students' presentation and reflection. After each presentation, students in other groups were allowed to ask at least two questions related to the presentation. These questions were sent to the Meeting Chat - one of the two main interaction channels of MS Teams software. The presentation group answered questions directly using the speaker, so everyone in the class could hear. The students' answers were texted and also sent on the Meeting Chat for their peers to follow. Students from other groups can support the presentation groups in answering the questions, and they can get a bonus point for their support.

In contrast, the groups that did not prepare the questions got a minus point. The rewarding mechanism was expected to motivate students to read the learning materials and prepare questions and answers. This helped reinforce students' knowledge and made their online presentations highly interactive.

The second instrument is a teacher and peer feedback. When questions were posted on Meeting Chat, the teacher evaluated the content and asked questions so that students could make appropriate adjustments to the content of the presentation. The teacher gave comments and suggestions on each answer, and she also provided the correct answers and gave students more resources to study further.

The qualitative data analysis focuses on what can be celebrated and what needs attention. By looking at both teacher and learners' reflections and feedback, it is possible to determine the priority areas for action.

Findings and discussion

This section discusses the students' performance in their presentations and teacher's scaffolding, as well as the results of the students' interviews.

Students' performance and teacher's scaffolding

During the course, students participated in presentations in 5 sessions in weeks 2, 3, 5, 8, and

9. In the first two weeks, students' presentations lacked consistency and generalization, and they contained many overlapping details.

To support students in overcoming their weaknesses, teacher and peer feedback was used to help learners reflect on their performance. It was found useful to provide sentence patterns suggested by Croswell (2021) for giving feedback. For example:

“Something I really appreciate about your presentation is...”

“I think you did a great job when you ...”

“I would love to see you do more of X as it relates to Y...”

According to Croswell (2021), “these sentence patterns help students avoid thinking of feedback in terms of “positive” or “negative”. Rather, students were encouraged to think of feedback in terms of reinforcing and redirecting. Reinforcing feedback is given when we want someone to keep doing a certain positive behavior. With directing feedback, we are telling someone that we want them to stop doing X and start doing Y.” With these types of feedback, students were enabled to explore the artistic values of a particular literary work. For example, group 5, in presenting Shakespeare's King Lear, demonstrated the ability to analyze the use of metaphors to convey the theme of nothingness. Thanks to teacher and peer feedback, learners were able to see the meaning in small details, which are symbolic of the concept of nothingness. Student 3 reflected on King Lear's status: "At first, I didn't pay attention to the fact that King Lear lost everything after his decision to divide his kingdom. The feedback from my teacher and classmates enables me to see things in terms of the metaphors used in the play.” These types of feedback can serve as examples of quality peer scaffolding advocated by Shin et al. (2020). By the word “quality”, Shin et al. place emphasis on the type of peer scaffolding that enables learners to ask critical questions or poses new ideas while engaging in group activities.

Teacher feedback was followed by guiding questions for class discussion. For example, the following questions were raised to help learners wrap up their presentations:

- (1) What are the most distinctive features of English literature during the 1066 period?
- (2) How did social factors influence the literary development of this period?
- (3) Who are the most influential authors and why?

These questions helped students focus on developing generalization skills and critical thinking skills. They were able to identify the general features of a particular period and the roles played by the authors of that period.

Comprehension scaffolding was also used to help students understand the events or plot of the literary text. Student 7 said: “I was reminded of the subplot in which nothing causes the same trouble to the minor characters. The feedback encourages me to further explore the theme of the play that is conveyed in the subplot.” Student 10 said: “Thanks to the feedback, I started to notice the consequences that King Lear caused and suffered from his act of sheer folly. He lost his kingdom, then his status, then his family, and his mind.” It is noticeable that this type of

scaffolding involved linguistic, cultural, and reading skill assistance from the teacher or peers when needed. The findings of this present study are consistent with those of Zarei and Alipour's (2019) study and Rawengwan and Yawiloeng's (2020) study in that scaffolding provided a kind of comprehension aid to help learners gain a better understanding of the reading text and to motivate them in developing reading strategies.

Similarly, Yusuk (2018) reported that scaffolding techniques could enhance Thai EFL students' reading comprehension by supporting them to draw on prior knowledge and create new information. Wood (2017) also emphasized the importance of teacher assistance and guidance in language analysis prior to engaging students in creative activities. He noted that they were willing to engage in more challenging responses only once they felt confident with their understanding of the literary text.

Questioning also helps students in summarizing. For example, the following two questions were used to help Group 2 recognize the overlapping in their summary. The first question is, "How do the works of author X reflect the social life of Britain in...?". The second question is, "What are the social factors reflected in the works of author X in ...?" These two questions have the same meaning. Students can use either one, but they should not use both. Otherwise, their presentation becomes lengthy because of unnecessary repetition. These two questions gave students an example of how to avoid overlapping details. When students were asked to look at the presentation again, they were able to identify the overlapping details. Student 8 said: "I think it's useful to look again at our presentation to see if there are any overlapping. And the use of questioning helps us maintain focus in our presentation." Students in Group 2 reported that their group perceived questioning as an effective tool to help them identify and summarize the main points of their presentation contents.

Interview results

The results of the interview showed that students preferred teacher feedback on their group work preparation because they could know what to improve and therefore felt more confident in presenting their group work. They also appreciated their peer feedback because they had an opportunity to share their views in an online learning environment. Student 1 said: "We were provided with sentence patterns to give feedback which helps us to avoid negative criticism." Student 4 said: "I didn't feel embarrassed at the feedback because my classmates used sentence patterns to give constructive comments on my performance." The interview findings of this present study are in line with those of Aliyu and Yakubu's (2019) study, which reveals that "learners acquire knowledge from interactions with peers and experts who are more knowledgeable" (p. 87). More importantly, it was found that peer feedback or peer scaffolding was mutually beneficial to both the scaffolders and the scaffolders. This fact is evidenced in Demissie's (2018) study in which scaffolding intervention was used to enhance learners' reading performance. Both the weaker learners and the more knowledgeable learners agreed that the scaffolding intervention as socially valid.

Students also liked questioning activities during the presentation. They found it highly

interactive, and they suggested that more questioning patterns should be introduced to help them develop interpretation skills. Student 2 said: “I find the questioning session engaging. Actually, I learned a lot from my friends when I asked questions. The problem is I need more questioning patterns to formulate my questions.” Student 6 admitted she was not good at questioning: “I simply don't know how to ask questions of good quality.”

Students wanted other forms of support besides questioning activities to build their interpretation skills and creativity. As far as this matter is concerned, Manzollilo (2016) proposed the following activities: telling the story of a minor character, rewriting a passage from a different point of view, and filling in a blank in the narration. In Manzollilo's ideas, these forms of scaffolding help learners develop the fundamental skills of reading, interpreting, and criticizing literary texts. Ha Thi Thu Nguyen (2016) suggested other creative expression activities such as writing a poem based on word prompts, writing a letter to a fictional character or a continuation to a story, and enacting role-plays using scripts adapted from literary texts, structured guidelines, and their own improvisations. The researcher maintained that scaffolding activities like these put learners in creative experiences of literature and heighten their connection with it. In the context of this present study, those suggested activities can be implemented in the next phase of action research.

Another type of scaffolding used in this study is providing relevant resources. Most students stated that they found the digital resources the lecturer and their peers shared with them usefully. In presenting Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, Group 8 could gain access to suggested links and websites to learn about this novel. By watching movies with different versions of *Pride and Prejudice*, students could make the comparison in terms of perspectives and characterization. The students in Group 8 all agreed that they were motivated to learn English literature while watching different movie versions of a literary text. According to Travis and DeSpain (2018), using digital resources “can enrich student experiences of reading, writing, and researching” (p. ix). Likewise, Roig-Marín and Prieto (2021) points out that the multimodal nature of digital resources may increase students' motivation when dealing with literary texts. In this aspect, Yawiloeng's (2020) suggestion for considering appropriate multimedia modes for EFL classrooms also applies to English literature classrooms in the particular setting in Vietnam. It is, therefore, necessary to focus on enhancing literary appreciation through the use of multimodal texts along with teacher and peer scaffolding within a multimodal learning environment.

Conclusion

Overall, scaffolding provided by the teacher is important in helping learners understand literary texts. Teacher feedback plays a supportive role, supplementing peer feedback to help learners realize the limitations of the content they present. Questioning is also a useful technique in helping students explore different aspects of literary works. Providing resources helps students focus on pertinent facts about the presentation tasks, and it also has an effective impact on

learners in their search for relevant information. All these activities aimed to enable the students to interact creatively with the texts and the class before and during their oral presentations in the English literature classroom.

The above-mentioned findings imply that the teacher's role is to provide learners with appropriate scaffolding to encourage them to explore ideas and values in a literary text through social interaction instead of imposing subjective judgments. It is also suggested that peer scaffolding should be endorsed in the English literature classroom to facilitate learners' oral presentations.

This paper only focuses on the students taught by the researcher within a semester. Further studies should be conducted during a longer period of time to see how scaffolding affects students' performance in the long run. Other forms of scaffolding should also be explored in connection with students' performance in online literature classes.

Acknowledgement

The authors of this article acknowledged the support of Van Lang University at 69/68 Dang Thuy Tram St. Ward 13, Binh Thanh Dist., Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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Biodata

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Extensive Reading on Postgraduate Students' Perceptions and Its Effects on Reading Comprehension

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22243>

Received: 04/05/2022

Revision: 18/06/2022

Accepted: 22/06/2022

Online: 26/06/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: extensive reading, reading comprehension, students' perceptions, reading, ER.

Several studies have shown the effectiveness of extensive reading (ER) in English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms. This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of ER and its benefits on reading comprehension. Extensive reading is considered to be a useful reading technique to arouse students' reading abilities. Data were collected from 36 participants who are master's candidates at a university in Southern Vietnam through a 3-Likert scale questionnaire and a semi-interview on study issues. The findings of the study claim that students applied ER to their reading processes through free reading, free topics, and non-pressure on reading tasks. Students believe that ER activities help to improve reading competence and unconsciously build up a reading habit for readers. From the results of the study, ER proves its advantages by what students gained, such as the ability to comprehend reading passages and to make inferences or predictions. The researcher suggests further studies should focus on factors that affect ER processes and conduct experimental research to evaluate ER advantages.

Background of the study

On the perspectives of second language acquisition (SLA), Krashen (1985) states that reading materials are considered to be one of the inputs of languages that are analyzed and acquired through a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). He also says that students may acquire a language greater if the inputs are comprehensible and interesting. Extensive reading (ER) is required to explore languages and engage in learning. Therefore, many pieces of research on this topic in Vietnam and over the world open a large image of ER (Phuong, 2018; Waring & Vu, 2020; Uemura, 2020; Sun, 2020). In English learning, reading plays an important role in developing many other aspects of a language, such as vocabulary, grammar, structures, meanings, etc. According to Ni'mah and Umamah (2020), they suggest that ER may be an effective tool to make reading enjoyable and interesting to students. Furthermore, Stanley (2005) suggested that extended reading entails students reading long texts or significant amounts of text for general understanding and enjoyment.

Statement of problems

Recently, there has been an interest in ER, which has been researched by many authors. Besides the benefits of ER, some research shows its limitations. Due to the limit of time allowance in class, the researchers did not have enough time to investigate the impacts of student encouragement to make ER become a habit in their daily life (Ruzin, 2019). The studies of Tien (2015) and Hagley (2017) showed that within the study period, their students significantly improved reading comprehension. Still, it could not become a habit after they completed their studies (Hagley, 2017). Another study written by Nurviyani (2020) described that students were lack of motivation when implementing ER. They felt bored while searching for appropriate materials to read. Although they were able to comprehend the passage quickly, their reading comprehension development was not improved significantly due to many unknown words. According to Elley (2001), several instructors appear to have little or no knowledge of ER or to have made incorrect assumptions about ER. Few believe that ER is beneficial to ER advanced-level students, i.e., those who can read lengthier and more difficult texts. They might argue that understudies with inferior abilities would not gain anything from ER.

In Vietnam, generally, many schools or universities have focused on textbooks and fairly applied ER in their classes. They taught students and guided them to read intensively instead. The others applying ER are misunderstanding ER approaches (Waring & Vu, 2020). Therefore, engaging students to read extensively is a missed aspect of teaching and learning. In particular, students who are participating in a master's course already have experience in this field. They normally are teachers who teach in educational schools or institutions. When studying at a Vietnamese university, the researcher found that master's students are facing many difficulties in reading learning materials such as textbooks, extra documentaries, and journals relating to their linguistics major. Many of them have issues with reading comprehension skills, although they have built up reading skills for many years when being at the undergraduate level. Moreover, the students get stressed with a lot of new terms and concepts related to linguistics. They seem to be lost in the reading mazes and feel hard to be enjoyable with textbooks. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research on reading strategies to solve these problems.

Purpose of the study

For all the reasons mentioned above, the researcher decided to carry out this study titled "***Extensive reading on postgraduate students' perceptions and its effects on reading comprehension***," with the main focus on students' perceptions of ER. In this paper, the researcher target to investigate students' perceptions of ER, which may help them to improve their comprehension skills, and also figure out the factors that affect their reading comprehension when applying ER in learning.

Literature review

Extensive reading

Recent theoretical developments have revealed that ER is a considered approach to developing reading skills (Krashen et al., 2004). Grabe and Stoller (2013) say that ER is a method that allows students to select appropriate materials which are suitable to their levels and read them as much as possible. Furthermore, Bamford and Day (1998) defined that ER activities may bring motivation to students and build up a solid habit of reading. This has also been explored

in prior studies by Carrell and Carson (1997); Nuttall (1982), as cited in Willy A (2009), that the terms "extensive reading" and "intensive reading" are not interchangeable. Intensive reading usually involves students working with short texts under the teacher's supervision. The goal of intensive reading is to assist students in getting a deeper understanding of the material, develop reading skills (such as identifying primary ideas and text connectors), and improve vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. It's crucial to remember that these two approaches to reading instruction—intensive and comprehensive reading—are not mutually exclusive; they serve different but complementary functions.

In the light of a report by Krashen (2004), it is conceivable that ER is part of the Free Voluntary Reading (FVR) movement, which promotes independent, voluntary reading. Sustained Silent Reading and Self-Selected Reading are two more types of FVR. Another perspective of ER written by Bamford and Roberta (2015) states that ER is based on reading simple content with one to two unfamiliar words on each page for broad comprehension. Students select their own content and have the option to stop reading if the information is not engaging. After reading, there are no assessments; the purpose is for students to express their personal reactions to what they have read. ER is similar to reading in a native language in that its main components are purpose and pleasure.

According to Day and Bamford (2002), an ER process should include the following elements:

1. Students will probably read as much as possible, both inside and outside the classroom.
2. Different materials are available on different subjects to facilitate reading in different ways for different reasons.
3. Students choose what to read and stop reading materials if they are not interested.
4. The purpose of reading is generally for joy, information, and general understanding. These purposes depend on the type of material and the student's interests.
5. Reading is its own reward. There is little or no follow-up practice after reading.
6. The reading material corresponds to the student's language proficiency in terms of vocabulary and grammar. Dictionaries are rarely used when reading, as stopping searching for words makes it difficult to read fluently.
7. Reading is done individually and quietly, outside the class, at the student's own pace, at the time and places the student desires.
8. Reading books and materials are usually faster than slower because students read books and materials that are easy for them to understand.
9. The teacher will guide the students toward the goals of the program, explain the methodology, track what each student is reading, and guide them to get the most out of the program.
10. Teachers are role models for students as readers, active members of the classroom reading community, and show what it means to be a reader and the benefits of being a reader.

These mentioned-above elements highlighted the guidance to apply ER into the teaching process. The following part is a definition of reading comprehension, which is the result of ER

application from different perspectives of related research.

Reading comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the most complex actions that humans engage in. Reading theorists have focused on comprehensive and meaningful descriptions of reading comprehension, and various theoretical models have been proposed in recent decades (McNamara & Magliano, 2009; Perfetti & Stafura, 2014). These models range from general theoretical models that describe the relationships and interactions between subcomponents of understanding to process-specific models of understanding. After examining the different frameworks and models, there is a significant impact on theory development, reading comprehension research, and teaching. Perfetti et al. (2005) state that reading comprehension requires the coordination of a number of cognitive and linguistic processes, including word reading, functioning memory, making inferences, comprehension control, vocabulary, and prior knowledge.

Following the ideas mentioned above, Brown (2001), as cited in Pham (2021), describes reading comprehension as primarily a proper and efficient understanding of the meaning of the text in order to fully understand and answer descriptive questions. Reading literacy is meaningless if the reader does not understand the content of the text (Tokunaga, 2008, as cited in Tran, 2021). It means that the readers will not perform reading comprehension unless they can decode the hidden message in the text.

To sum up, there are many different definitions of reading comprehension based on the researchers' perspectives. Pham and Le (2019) define the last definition of reading comprehension. They refer that reading comprehension is a dynamic process in which the text and the reader's prior knowledge interact to create meaning. There are some related studies presented in the following part in order to clarify the relationship between ER and reading comprehension.

Related studies

Previous research on the impacts of ER has used a variety of research methodologies, but few have implications for how ER enriches reading comprehension at the master level.

A study entitled "Online Extensive Reading in an EFL Context: Investigating Reading Fluency and Perceptions" on Vietnamese students was conducted in 10 weeks by Bui and Macalister (2021). Using pre-and post-tests to collect students' self-assessment after participating in an extensive online reading program, the results show that ER has a positive impact on reading development, increasing about 20% of reading proficiency. Furthermore, this study shows through a semi-structured interview that students' attitudes were positively changed thanks to ER. However, due to the small number of participants, this study needs to be examined at a larger scale to understand students' perceptions of ER better and to uncover missing areas of ER's impact on reading fluency.

In a seminar at the University of Hawaii, Hitosugi and Day (2004) titled "ER in Japanese" implemented an ER program based on Japanese children's literature. This ten-week program enhanced students' reading comprehension scores on a standard test. It also improved students' attitudes toward studying Japanese and their motivation to do so. The researchers offered a full overview of the challenges they faced when adding ER into the course, which is a valuable contribution. This account can help researchers better understand how to use ER in the future.

Along with the above studies, a recent study performed by Khalid (2015) titled "The Effectiveness of an ER Program in Developing Saudi EFL University Students' Reading Comprehension" consisted of 54 samples and was divided into two groups: experimental (ER treatment) and control one (conventional method). The results of this study show that ER can increase motivation and make learning interesting. He also emphasizes the important role of ER as a powerful tool to improve student performance and positively impact students' reading comprehension. The limitation of this study is it requires further research on a bigger scale of participants and to analyze more variables relating to his study. According to Leung's (2002) case study, he looked at extensive reading and its association with adult self-study of Japanese over the course of a 20-week period. ER practice appears to have impacted vocabulary and reading ability, according to the findings. According to this study, Hong and Wang (2007), as cited in Wang and Chu-Tai Ho (2019), found that their female sample improved in reading, listening, speaking, and writing when applying ER to her reading process.

The association between substantial reading and affective aspects has also been studied. ER is highly recommended by Krashen (1993, 1994); Krashen and Terrell (1983) since it entails subconscious learning, intelligible material, and a low affective filter, the latter being very likely the core for the learner to maintain efforts. In a recent review of ER research – "The Effectiveness of Core ER Principles", Jeon and Day (2015) examined five main components of ER treatments, presenting Day and Bamford's (2002) principles on three main aspects: materials, learner attitudes and role of teachers. The results emphasize that the implementation of five basic principles can influence the outcome of the ER program. The researchers believe that the ER approach is more useful for adults than for adolescents. Finally, students guided by skilled and passionate teachers can get much more motivation to learn.

Research Questions

With different points of view, each research has shown a nature image of *ER*. The understanding issue is what master candidates know about *ER* while they may use this technique without recognizing it purposely beneficial to their study. To figure out this issue, the researcher decided to focus on the questions below:

Research question 1 (QR1): What are students' perceptions of ER at the master level?

Research question 2 (QR2): How does ER improve reading comprehension at the master level?

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The aims of the research were to find the students' perceptions of using *ER* in their study and to answer how it improves reading comprehension in the context of postgraduate studies. Therefore, this study was conducted in Foreign Languages Department at a Vietnamese private university. Forty master candidates were studying during the period of sample collecting, and only thirty-six responses (90%) were collected. The participants were postgraduate students who were studying Master of Linguistics in this school. They mostly were teachers who had experience in teaching English as a foreign language. In addition, they understood and applied extensive reading both in class and at home. To complete the tasks of assignments and projects during this master's course, they must read a lot of materials, documentaries, books, articles, and so on. Therefore, using different strategies to read and comprehend the course books is one

of their learning methods.

Design of the Study

Table 1. The 3-Likert scale questionnaire on student's perceptions of ER and the improvements gained by ER application

Questions	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
SECTION 1			
SP1: I know what extensive reading is.	1	2	3
SP2: I believe that practicing extensive reading is important.	1	2	3
SP3: I believe that my skills are improved by extensive reading activities.	1	2	3
SP4: I believe that extensive reading is a good learning habit.	1	2	3
SP5: I believe that extensive reading has become my regular activity in learning.	1	2	3
SP6: I believe that extensive reading is a necessary skill in postgraduate courses.	1	2	3
SP7: I believe that extensive reading is not only offline but also online.	1	2	3
SP8: With extensive reading, I can get more knowledge about the topic I am searching for.	1	2	3
SP9: With extensive reading, I can access to many different English inputs in various contexts.	1	2	3
SP10: With extensive reading, I can learn English with fun and pleasure.	1	2	3
SECTION 2			
ER1: Extensive reading helps to increase vocabulary.	1	2	3
ER2: Extensive reading helps to sequence a passage into an ordinal series.	1	2	3
ER3: Extensive reading helps to understand the details of what you have read.	1	2	3
ER4: Extensive reading helps to understand the main ideas of what you have read.	1	2	3
ER5: Extensive reading helps to summarize the gist and draw the conclusion.	1	2	3
ER6: Extensive reading helps to make inferences / predictions.	1	2	3
ER7: Extensive reading helps to remember new words easier.	1	2	3
ER8: Extensive reading helps to read the entire text faster.	1	2	3
ER9: Extensive reading helps to find the distinction between two relating articles.	1	2	3
ER10: Extensive reading helps to answer reading comprehension questions effectively.	1	2	3

A 20-item questionnaire was written in English and sent to thirty-six participants via a system called Google form. The questionnaire was designed with a 3-Likert scale (1=disagree, 2=agree, 3=strongly agree) and divided into two sections to gather students' perceptions of ER—Section 1 and to understand how ER improves students' reading comprehension—Section 2.

Participants were free to access the Google form to read and complete the survey at a flexible

time as their wish. Each person could only send a response to contribute to the data collection of the study. The items of the survey were designed based on the elements of Day and Bamford's *ER* process (2002), which were stated above in the literature review section. In order to clarify the collected data from the survey, three students were randomly selected to participate in a semi-structured interview with four asked questions.

Data collection & analysis

Procedure of the study

This research was conducted in a mixed-method research design, collecting data from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. In this study, the researcher used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. According to Nassaji (2015), qualitative research was used to collect data from many sources in order to acquire a better knowledge of individual participants, including their thoughts, perceptions, and attitudes. Therefore, the researcher asked for permission from the department head to take fifteen minutes in each class to address this study's purposes and get the students' approval. After getting approvals, the questionnaire was delivered to participants individually by a link on the Google form platform. All the information collected was confirmed to be confidential. Then, when asking for a semi-structured interview, there were three participants who were interested in ER implementation and volunteered to be interviewed. To ensure confidentiality, three participants were coded and given a pseudonym from PT1 to PT3.

Statistical Package analyzed the collected data from the survey for Social and Science (SPSS) version 25. Firstly, reliability analysis was conducted to check the reliability of the collected data. Then, the researcher proceeded with descriptive statistics to explain the results.

The interview questions were prepared to confirm participants' understanding of the responses and to explore other aspects of ER that the survey could not be defined.

Data collection

Cronbach's Alpha was used to evaluate the reliability of the 3-Likert scale for finding student perceptions on extensive reading (Table 2) and how extensive reading improved reading comprehension (Table 3). There were a totally of five items (SP9, SP10, ER1, ER7, ER10) dropped since their Corrected item-total Correction was less than 0.3 (0.17, 0.08, 0.18, 0.62, -0.03). After dropping five items, fifteen items had Cronbach's Alpha figures ≥ 0.6 and Corrected item-total Correction ≥ 0.3 . This meant the fifteen variables were enough reliability to proceed with further analysis.

Table 2. The reliability statistics of students' perceptions of extensive reading.

Students' perceptions on extensive reading	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
SP1: I know what extensive reading is.	20.44	1.97	0.79	0.87
SP2: I believe that practicing extensive reading is important.	20.44	1.97	0.79	0.87
SP3: I believe that my skills are improved by extensive reading activities.	20.44	1.97	0.79	0.87
SP4: I believe that extensive reading is a good learning habit.	20.44	1.97	0.79	0.87
SP5: I believe that extensive reading has become my regular activity in learning.	20.58	1.56	0.70	0.88
SP6: I believe that extensive reading is a necessary skill in postgraduate courses.	20.58	1.56	0.70	0.88
SP7: I believe that extensive reading is not only offline but also online.	20.50	1.86	0.56	0.88
SP8: With extensive reading, I can get more knowledge about the topic I am searching for.	20.47	1.86	0.72	0.87

After piloting the questionnaire with three volunteers, the researcher sent it to the participants to investigate their perceptions of ER. Performing reliability evaluation, there were still eight statements that were supposed to discover student perceptions of ER (*shown in table 2*). However, these statements were readable and understood by the respondents to show their perceptions of ER, such as its definition, importance and implementation in learning.

Table 3. The reliability statistics of how extensive reading improves reading comprehension.

Extensive reading improves reading comprehension	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
ER2: Extensive reading helps to sequence a passage into an ordinal series.	15.56	13.85	0.62	0.95
ER3: Extensive reading helps to understand the details of what you have read.	15.61	12.13	0.77	0.94
ER4: Extensive reading helps to understand the main ideas of what you have read.	15.61	10.99	0.93	0.92
ER5: Extensive reading helps to summarize the gist and draw the conclusion.	15.67	10.97	0.92	0.92
ER6: Extensive reading helps to make inferences / predictions.	15.44	13.51	0.84	0.94
ER8: Extensive reading helps to read the entire text faster.	15.83	12.14	0.77	0.94
ER9: Extensive reading helps to find the distinction between two relating articles.	15.61	10.99	0.93	0.92

Applying the same procedure of analysis, table 3 recorded seven statements that ensured the reliability and validity in order to inspect the effectiveness of ER practice in reading comprehension. The improvements were described by things that students performed in reading. Afterward, the respondents fully understood and ranked their opinions based on their experiences in reading.

Results/Findings and discussion

The main purpose of this chapter is to answer two research questions based on descriptive statistics such as minimum, maximum, mean, standard deviation (SD), and percentages. Then, the researcher described the result of the semi-interview to discover other aspects of the participants about ER. This result would be shown as short summary statements.

Research question 1 (QR1): What are students' perceptions of ER at the master level?

Table 4. Descriptive statistics of students' perceptions of extensive reading.

Student's perceptions on extensive reading	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
SP1: I know what extensive reading is.	36	2.86	0.487
SP2: I believe that practicing extensive reading is important.	36	2.81	0.577
SP3: I believe that my skills are improved by extensive reading activities.	36	2.86	0.487
SP4: I believe that extensive reading is a good learning habit.	36	2.92	0.368
SP5: I believe that extensive reading has become my regular activity in learning.	36	2.64	0.683
SP6: I believe that extensive reading is a necessary skill in postgraduate courses.	36	2.78	0.485
SP7: I believe that extensive reading is not only offline but also online.	36	2.75	0.604
SP8: With extensive reading, I can get more knowledge about the topic I am searching for.	36	2.89	0.398
Valid N (listwise)	36		

To answer the first research question, the researcher displayed the data collected as above (*shown in table 3*). In table 4, students' perceptions of ER were described from SP1 to SP8. Then, data were analyzed and exerted from the descriptive result of SPSS. The researcher mainly used the mean (M) as a tool in order to rank and evaluate the participants' responses.

According to table 4, master's students strongly stated that ER is a good learning habit (M=2.92). It is in accordance with Bamford and Day (1998), who indicated that ER might bring motivation and build up a solid habit of reading. Moreover, 91,7% of respondents think that they can gain more knowledge about what they are reading by ER (M=2.89). Thanks to the recognition of what ER is (M=2.86) and the importance of ER (M=2.81), students believed that their skills were improved by ER activities (M=2.86). They realized that ER is a necessary skill to study in postgraduate courses (M=2.78). Therefore, they tried to apply ER whenever they read books or documentaries offline or online (M=2.75). Last but not least, although Tien's

(2015) and Hagley's (2017) study stated that ER had a significant impact on students' reading comprehension and could not last long after they finished their study, over 80% of participants still think that ER has become their regular activity in learning ($M=2.64$). Generally, postgraduate students have an overall perception of ER. From the mentioned-above results of students' perception of ER, it is implied that most of them understand ER and its activities which help their study. Some of them who do not frequently practice ER feel that ER is not as important as they think (8.3%). Therefore, ER may not become their regular activity (11%).

Research question 2 (QR2): How does ER improve reading comprehension at the master level?

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of how extensive reading improves reading comprehension.

Extensive reading improves reading comprehension	N	Mean	SD
ER2: Extensive reading helps to sequence a passage into an ordinal series.	36	2.67	0.478
ER3: Extensive reading helps to understand the details of what you have read.	36	2.61	0.688
ER4: Extensive reading helps to understand the main ideas of what you have read.	36	2.61	0.766
ER5: Extensive reading helps to summarize the gist and draw the conclusion.	36	2.56	0.773
ER6: Extensive reading helps to make inferences / predictions.	36	2.78	0.422
ER8: Extensive reading helps to read the entire text faster.	36	2.39	0.688
ER9: Extensive reading helps to find the distinction between two relating articles.	36	2.61	0.766
Valid N (listwise)	36		

In response to these questions, table 5 shows the results of the influences of ER on reading comprehension. Overall, most of the participants agree that practicing ER makes a significant impact on their reading comprehension. For instance, practicing ER in learning also helps students read the text faster ($M=2.56$) by understanding the passage sequences ($M=2.67$). Besides, comprehension improvement is identified by making inferences from what they read ($M=2.78$). Supporting this statement, Perfetti, Landi and Oakhill (2005) state that reading comprehension requires the coordination of making inferences from the text. In addition, applying ER improved their reading comprehension by understanding main, detailed ideas and being able to distinguish between two concepts or articles ($M=2.61$). Contributing to this influence, students may summarize the gist and draw a conclusion after reading ($M=2.56$).

The results of the semi-interview

In the interview section, the researcher received some other opinions of three participants about their perceptions of ER and its influences on reading comprehension.

Interview question No.1: What are your attitudes toward extensive reading?

The results collected from the semi-structured interview were constructive and consistent with some studies mentioned in literature reviews (Ruzin, 2019; Bamford & Day, 1998; Khalid, 2015). They stated that ER is one of the reading strategies that arouses students to read, as well as is related to free reading with free topics. Meanwhile, frequently practicing ER makes their

skills improved as well as a necessity to build a reading habit. The following quotes illustrate these:

"At first, I think reading is boring because of reading tasks. It would be more interesting if *we read whatever we want*. When learning a new subject, *I prefer to read* not only the text-books but also *other materials* such as journals, reviews on the same topics. It helps me to feel more relaxed and *approach reading in an active way*." (PT1)

"I think *ER is a reading strategy* rather than a skill. I like to read *wherever I got time and read whatever I like*. Topics are not important at all, the more we read, the more knowledge we gain." (PT2)

"Yeah! I also have the same opinions with both of them. I think *practicing reading* frequently helps me to *form a habit* and makes me be knowledgeable." (PT3)

Interview question No. 2: Which platforms do you find your reading materials? Does it take a long time to search for what you need / desire to read?

In this question, the results were various among three participants. Based on their learning and teaching experience, they could find different sources to access reading materials. Most platforms to find reading materials are the school library and the internet. They spent a lot of time searching for the appropriate resources. Therefore, finding suitable reading materials is not easy, especially for those who are studying to a high degree. These are described below:

"I usually go to *school library* to look for the books I want. However, sometime I cannot find the relevant books. Later, I decided to search the topic I was inquiring *on the internet*. As you know, there are *tons of resources*. I felt like I was getting lost. It *took me a lot of time* to find the best suitable one". (PT1)

"Yeah, me too. I got troubles with *online searching*. I often search reading materials on Google Scholar. I think it *saves my time* because of useful searching tools comprised in this web." (PT2)

"Beside the materials given by lecturers, I *spent a lot of time on searching* for some other simpler materials to support my studies via the internet. I also searched for books, articles and journals through *Google Scholar, Springers, or other publications*." (PT3)

Interview question No. 3: What do you think about the benefits of extensive reading?

The results of this question make ER essential for postgraduate candidates (SP6). PT1 believes that "*practicing ER helped her to become a better reader by focusing on the meaning of the text rather than its language*". Whilst PT2's saying is that "*I can comprehend the text from overall to details and it is easily to understand the gist and to draw the summary due to the non-pressure of reading*". These were put in light of descriptive statistics that summarizing and understanding were both valid for extensive reading (ER5; ER4). It is proven by Brown (2001), as cited in Pham (2021), that reading comprehension requires readers to fully understand the text and decode the hidden messages in the text.

Interview question No. 4: Do you think that there is a relationship between extensive reading and reading comprehension at a higher level? If yes, please define the ways that you used to develop your understanding?

It is reported that all of the interviewees claim that extensive reading is a strategy that could

enhance reading comprehension. Cho and Krashen (1994) reported that English second language learners improved their reading competence through ER. Understanding ER process helps to improve reading comprehension by selecting appropriate materials which are suitable for readers' level. Besides, applying ER's principles (Jeon & Day, 2015; Day & Bamford, 2002) in reading activities is essential to improve reading comprehension. In addition, reading with joy and interest (Krashen, 1985) motivates students to acquire language. Finally, when conducting ER, teachers play the role of facilitators to explain the reading methodology and keep students on track. These statements are totally described in the ER process of Day and Bamford (2002), which supports the evidence of the relationship between ER and reading comprehension.

"Yes, of course. It is good if I *understand how ER process is*. You know, I save time and energy to improve reading comprehension. I begin with short texts to longer texts, from easy to more complicated, from standard knowledge to an academic one and read it with joy. I think *the most important thing to improve my reading is to read with joy and interests*. My teachers also help me to identify which reading materials are suitable for my study. Whenever I got problems, just need to ask them". (PT1)

"What I learned when practicing ER is *guessing skill*. I can guess the meaning of new lexical items without using dictionaries. In my opinion, *this skill helps improve my reading comprehension*, especially when I need to read a lot of reading papers given in my master's course. This would *not successful without a favor of my facilitators*. They encourage me to keep reading and sometimes I get stuck because of misunderstanding, I email them to *ask for a support*." (PT2)

"Definitely yes! I use *ER as a reading strategy*, so it gives me a lot of benefits. For example, I can *read a long passage faster and understand the gist easier*. Whenever I need to find detail information, I know which part of the text I need to read. *It would not be reachable if I did not practice ER in my study*." (PT3)

Conclusion

Summary of the findings

In a nutshell, students' perceptions of ER are informative and practical. They believe that practicing ER may bring motivation and build up a solid habit of reading (Ruzin, 2019). According to the data collected, ER is considered to be a necessary strategy to implement in the learning process. They also remind us that practicing ER will bring a significant impact if it becomes regular reading activity. Besides, the data shows how students use ER to improve their reading comprehension. Thanks to ER in learning, students can understand the text faster and guess the meaning of new lexical items more easily. Therefore, reading with the sequence organized in the text helps to find the gist and detailed information and to make inferences for hidden messages.

Finally, some suggestions on the ER process were discovered through a mini-interview. Students suggest reading from easy to complicated levels and reading with joy and interest in order to improve reading comprehension. The teacher role is a facilitator who guides, explains, and monitors students to reach their reading goals.

Conclusion

In conclusion, ER proves its benefits to reading comprehension. Most of the participants believed that ER would be a great tool for participating in the learning process generally and in reading comprehension specifically (Khalid, 2015). From the cognitive perspective, students perceived ER as a fun and enjoyable activity in their study (Day & Bamford, 2002; Perfettiet al., 2005). Drawn from students' perceptions toward ER, students can gain more knowledge on their concerned topics due to understanding the meanings of the text (Brown, 2001 as cited in Pham, 2021). They built up ER skills as a habit of the reading process to improve reading and the other (Ruzin, 2019). On the other hand, students gain much improvement in reading competence and sub-benefits related such as predicting, summarizing, sequencing a passage, faster reading, and distinguishing between two texts.

Implications of instructions

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher suggests applying ER to learning and teaching in universities. Teachers should do research on learners' need to collect and present both an interesting series of learning materials and an effective curriculum (Tran & Pham, 2021 as cited in Pham, 2022). Stakeholders need to fulfill the library with trusting and interesting books for those who would like to read and gain reading comprehension skills for joy or for academic purposes. Finally, learners should increase the frequency of applying ER to their reading process in order to make it become a solid habit and have reading proficiency levels upgraded.

Recommendation for further research

Nonetheless, the focus of this study was still on students' perceptions of ER and its advantages. The study would be much more effective if it were able to manage and identify the factors that influence ER processes and students' reading comprehension. Furthermore, additional research should be conducted with a large number of participants at the postgraduate level to investigate other parts of this study that have yet to be discovered. Finally, the upcoming study should assess ER effectiveness using pre-tests and post-tests from two different groups. Due to the outstanding issues, ER has attracted the curiosity of numerous scholars interested in reading comprehension and techniques.

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Biodata

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Students' perception of "American English File Multipack 3" – a study at people's security university

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22245>

Received: 25/10/2021

Revision: 03/07/2022

Accepted: 04/07/2022

Online: 13/07/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: American English File Multipack 3, coursebook, perception, students

Coursebooks are of the utmost importance to language classes, and selecting a good textbook is of great value. Amongst them, the coursebook *American English File Multipack 3 (AEF3)* was chosen and has been used at People's Security University (PSU) for six years now. This study was designed to have a more critical view of AEF3 that could help identify features of the coursebook from PSU students' perspectives. Due to the scope of the study, only five aspects, namely *Layout and design, Activities, Skills, Language type* and *Subject and content*, were chosen to be investigated. In this study, a quantitative method was opted to conduct, and the data were accumulated through coursebook evaluation form returned by 85 students. The findings of the study revealed that under students' perspective, although there existed certain drawbacks in AEF3, was still evaluated positively. And thus, it is obvious that AEF3 is an appropriate coursebook for the context of PSU.

Introduction

Today there is a variety of English Language Teaching (ELT) materials accessible, with numerous up-to-date, financially available headings introduced every year. ELT materials, moreover, are considered useful supports for learning a language. Nothing is perfect, and neither do coursebooks. The assessment of materials, therefore, is worthy of solemn consideration. Cunningsworth (1995) supposed that coursebook evaluation creates favourable conditions for teachers to move beyond generalized valuations and facilitates them to get valuable, truthful, logical, and circumstantial understandings of the general character of the material. Tomlinson (2011) advocated that it is unable to generate a "model framework" for all material evaluations. He also emphasized that the elements that determine the framework are "the reasons, objectives, and circumstances of the evaluation". According to Cunningsworth (1995), "it is important to limit the number of criteria used, and the number of questions asked to manageable proportions". Or else, we endanger being overwhelmed by details.

The research problem underlying the current study arises out of the context of the PSU. Up to now, the coursebook AEF3, one of the coursebook series reported to be suitable in a variety of educational institutions in the world, has been introduced and employed in the curriculum of PSU for six years. Nevertheless, many students of PSU complain that English is one of the biggest obstacles on their way to achieving a BA Degree in Security Science. The aims of the study comprise (1) pointing out the actual characteristics of the coursebook AEF3 under students' perception in the context of PSU; (2) figuring out the particular advantages and disadvantages of this coursebook; and (3) proposing respective and feasible pedagogical suggestions to facilitate the students in using the coursebook AEF3.

Theoretically, this study will reveal more obviously the relationship between teaching materials, especially the coursebooks, and learning effectiveness. Practically, the results of this study would be significant to all the teachers and students of PSU. They have been engaged in the process of learning or teaching English as a foreign language with the coursebook AEF3. Moreover, the study would be helpful not only to teachers and administrators but also to material developers and syllabus planners.

Literature review

Coursebooks

Many scholars have suggested their own definitions for textbooks/ coursebooks. The teacher has traditionally utilized coursebooks as a guide to assist shape learning and offer additional resources for the student in the classroom and at home (Weng et al., 2018). Its aim is to assist foreign learners of English in improving their linguistic knowledge and/or communicative ability. Within this definition is a variety of diverse examples, ranging from books aimed at general English contexts to those centering upon any one of a number of specialist applications. Some try to acquire universal aptitude across a widespread front, while others emphasize more closely on particular skills. Many coursebooks have supplementary materials like teacher's books, cassettes, videos, workbooks, and multi-media programs. Furthermore, it has been identified that they are the collection of tools teachers utilize to access and share information about educational resources with their learners. (Getie, 2020, as cited in Le & Le, 2022).

Existing in the printed form, coursebooks are deemed to play a crucial role in English instructional programs. According to Tomlinson (2011), coursebooks:

...aims to provide as much as possible in one book and is designed so that it could serve as the only book which the learners necessarily use during a course. Such a book usually includes work on grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation and reading, writing, listening and speaking skills.

Having a similar claim to Tomlinson's, Tran et al. (2021) believe that if learners' needs and preferences are included in the learning resources, this will appeal to students' demands for information processing. Additionally, Hutchinson and Torres (1994) have clarified that coursebooks are a central section of innovation. They propose that coursebooks can back up the teachers by possibly intimidating change courses; moreover, they introduce innovative

methodologies, introduce transformation gradually, and generate a framework upon which teachers can construct more innovative methods of their own.

Coursebooks evaluation

Evaluation is a practice of investigation in which information is collected over different means and from various sources. The result of this process is clarified to make important judgements based on the study's results. These judgements may demand a modification and wield a certain influence over a big change in the framework and the practice of a language curriculum. All these works are carried out to advance an ELT course and yield agreeable outcomes.

Evaluating coursebooks is crucial for the development of a language program since it reveals specific advantages and disadvantages of the resources being used (Tran et al., 2020). The coursebook has to be evaluated after some period of usage whether it has succeeded in meeting users' needs or not. Different ideas for evaluating materials have been developed. The process of evaluating a coursebook involves gathering information, making decisions based on that information, and, most importantly, determining if the material is pertinent to the curriculum's learning goals.

Coursebook evaluation, moreover, would be beneficial in eventually supporting teachers with optimizing the use of a book's strengths and identifying the weaknesses of a particular aspect of a coursebook. As emphasized by Cunningsworth (1995), coursebook evaluation is to identify particular strengths and weaknesses in coursebooks already in use. Evaluating coursebooks, likewise, can be a valuable constituent of teacher guiding programs because it pursues the dual objective of making teachers conscious of principal features to seek in coursebooks whilst acquainting them with a lot of available language teaching materials.

Criteria and frameworks to evaluate a coursebook

Evaluating a coursebook is an important endeavour for matching materials to both teacher and student. Just as there is no universal coursebook for learners, there is no one model for evaluation (Tomlinson, 2011). In order to facilitate the process of evaluating coursebooks, a variety of frameworks have emerged based on various principles and criteria. To find a suitable evaluation method, past frameworks and their subjectivity are examined and described as follows.

Many experts have supported a very detailed investigation of the language content of a coursebook, which has resulted in the formation of general evaluation checklists. Typically, the evaluation process comprises of two or three evaluation stages or levels. Cunningsworth (1995) described these stages as a general impression and in-depth evaluation. He claimed that coursebooks ought to be consistent with learners' needs, facilitate learners in their language learning, assist users in their teaching and learning process, and play an important role in supporting students' learning.

Having a perspective in categorizing a coursebook' aspects to evaluate, Littlejohn (1998) stated that there are two groups of evaluating aspects, namely publication and design. Publication

relates to the tangible or physical aspects of the materials and how they appear as a complete set, whether on paper or electronically. The second section (design) relates to the thinking underlying the materials. This entangles consideration of the clear objectives of the coursebooks and the way to choose and sequence all the content, task, activities, and language in the coursebooks.

Making another contribution to the material evaluation field, Litz (2005) proposed his own questionnaires based on the "specific concerns and priorities" of his research site. Litz's research was conducted by discussing and describing the complicated evaluation practice by aiming to clarify the pedagogical value and appropriateness of a coursebook for a particular language curriculum. Figure 1 demonstrates Litz's scaffold, which comprises many criteria that are relevant and contextually suitable to assess coursebooks utilized in ELT classrooms.

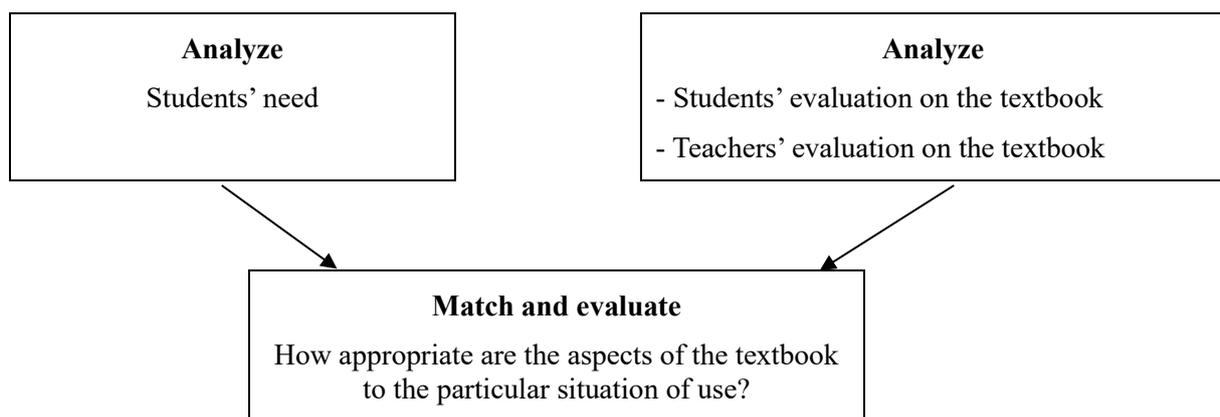


Figure 1: Litz's framework on coursebook evaluation (2005)

Litz's (2005) model is believed to be well suited to the need of the current study. However, due to the scope of this study, only students' perceptions of the coursebook are taken into account to answer the research question mentioned below.

Review of related studies

ELT coursebooks are considered to have made an enormous contribution in most language classrooms. However, the tangible function of coursebooks in teaching ESL/ EFL has recently been debatable in the field of ELT. The popular arguments in these years have been mostly related to certain characteristics of coursebooks, including layout and design, methodological validity, adaptability, the authenticity of language presented, appropriateness of gender, content and culture have shown, etc.

Being considered as both an ESL and EFL coursebook, American English File was investigated by Haghverdi & Ghasemi (2013). This study assesses the American English File series by the utilization of Littlejohn's (1998) framework to investigate the series' explicit features, pedagogic values, the match between the actual and claimed objectives, and merits and demerits. ELT experts and ELT teachers helped the researchers rate the evaluative checklists. The study led to a conclusion that though there existed a number of drawbacks to the American

English File series, its pedagogic merits and encouraging features were much more valuable than its shortcomings or drawbacks.

Another research on evaluating the American English File coursebook was conducted by Shahriari and Tabrizi (2014) based on Cunningsworth's (1995) model. The participants were selected from the total population of available intermediate and advanced students at an English Institute in Kerman. The questionnaire, which was declared to be the only instrument of this research, was a modified version of Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist. The results of this study revealed that the American English File coursebook was assessed to be of beneficial value because it reached the standards of a good coursebook according to Cunningsworth's (1995) criteria.

Another noteworthy research was carried out by Hashemi and Borhani (2015). These authors aimed to examine the "American English File" series in the Iran EFL context. In order to do this, 23 teachers whose qualifications varied from B.A. to PhD and whose ages ranged between 24 and 37 participated in a questionnaire adapted from Litz (2000). Results of the study revealed that the American English File series proved suitable and appropriate to acquire the objectives set by not only ELT teachers but also the language institutes.

Based on the research mentioned above, it is undeniable that there has been a variety of research to evaluate the American English File series in various places. These studies, in general, have proved that regardless of its demerits, the series' merits still outweigh the drawbacks for international learners in such places. However, there has not been any evaluation on using AEF3 at PSU, whereas it has been approved to be utilized for six years. In this vein, an evaluation on AEF3 is determined to be carried out in PSU as described below.

Research Questions

With the purpose of acquiring satisfactory outcomes, the study endeavours to answer the research question: "***How is the coursebook AEF3 evaluated under the students' perception?***"

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The population of the research comprises 175 students at PSU who are taking English classes with the AEF3 coursebook. These students were grouped into four classes right from the beginning of the first university semester. Based on the placement test held at the beginning of the English course, it is obvious that the students of these four classes are at all levels, including level 1, level 2 and level 3. The author tried hard to get data from all these classes. However, due to administrative constraints, only two classes could be approached to send evaluation forms. Ninety-three evaluation forms were sent out, and 85 were returned.

Data collection & analysis

The instrument of the study was a Coursebook Evaluation Form, which elicits the criteria of a coursebook for English courses. The Coursebook Evaluation Form was adapted to the context

of PSU by the researchers. The sixteen-question original version developed by Litz (2005) covers seven dimensions (namely *Practical Considerations*, *Layout and Design*, *Activities*, *Skills*, *Language Type*, *Subject and Content*, and *Overall Consensus*) and applies a Likert-type of 10 ranges. Excluding the *Practical Considerations* dimension, because the students are given the coursebook for free, the adapted one included five evaluation criteria (1) *Layout and Design*, (2) *Activities*, (3) *Skills*, (4) *Language Type*, (5) *Subject and Content*, and (6) *Overall Consensus*. In this study, five-range scales were used to gain the information from students' answers, including *completely disagree* (1), *disagree* (2), *neutral* (3), *agree* (4) and *completely agree* (5) because the five-scale checklists are preferable (Skierso, 1991). After the fourteen-question version was finalized in English, it was translated into Vietnamese to avoid any misunderstanding about the questions. Three teachers in Foreign Language Department checked the two versions in English and Vietnamese. In this process, all necessary adjustments were made to ensure the adjustment of the translated version.

Results

Based on the data gathered, some valuable results about the coursebook AEF3 have been drawn out and discussed in this research.

Layout and Design

Due to the structure of the evaluation forms, the *Layout and Design* aspect, which comprises Questions 1 and 2, was analyzed first, and the data is illustrated in *Figure 2*.

The data for Question 1 presented in *Figure 2* show that the biggest group of students, whose proportion ranks first at 44.2%, agreed that the *Layout and Design* of the coursebook AEF3 are appropriate and clear. Approximately half of this number said that they completely agreed and were in a neutral position.

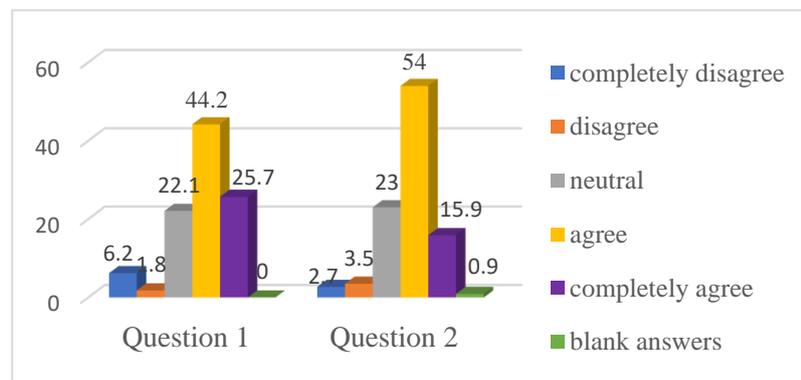


Figure 2: Frequency statistics of *Layout and Design* (in percentage)

Moreover, the lowest percentages of students, who disagreed and completely disagreed, were 6.2% and 1.8%. The figure also depicts that regardless of 0.9% for a missing answer, nearly a quarter for neutral position and under 3.5% of "disagree" and "completely disagree" options, the percentage of students, who agreed with the effective organization of the coursebook, still occupies the first position. The similar character of students' evaluation of these two questions is that most of them said that they agreed, and few disagreed or completely disagreed with the statement.

Table 1.

Descriptive statistics of 6 scales

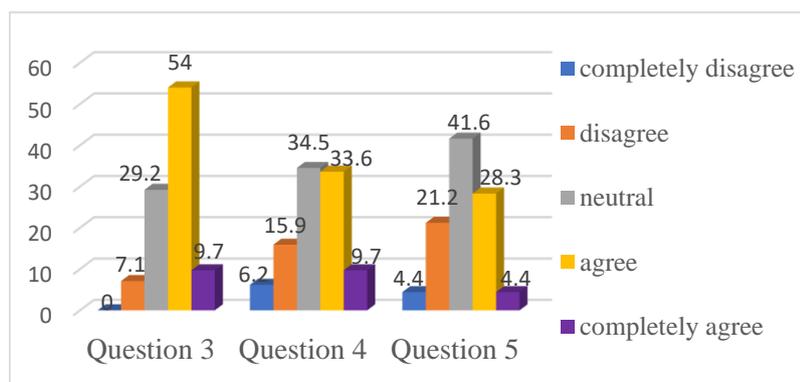
Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Median	Mean	Mode	Std. Deviation
Layout and Design	1.00	5.00	4.00	3.797	4.00	.850
Activities	1.33	5.00	3.33	3.327	3.33	.708
Skills	1.00	5.00	3.5	3.504	4.00	.814
Language Type	1.00	5.00	3.5	3.434	3.5	.825
Subject and Content	1.00	5.00	3.67	3.563	4.00	.765
Overall Consensus	1.00	5.00	3.5	3.252	4.00	.962

Additionally, the overall assessment of students on the *Layout and Design* aspect of *AEF3* is clearly illustrated in *Table 1*. It can be seen from the table that the values range from 1 to 5, with the mean value (M) at 3.797 and standard deviation (S.D.) at .850 so the answers vary mostly from 2.947 to 4.647 ($3.797 \pm .850$). Especially with the mode of 4.00, the table shows a dramatically superior frequency of this value in the scale *Layout and Design*. From the descriptions above, it can be inferred that despite there were a few who badly evaluated the *Layout and Design* of *AEF3*, the majority of students highly appreciated it.

Activities

In terms of assessing *Activities* of the coursebook, students were asked questions 3, 4 and 5, as in *Figure 3*.

Figure 3 reveals that more than half of students denoted that the activities given in the coursebook are balanced. Moreover, about one-third of students opted for neutral choice and the others are classified fairly equally into opposite poles of disagreeing and totally agree. Whereas most

Figure 3: Frequency statistics of *Activities* (in percentage)

students agreed with the balance of activities, the ordinal number of positions experiences a little change with the rise of "neutral" options to communicative and meaningful practice (Question 4) and creative, original and independent responses (Question 5) that the activities aim to promote (34.5% and 41.6%). Additionally, the second-highest percentage is of students

who chose "agree" in both Question 4 and Question 5 (33.6% and 28.3, respectively). Similar to the results of Question 3, the three lowest proportions are for "completely disagree", "disagree" and "completely agree".

It would be uncompleted if the overall assessment of students on *the Activities* aspect of *AEF3* (*Table 1*) were not considered. *Table 1* reveals that the values range from 1 to 5, with the mean value (M) at 3.327 and standard deviation (S.D.) is .708. Particularly, this means that the highest frequencies focus mainly between the scales of 2.619 to 4.035 ($3.327 \pm .708$).

From the descriptions above, it can be inferred that even if some evaluated that activities of *AEF3* were completely good or completely bad, the majority of students stood on the border of "agree" and "disagree" options. In other words, most of them were in an impartial position while evaluating *AEF3*'s aspect of *Activities*.

Skills

Results for questions 6 and 7 presented below were utilized to assess the *Skills* aspect of the coursebook:

From *Figure 4*, it is clear that nearly half of the students expressed their agreement with the balance of four language skills distributed in the coursebook (Question 6). However, there are sharply higher shares of other ideas. The proportion of students who completely agreed with this balance is under a fifth, and a little lower proportion is of the neutral ones. Some least students totally disagreed with the skills' balance, and they made up only 2.7%. This is similar to the data in Question 7, in which some least students totally disagreed with the subskills provided by the coursebook. However, the share for the neutral option in Question 7 is doubled over that in Question 6, and this is also the highest chosen. However, the number of students agreeing with the sub-skills just stands second with 33.6%.

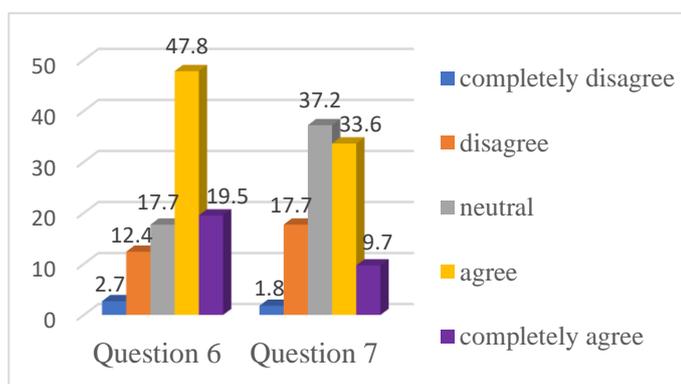


Figure 4: Frequency statistics of *Skills* (in percentage)

Moreover, *Table 1* reflects the overall descriptive statistics of the data regarding students' assessment of the *Skills* aspect of the coursebook. This scale's mean value (M) is 3.504, and the standard deviation (S.D.) is .814. The table shows that the highest occurrences concentrate mostly between the scales of 2.690 to 4.318 ($3.504 \pm .814$).

In summation, it can be inferred that though most students chose neutral and agreed on options for the *Skills* of *AEF3*, most of them tended to lean on an agreement to the *Skills* of the coursebook. This means that the students had a fairly positive assessment, rather than an

impartial opinion, of the *Skills* of *AEF3*.

Language type

As for *Language type*, questions 8 and 9 were employed to investigate this aspect of the coursebook (Figure 5). When being inquired about the *Language type* aspect of the coursebook, most of the students agreed with the statements given (39.8% and 34.5% for Question 8 and Question 9,

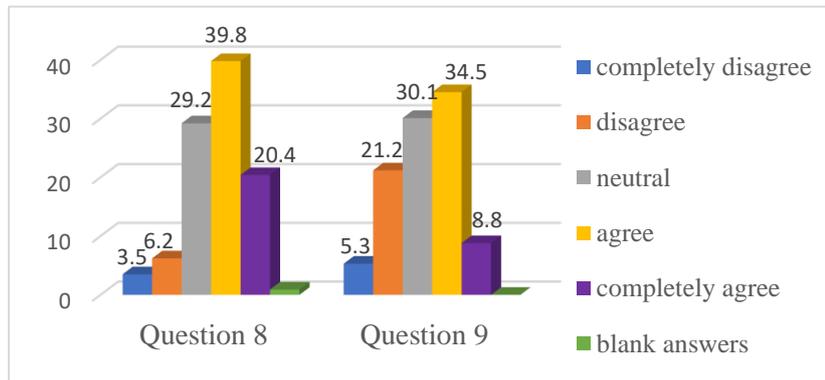


Figure 5: Descriptive statistics of *Language type* (in percentage)

respectively), and the second-highest share is of the students who stood on neutral position (29.2% and 30.1% for Question 8 and Question 9 respectively). While the third-highest rank is for the students who totally agreed with the life-like language of the coursebook and the fourth-highest rank is for those who disagreed with it (Question 8), the order of these two options is reversed in Question 9. Over one-fifth of students denied the suitability of the language used in the coursebook to their current language competence.

Moreover, Table 1 reflects the general descriptive statistics of the data regarding students' assessment of the *Language type* aspect of the coursebook. The mean value of this scale is 3.434, and the standard deviation is .825. Remarkably, the table reveals the information that the uppermost frequencies converge mainly in the scales from 2.609 to 4.259 ($3.434 \pm .825$), especially at a mode value of 3.5.

In short, the students gave quite positive feedback regarding the *Language type* of *AEF3*. However, there were still many who were uncertain or denied the suitability of the language utilized in the coursebook with their present capacity.

Subject and Content

There were three questions (10, 11 and 12) for the students to evaluate the *Subject and Content* aspect of the coursebook.

Figure 6 exhibits that the number of students

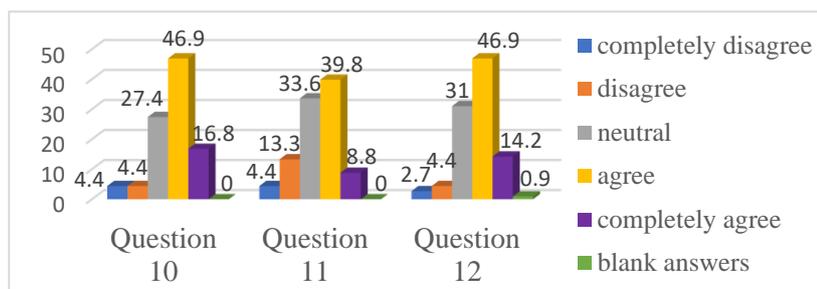


Figure 6: Descriptive statistics of *Subject and Content* (in percentage)

who ticked the agree on option for questions 10 and 12 is of equality, and this group of students accounts for 46.9%, the highest percentage in the three questions of the scale. This means that most students agreed that, in general, the subject and content of the coursebook are not only realistic but also diverse enough. A little bit lower than that, a percentage of 39.8% illustrates the share of the dominant choice for Question 11 and the total students who claimed their agreement or complete agreement to this question accounts for 48.6%. It means that students generally agree that the materials' subject and content are interesting, challenging and motivating. It is noteworthy that regardless of 0.9% for blank answers in Question 12, the results witness a similarity of these three questions in the rank order in which the "completely disagree" option's proportion is the lowest, "neutral" option is the second-highest and "agree" option's is the highest.

Likewise, *Table 1* gives a general picture of the data of the whole scale *Subject and Content*. With a mean value of 3.563, a standard deviation of .765 and a mode of 4.0, it can be seen that the data mostly focus between 2.798 and 4.328 ($3.563 \pm .765$), especially at 4.0. This means that although the rate for the students who had completely positive comments on *the Subject and Content* of the coursebook is notable, most respondents had highly positive feedback on this aspect.

In brief, the data given and examined above show that while some students expressed their unbiased viewpoint on the *Subject and Content* of the coursebook, the respondents largely agreed to say that this aspect is realistic, interesting, challenging, motivating and diverse enough.

Overall consensus (general evaluation)

The last category of the evaluation form does not help to investigate the students' assessment of any particular aspect of the coursebook but of the coursebook in general. This was done by giving them questions 13 and 14, as in *Figure 7*.

When asked whether the coursebook could raise their interest in studying English in the future (Question 13), 44.2% of the students chose to stay in the middle. This is the only question in the Coursebook Evaluation Form that has such a high rate for the "neutral" option. Moreover, though

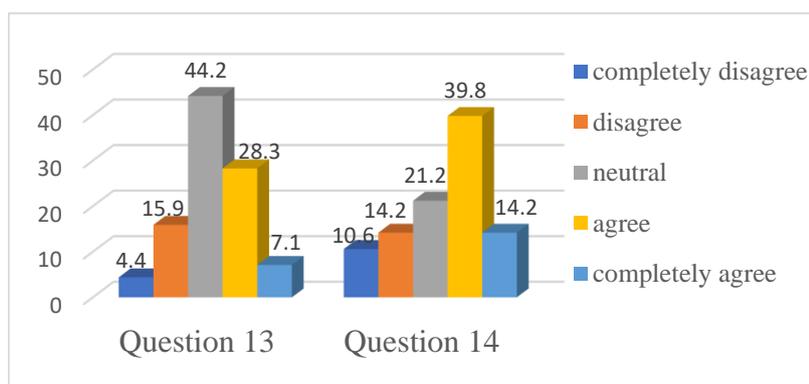


Figure 7: Descriptive statistics of *Overall Consensus* (in percentage)

the percentage of students agreeing and totally agreeing with this statement (35.4%) is much lower than that in other questions, this percentage still approximately doubles that of students

who disagreed and totally disagreed. Furthermore, nearly 40% of students declared that they agreed to choose this coursebook again (Question 14). Apart from 21.2% of students who said they were neutral, the rest are distributed fairly equally to other options with a little inferior part for "totally disagree" choice.

As shown in *Table 1*, it can be seen that the *Overall consensus* scale has a mean of 3.252, a standard deviation of .962, mode of 4.0. However, an easily recognizable point here is that most values do not only concentrate on the range of 3.0 and 4.0 but also on the value of 2.0.

Based on the data above, a conclusion to be drawn here is that although a lot of students were not sure about whether the coursebook could inspire them to study English in the coming time, most of them still wished to use it once again.

It is clear that the students, in general, adopted a fairly positive attitude to the coursebook *AEF3*. Most of them had a fairly encouraging assessment of *Layout and Design, Skills, Subject and Content*. Additionally, *Language type* was generally evaluated with encouraging feedback. However, the students also expressed their denial of the suitability of language used in the coursebook with their language competence. Furthermore, most of the students chose to have an unbiased position when evaluating *Activities*. Likewise, though it was still disputable whether the coursebook could stimulate the students to study English further, most of them expressed their desire to study English with *AEF3* again.

Discussion

Concerning the *AEF3*'s shortcomings, the results are also congruent with other research, in which it was claimed that the coursebook revealed several shortcomings (Haghverdi & Ghasemi, 2013). The defects include the gap between the language competence of targeted learners of the coursebook and students in PSU; the stimulation of further study for students. However, it can be seen that not all the students agreed with those ideas.

With respect to the overall evaluation, the results are in line with research by Haghverdi & Ghasemi (2013), in which the coursebook's pedagogical qualities and encouraging characteristics were far more helpful than its flaws or downsides. In fact, most of them were in high consensus about the advantages of the coursebook, including appropriateness and clarity, and adequate sub-components. Moreover, the majority of students claimed their desire to study English with *AEF3* again.

Studies by Tabrizi and Shahriari (2014) and Borhani and Hashemi (2015) had similar results, which pointed out that the coursebook was found to be of positive value and the coursebook itself adequate and appropriate for achieving the defined goals.

In short, from students' viewpoint, although there existed certain drawbacks in *AEF3*, a coursebook for international users, it was still evaluated positively. And thus, it is no exaggeration to say that *AEF3* is an appropriate coursebook for the context of PSU.

Conclusion

The study sought to investigate students' perspectives on the coursebook AEF3 at PSU. It is undeniable that as an international coursebook, AEF3 cannot satisfy all users' demands worldwide, and the users in Vietnam are no exception. In fact, various drawbacks exist in the coursebook itself that need to be improved to be suited to the learners not only in PSU in Vietnam but also in other institutions in other geographical regions. The users, especially the teachers, can make use of the advantages of the coursebook, modify its contents to suit their real teaching context and offer practical recommendations to the coursebook designers to have a more effective coursebook in the course of creating favourable conditions for the learners in general, and the students in PSU in particular.

In spite of the careful preparation and implementation of this research, its limitations and shortcomings are unavoidable. Only 85 over 175 students sent back the Coursebook Evaluation Form. Although these were mainly because of administrative-constraint and time-constraint reasons, it is undeniable that the results of the study would be much better and more precise if there were bigger samples. Regardless of those limitations, this study is supposed to have achieved its goal of revealing the coursebook AEF3's characteristics from the viewpoints of its real users at PSU.

Within this study's scope, only the students' subjective evaluation is taken into consideration, and the objective evaluation of sections in detail was excluded. Thus, it is recommended to conduct further studies to evaluate the coursebook AEF3 both subjectively and objectively on the basis of the results of this study. Moreover, this research was conducted within the context of PSU. Therefore, more studies should be conducted profoundly at other research sites and in larger-scaled research sites.

Acknowledgements

It is acknowledging contributions to this research article in the order that best represents the nature and importance of those contributions, such as intellectual assistance and funding support.

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Biodata

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Teachers' Feedback on Using Discord as an Online Learning Platform

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Received: 15/10/2021

Revision: 13/06/2022

Accepted: 17/07/2022

Online: 20/07/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: e-learning, distance learning, online learning, conferencing software, Discord

The COVID-19 pandemic has called for a shift in the teaching and learning landscape from conventional classes to e-learning. This propels the use of a range of online learning and distance learning platforms massively, notably MS Teams, Zoom US, and Google Classroom. However, the fact that the aforementioned require a monetary subscription to unlock their full potential proves detrimental to the accessibility to education during the pandemic, i.e., not all students and/ or educational institutions have the available means. This paper thus seeks to affirm the capability of Discord as an alternative online learning platform that is not only efficient in its own right but also comes at no expense. To this end, a handful of English teachers who had been teaching online via either of the three platforms above were offered to switch to Discord for a fixed amount of time. They received instructions and support from the research team concerning the platform along the way and were asked to participate in a survey afterward. With the use of SPSS for statistical data analysis, the paper pointed out that Discord achieved a high compatibility level for both parties in use, namely the teachers and the students.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the study

The impact of COVID-19 made 1.6 billion children out of school (Karboul, 2020). This stems from the fact that many countries – Vietnam included – have been forced to isolate their teachers and students in their respective homes. Hence, it can be observed that COVID-19 has taken its toll on education, diminishing the efforts spent on the endeavor for the past decade, as well as aggravating pre-existing problems, e.g., the dropout rate in all education levels. Supposedly, as a countermeasure and also to assure the continuity of education, Teaching and learning are thus

done remotely. As such, teachers need to adopt a new measure following the given health protocols and teach in multiple ways suitable for the student's socioeconomic status, along with ensuring the need for communication among English learners (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022).

Since the pandemic has rendered the conventional picture of pedagogy in the classroom unfeasible, both parties involved in the process, namely teachers and students, have opted to resort to the Internet for adaptation (Wahab, 2020). This is, in turn, accomplished via either or both of the available approaches to e-learning: online learning and distance learning, each of which retains its unique features, perks, and drawbacks (Moore et al., 2010). While more on the matter is to be discussed in the subsequent chapter, it should be noted that in the teaching and learning context of Vietnam during COVID-19, online learning, which has already gained momentum pre-pandemic (Dang et al., 2017), spikes in popularity both among the K-12 as well as the higher education levels due to its accessibility, among other positive effects (Suprianto et al., 2020).

1.2. Problem statement

As aforementioned, taking education online is the rising trend during the pandemic (Dhawan, 2020). However, with the immediate and visional upsides yielded, the preparations along with facilities available to cater to the matter at hand must be undoubtedly proportional, the notion which is facing challenges left and right in Vietnam. First of all, educational institutions across all levels are simply not equipped for this sudden technical transformation, typically around one week or two (Gülbahar & Adnan, 2020; Arum & Stevens, 2020). Secondly, not all students are exactly compatible with the rapid change to boot (Dao & Ha, 2021).

The forefront issue that all boils down to is the application – the medium via which e-learning is made possible. The synthesis is that the application is already prepared to launch or has been launching for a period of time so that educational institutions could make use of it right away and that it has garnered sufficient credibility to gain confidence from its users, especially the students/ learners (Cacho, 2020). Then again, most popular apps, e.g., Zoom US, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, often come with a hefty price tag to gain full access to their features, which poses a dilemma to small educational institutions such as cram schools and language centers. While less economically burdened alternatives like Discord are certainly up to the task, they have not yet received appropriate recognition to be applied prevalently, leaving the situation unsolved (Wulanjani, 2018).

1.3. Research purpose & research questions

The research purpose thereof is to evaluate Discord as an alternative application for the teaching and learning process during COVID-19 and beyond. As such, the study will function based on the following research questions:

1. To what extent is Discord effective as an e-learning platform?
2. What are the advantages of Discord over other applications, e.g., Zoom US, Google Classroom, and MS Teams?

1.4. Significance of the study

The study is believed to raise the public's opinion of Discord as a viable learning platform outfitted for online education in a fashion no less than its more prominent counterpart in terms of resourcefulness and accessibility. On another note, by doing so, the study seeks to introduce to small educational institutions a more cost-effective application that could resolve a part of their financial struggles during COVID-19, paving the way for the rise of Discord later on the pandemic is gone.

2. Literature review

2.1. Online conferencing software as a medium to conduct online classrooms

In a typical classroom, the teacher and students interact with one another via different means: vocal, gestures, and written words. All of these processes happen simultaneously. In other words, the communication in the classroom is synchronous (Blake, 2013; Beatty, 2010). When a learning course is transferred onto the Internet and technology becomes a medium for Teaching and learning, these characteristics remain. Of course, institutions can choose between offering distance learning programs, i.e., the students are paid for recorded materials and study by themselves at any time, or online learning ones, i.e., the students participate in live lessons with the teacher/ professor. Nevertheless, for ESL classrooms, online learning is still the preferred approach since it facilitates interaction and negotiation between the teacher and students, as well as students among themselves, which is essential for L2 acquisition to take place under the view of Interactionists (Long, 1983; Gass, 2018; Hummel, 2014).

Online classes are conducted via websites or applications that provide synchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC). This might include social media, e.g., Facebook and Zalo, as well as standalone online conferencing sites and software, e.g., Zoom. Studies on CMC platforms are scarce; thus, the available data is insufficient to draw meaningful statistics (Ajabshir, 2018). However, it is observable that the latter option is more commonly used, perhaps since they come better equipped for conferencing, as the name suggests (Roos et al., 2020). Most online conferencing services provide three basic functions: audio and video conferencing, screen sharing, and text chat.

- Audio and video conferencing forms the foundation of an online classroom by allowing the teacher to present the lesson in real-time as in a traditional class. It also functions as a medium for discussion, Q&A sessions, or other collaborative tasks. By having cameras turned on, video conferencing aims to replicate the eye contact that both the teacher and the students need to feel more like speaking to actual human beings rather than a computer.
- Teachers often use screen-sharing features and text-compiling software to act as a whiteboard to illustrate their lectures better. They can also use it as a projector, showing PowerPoint slides directly onto learners' screens as they present. If the teacher so chooses, the feature can also be used by students to conduct presentations in the same manner as in offline classes.

- Although not as prominently used as the other two, text-chat is valuable when the teacher needs to keep important information "on the board" when they move on to the next sections.

The degree to which the other two features can function at their top efficiency, given that they are deployed correctly on the part of the teacher, depends on internet connection stability and the program's technical infrastructures. Issues such as stuttering voice, pixelated images, or high latency in screen sharing are quite common when connection speed is low or when there are limitations in how a program functions.

2.2. Challenges that teachers face when conducting online classes

Considering the fact that online conferencing software is the go-to choice for many online classes, students are willing to make the switch from traditional classrooms to these platforms during the pandemic (Nguyen, 2022). However, things may not be so easy for teachers. Issues may arise as a result of the transition from traditional Teaching to Online Teaching. Anderson et al. (2011) claim that teachers who are confident in their face-to-face practice have a sense of uncertainty when it comes to teaching virtually. One related challenge identified by Murphy (2009) is multitasking. She emphasizes the fact that teachers constantly need to resolve the issues encountered by different learners and that technological problems further complicate the situation, leading to the unlikeliness of learners receiving equal attention from their instructors. Teachers, according to the author, can remedy this situation by appointing some students as moderators who provide assistance to their fellows. Having said that, the transformation in the mode of instruction has placed tremendous pressure on teachers, who have to deal with more spontaneous trouble.

In addition, teachers can face communication challenges (Kebritchi et al., 2017). Whereas teachers can directly observe students' attitudes via verbal or non-verbal affective signals in a traditional classroom (Coppola et al., 2002), it is more difficult to do so in an online context (Crawley et al., 2009). Another setback is associated with learners' engagement, indicated by long silences (Moorhouse, 2020; Murphy, 2009). Murphy (2009) discovers that activities are often lengthy and slow, so the engagement level is consistently low. In Moorhouse (2020), students are inclined to provide short responses, not to mention that they prefer using the text box to talking through the microphone. The disengagement can cause difficulty in communication, especially when the students leave their cameras off, inducing a lack of paralinguistic cues (Peachy, 2017). Quite often, the online environment makes it more difficult to generate students discussion and smooth teacher-student communication (Nguyen, 2022), which may help explain lower exam scores in online courses (Pham, 2022). In general, these studies illustrate that the degree of communication and engagement can decline in a virtual classroom, posing yet another threat to the success of online Teaching.

Since online Teaching entails the use of video-conferencing software, the technology can be a burden for teachers (Fein & Logan, 2003). The authors accentuate teachers' need to understand what they use despite challenges comprehensively. In fact, teachers need not rely on technology so as to succeed in a traditional classroom. On account of the emergence of online Teaching as

a new phenomenon, it is unavoidable that some teachers are not willing to welcome it, resulting in a struggle to find their own identity (Baran et al., 2011), that is, a reluctance to become an e-instructor (Fein & Logan, 2003). It is obvious that teachers usually apply their usual traditional practice to the online context. This, however, may restrain them from effective Teaching, provided that there is a huge difference between online and traditional environments. It is obvious that familiar teaching aids such as blackboards as well as chalk or markers are not at teachers' disposal, and they have to get used to in-app features such as word processors and doodling widgets as a replacement. The circumstance can be exacerbated for technophobe teachers or those who are not acquainted with the technology.

Teaching also involves giving assignments, which cannot be implemented online in the same way compared in face-to-face classrooms, and which there has been limited research on. Teachers clearly cannot assign students homework by posting instructions and uploading files onto the chat box because they are not allowed to do so with some applications, and nothing will be saved after a session. In reality, teachers often resort to other platforms in order to upload and store files, materials, and instructions for assignments and revision. In other words, additional applications must be used in conjunction with the video-conferencing software to keep records of ongoing classes. This calls for the need to acquire new skills and competencies linked with the technology (Peachy, 2017).

There also exist external technical problems. Murphy (2009) presents two problems, one related to the sound quality and the other related to the insufficiency of equipment. For the former, the author suggests using an integrated tool – direct messaging, which is similar to the chat box of video-conferencing applications. As for the latter, she recommends enquiring technicians for further support. Nevertheless, this solution is not concerned with the internet connection, which can also cause a lag in signal transmission. As a matter of fact, concerns about internet connection or power supply are beyond teachers' reach, and many teachers might as well give in when encountering them, leading to low-quality lessons and even the cancellation of sessions.

Last but certainly not least, one key difficulty that these online conferencing services pose to small-scale institutions is their pricing. In other words, unless users (in this case, the stakeholders or teachers) are willing to buy a premium membership, there are bound to be blockages implemented within the software that present inconveniences for Teaching and learning. These can be in the form of a limit on the maximum time allotted per meeting, a participant cap, or an outright disability on certain features. All of these shall be discussed in more detail in the following section.

2.3. Discord as online conferencing software for educational use

Unless the institution issues an in-house built program, most teachers are currently using one of the following: Zoom US, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams. All of these three are designed with the business world in mind, which is reflected in their marketing tactics. On the other hand, Discord was not originally opted for this user demographic. Up to now, Discord is still mainly used by the gaming community, despite having comparable features for online learning and

arguably more competitive prices. Users can utilize most of Discord without having to pay a dime. However, the software also offers a premium license with noticeable upgrades, i.e., larger bandwidth to accommodate more simultaneous speakers or higher upload speed for better audio transmission. In comparison with others save for MS Teams, Discord Nitro (the name of Discord's premium subscription) is sold at a lower price of \$9.99 per month. Table 1 illustrates a more detailed comparison of the four platforms.

Table 1. A comparison among Zoom US, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Discord

	Zoom US	Google Meet	MS Teams	Discord
Premium pricing				
Starting from	\$14.99 /month	\$7.99 /month	\$5.00 /month	\$9.99 /month
Voice/ video conferencing (Free license)				
Maximum number of participants	100	100	20	50
Call duration	45 minutes	60 minutes	Unlimited	Unlimited
Video quality	Above 720p	720p	Above 720p	720p
Additional features				
Breakout room	No (available in paid licenses)	No	No (available in paid licenses)	Yes
Dashboard	No	No	No (available in Microsoft 365)	Yes
Recording	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Whiteboard/Doodling	Yes	No	Yes	No

2.3.1. Unique features of Discord

2.3.1.1. Unlimited voice conferencing

Suppose a free license is the basis of comparison among these applications. In that case, Discord has a quite modest capacity in terms of maximum users on the same voice channel (50) compared with Google Meet (100) and Zoom US (100). However, what sets Discord apart is that it does not limit the call duration at all, meaning that members can stay in the call for

unlimited time, whereas Zoom US only allows 45 minutes of voice conferencing in one session. Google Meet is also looking into the possibility of implementing the same time cap at 60 minutes. In the case of MS Teams, despite virtually not having an upper limit on the duration of the call (24 hours), the maximum number of participants on a free license of the host is 20.

2.3.1.2. Breakout room

Discord allows the server admin (the teacher) to create multiple voice channels within the server, then move other members (the students) into these channels where they can discuss vocally in pairs or smaller groups. These channels are completed with their own screen-sharing functions, meaning that students can share their screens for group work without interfering with other groups. The teacher can instantly hop from one room to another to observe and check on students' progress. This is an excellent tool for teachers to organize activities that are otherwise impossible to do in a common voice room and directly address the problem of lack of interaction among students (Nguyen, 2022). Although the feature is not inherently unique to Discord in the sense that only Discord has it, breakout rooms are locked behind paywalls in other apps (MS Teams), requiring paid licenses to gain access. The quota on breakout rooms on Discord exceeds 15, which should be more than enough for most ESL classrooms.

2.3.1.3. Dashboard

What is lacking in the three apps Zoom US, Google Meet, and MS Teams (or at least their free versions), is a dashboard. When a meeting is closed, any information that was sent through text is either lost or left unorganized. For important announcements, users often need the use of third-party platforms such as emails to keep everyone on track. With Discord, the server admin can create text channels that are dedicated to updates and announcements, equipped with multimedia and any file sharing (under 25 MB). By restricting who can post in said channel, the chance of text chat flooding by members is minimized. Even without anyone using voice calls, members can freely view these channels to get themselves up to date on current schemes.

2.3.2. Limitations of Discord in comparison with other apps

2.3.2.1. User interface (UI) not being technophobe-friendly

As Discord is built primarily for gamers, who have already familiarized themselves with computers, new users can be overwhelmed by its user interface. For teachers who are inexperienced in navigating applications, it may take them some time to set everything up the first time they create a classroom.

2.3.2.2. No recording features

Unlike the three other applications, Discord does not have a built-in feature for recording the meeting. This can be difficult for teachers who wish to upload the recorded version of their lesson on the Internet for students to revise later. Nevertheless, there are third-party soft-wares acting as workarounds for such a problem.

2.3.2.3. No whiteboard and doodling

Both Zoom US and MS Teams allow the host to present a whiteboard and doodling on it with their mouse, which is great for brainstorming sessions. There are yet to plan for the implementation of this feature on Discord.

3. Methodology

3.1. Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted at C-Plus Education, IPP Education, WESET English Center, and Zim Academy, as the researchers have connections with those institutions. The centers, all based in Ho Chi Minh City, provide English courses to cater to different learners' needs, ranging from general English to IELTS. Owing to the outbreak of COVID-19, online Teaching has been adopted, and each center employed different software to deliver courses to learners.

One hundred six teachers at the aforementioned institutions were chosen as participants, which is an appropriate number for the reliability and validity of the research (Fraenkel et al., 2012). Thanks to the association with the centers, the participants were selected based on convenience sampling. It is worth noting that all participants had some experience working with at least one of the predetermined software, which they were using for organizing online classes.

3.2. Design of the Study

For this study, a cross-sectional survey was employed to explore the efficiency of Discord compared to other video-conferencing software. This can be justified by the fact that a survey is used to discover opinions, attitudes, and trends (Creswell, 2012; Fraenkel et al., 2012). In addition, to be able to evaluate Discord comprehensively from teachers' beliefs, it was necessary to tap into several aspects of the software, which could be achieved with a survey design. Specifically, a cross-sectional survey was utilized as the study was carried out during one period of time, and there was a need to compare a certain number of involved applications, according to the aim of the research. The research team designed the survey in light of the scarcity of studies on CMC (Ajabshir, 2018). Even though they garnered the materials necessary to formulate the survey from various sources, especially user-experience surveys by Discord themselves, it ultimately was not adequate to consider this an adaptation of any previous study. Regarding the design of the content of the questionnaire, all questions were close-ended and adopted the four-point Likert Scale.

3.3. Scope of the Study

There exist many applications which can be applied to Teaching. However, the researchers deliberately limited the range of software to only four, including Discord, which was the main subject of the study, Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams, which are widely used as a platform for online Teaching. Since the aim of the paper was to evaluate Discord as an online platform for pedagogical purposes, it was important to make a comparison with other prevalent ones. Furthermore, platforms such as Tik Tok and YouTube are also popular with English

learners. However, they were excluded from the study because they are intended for distance learning, but not online learning.

3.4. Data collection & analysis

Once the teacher-participants finished their trial period using Discord as the English teaching and learning platform, they were asked to complete a relevant survey whose data were then yielded into a collective file. After being put through the analysis phase, which relied on the SPSS 20 engine, the means and the standard deviation were deduced. The findings and subsequent discussion of which were elaborated on in the ensuing sections.

Concerning the reliability as well as the validity of the research, since the survey was cross-sectional in nature, it was ideal for measuring quantitatively the attitudes, beliefs, opinions, and practices of the participants, which in this case was their entire interaction with Discord (Creswell, 2012). Additionally, there were 106 participants in the survey, ensuring that the population was large enough to be reliable (Fraenkel et al., 2012)

4. Results

4.1. Demographics

According to Table 2, of the 106 teachers participating in the survey, more than half had been teaching English for less than one or one to two years, at 34 and 29, respectively. Among those with less than one year of experience, 18 were familiar with online Teaching, while the remaining 16 were not. Said figure experienced a larger gap in the next 29 with one to two years of experience, where 22 were familiar, and seven were not. From the remaining number, the figure of who had been involved in the craft from two to four years was 23 – 19 of whom were considered to be no stranger to online Teaching – leaving those whose experience exceeded four years at 20, with only two declaring their unfamiliarity with online Teaching.

Table 2. The participants' demographics and online teaching familiarity

Time span	Number/ Percentage	Online teaching familiarity	
		Yes	No
<1	34	18	16
	100	53	47
1-2	29	22	7
	100	76	24
2-4	23	19	4
	100	83	17
>4	20	18	2
	100	90	10

4.2. Discord's features

4.2.1. ease of use

On Discord's features, a four-point Likert scale was implemented to discover to what extent the participants agreed to the given statements regarding the instructions required to operate the platform, the ease of setting up a server, voice and text channels, and screen sharing for both teachers and students.

Table 3 illustrates both the teachers' and the students' functions and needs when it comes to an online teaching platform. This particular instance concentrated on whether either party felt that the instructions, server set-up, voice and text channels, and screen sharing set-up were vital to a smooth teaching and learning session. Overall, the majority of the participants agreed that the four categories as mentioned above were essential and should be ensured to operate accordingly. Since the standard deviation was all marked below 1, the data was statistically significant.

Table 3. Teachers' perceptions of Discord as an online teaching and learning platform

Ease of use	Teacher's functions and needs				Students' supposed functions and needs			Overall
	Require instructions	Set up a server	Create voice and text channels	Set up screen sharing	Require instructions	Join voice and text channels	Set up screen sharing	User interface is easy to use
Strongly agree	35	33	44	42	55	43	38	40
	33.0%	31.1%	41.5%	39.6%	51.9%	40.6%	35.8%	37.7%
Agree	43	61	57	58	41	48	48	50
	40.6%	57.5%	53.8%	54.7%	38.7%	45.3%	45.3%	47.2%
Disagree	18	11	5	6	6	14	19	12
	17.0%	10.4%	4.7%	5.7%	5.7%	13.2%	17.9%	11.3%
Strongly disagree	10	1	0	0	4	1	1	4
	9.4%	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	3.8%	0.9%	0.9%	3.8%
Means	2.97	3.19	3.37	3.34	3.39	3.25	3.16	3.19
Std. dev.	0.94	0.65	0.57	0.58	0.76	0.71	0.74	0.78

As evidently shown in Table 3, the teachers' and students' responses of the survey enjoyed a fairly low standard deviation, with none exceeding 1.00. This can be interpreted that most of the responses do not scatter in terms of choices; rather, they clump up closely together towards a particular mean. Concerning the means of the eight question statements – four of which were reserved for the teachers, three of which were exclusive to the students, one of which was open to both parties – except for the “require instructions” of the teachers observed at 2.97, all of the

remaining seven items achieved a mean higher than 3.00, with the statement of whether students required instructions having the highest mean of 3.39, which is closely followed by teachers' 'create voice and text channels', at 3.37. Thus, it is sufficient to determine that the majority of both parties involved in the survey agreed to the presented items.

4.2.2. Basic functionality

Similarly, a four-point Likert scale was also utilized for the participant's perception of the frequency of Discord's basic functions in terms of the quality of voice reception, webcam and screen sharing.

The functionalities of Discord, i.e., voice reception, webcam, and screen sharing, were put into perspective in Table 4. The quantitative result yielded revealed that most of the participants on both sides, i.e., teachers and students, had a high opinion of what Discord could offer toward a smooth-running session.

Table 4. Teacher' perceptions of the basic functions of Discord

Basic functionality	Voice reception quality		Webcam smoothness	Screen sharing smoothness
	Students to Teacher	Teacher to Students		
Always	38	39	29	29
	35.8%	36.8%	27.4%	27.4%
Usually	58	62	57	67
	54.7%	58.5%	53.8%	63.2%
Rarely	9	5	20	10
	8.5%	4.7%	18.9%	9.4%
Never	1	0	0	0
	0.9%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Means	3.25	3.32	3.08	3.18
Std. dev.	0.65	0.56	0.67	0.58

Table 4's questions of frequency determine the smoothness of several basic functions of Discord overall. Since the standard deviation yielded all fall below 0.7, the dispersion is low. Regarding the accompanying statistics, the majority of the participants opted for the 'usually' answer, whose rate was closely followed by 'always'. The low dispersion rate, along with the tendency toward 'always' and 'usually' choices, elucidate that the participants generally encountered little to no issue with the items given while video conferencing with Discord. This is clearly elucidated via the four collected means, none of which falls below 3.00.

4.2.3. Comparison between Discord and other applications

In Table 5, when comparing Discord to the software they are using, the participants were asked to respond to the items based on the degree of agreement. These items concerned whether Discord has the better voice, webcam, and screen sharing quality.

Table 5. Teachers' comparison between Discord and the application they are using

Comparison	Discord has...		
	Better voice quality	Smoother webcam	Smoother screen sharing
Strongly agree	39	33	37
	36.8%	31.1%	34.9%
Agree	56	53	56
	52.8%	50.0%	52.8%
Disagree	9	19	11
	8.5%	17.9%	10.4%
Strongly disagree	2	1	2
	1.9%	0.9%	1.9%
Means	3.25	3.11	3.21
Std. dev.	0.68	0.72	0.7

The question in Table 5 was whether Discord achieved more persuasive performing functionalities compared to other conferencing apps, e.g., MS Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet. In general, it was observed that although Discord gained a huge vantage point regarding voice reception quality and screen sharing, the webcam was reportedly not as satisfactory as the other two, with 17.9% of the population in favor of other apps, but was ultimately serviceable. The standard deviation once again achieves a low dispersion rate around the high means of 3.25 for the voice quality, 3.11 for the webcam, and 3.21 for the screen sharing feature, respectively.

4.2.4. Other practices and features

Besides Discord's core features, there were a handful of add-ons and tools in the equation whether the teachers thought they or their students required these external aids or otherwise was elucidated in the tables below.

Table 6. Teachers' perceptions of doodling

	Doodling		
	Doodling is important	Discord should have Doodling	Teachers are willing to use third-party programs
Strongly agree	35	41	33
	33.0%	38.7%	31.1%
Agree	62	58	52
	58.5%	54.7%	49.1%
Disagree	9	7	16
	8.5%	6.6%	15.1%
Strongly disagree	0	0	5
	0.0%	0.0%	4.7%
Means	3.25	3.32	3.07
Std. dev.	0.6	0.59	0.8

Table 6 illustrates the participants' attitudes towards the doodling feature of Discord. With all three items achieving a low standard deviation of under 1.00, it is sufficient to assume that the dispersion rate is low and that the answers are clustered together reliably. Most participants agreed with the importance of doodling when conducting an online class, with more than 90% of the population choosing either 'strongly agree' or 'agree' to the item. While a similar proportion of the teachers wished Discord would integrate such a feature, most of them were willing to circumvent the problem using third-party programs, at 33.1% for 'strongly agree' and 49.1% for 'agree'.

Table 7. Teachers' perceptions of recording

	Recording		
	Recording is important	Teachers record lessons	Discord should have recording feature
Strongly agree	49	50	48
	46.2%	47.2%	45.3%
Agree	50	42	47
	47.2%	39.6%	44.3%
Disagree	5	11	7
	4.7%	10.4%	6.6%
Strongly disagree	2	3	4

	1.9%	2.8%	3.8%
Means	3.38	3.31	3.31
Std. dev.	0.67	0.77	0.76

Table 7 showcases the three items on recording concerning its importance and the need for recording lessons. Since low standard deviations, i.e., under 1.00, are observed, the results are deemed reliable. An overwhelming number of participants agreed that the feature was much needed; in reality, the number of teachers who recorded the lessons was lower, which attracted the notable 'disagree' of 11, claiming 10.4% of the population. However, many of the participants still captured their live lessons for later revisions and wished that Discord would incorporate this characteristic into its platform, much like doodling.

Table 8. Teachers' perceptions of breakroom

	Breakrooms		
	Breakroom is important	Discord has a good breakroom feature	Discord's breakroom is better than others'
Strongly agree	43	33	29
	40.6%	31.1%	27.4%
Agree	50	55	58
	47.2%	51.9%	54.7%
Disagree	9	18	19
	8.5%	17.0%	17.9%
Strongly disagree	4	0	0
	3.8%	0.0%	0.0%
Means	3.25	3.14	3.09
Std. dev.	0.76	0.68	0.67

Table 8 displays the analyzed data on breakrooms. Similar to doodling and record, the standard deviations collected here are also under 1.00, which means a low dispersion rate and a reliable outcome. The surveyed teachers aligned with the statements that the breakroom was essential for effective classroom management, with 87.8% agreeing. While Discord's breakroom was deemed very well-designed, with 31.1% of the population strongly agreeing with the statement, the participants were not as determined to claim that it appeared superior to what the other conferencing apps offered; therefore, only 27.4% of the population expressed a strong agreement with this statement. Nevertheless, it is still valid that over half of the population were more comfortable using Discord's breakroom compared to other programs, with a cumulative 82.1% of the population on the agreeing side.

Table 9. Teachers' perceptions of the dashboard

	Dashboard		
	Dashboard is important	Discord facilitates announcements and reminders	Discord has a better dashboard
Strongly agree	51	47	43
	48.1%	44.3%	40.6%
Agree	46	49	49
	43.4%	46.2%	46.2%
Disagree	8	9	13
	7.5%	8.5%	12.3%
Strongly disagree	1	1	1
	0.9%	0.9%	0.9%
Means	3.39	3.34	3.26
Std. dev.	0.67	0.67	0.7

Table 9 elucidates the three items on the dashboard. As with the features mentioned above, the dashboard's items also achieved a low dispersion rate via no standard deviations exceeding 1.00. The dashboard was the feature deemed necessary for Teaching, reflected by the mean of 3.39, which indicates that the participants mostly agreed with the statement. Nearly the same number of teachers asserted that Discord had made it easier to make announcements as well as remind students of assignments, seeing that a cumulative 90.5% of the population agreed with this. It was also noted that Discord's dashboard drew the preference of the majority of those surveyed, with 40.6% choosing 'strongly agree' and 46.2% for 'agree'.

Overall, Discord excelled at offering a smoother means of dividing the class into smaller groups with the use of breakrooms along with a dashboard for both sides of the participants. Meanwhile, doodling and recording fell short of other apps since Discord was yet to incorporate these features into its platform. However, the majority of teachers in the population, at 39.1% for 'strongly agree' and 49.1% for 'agree', were willing to mitigate this issue by making use of third-party programs.

5. Discussion

5.1. The challenges posed in online Teaching

As discussed in the literature review, both teachers and students, when familiarizing themselves with online learning platforms, face a plethora of difficulties that they need to overcome to achieve efficiency (Murphy, 2009; Anderson et al., 2011; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Peachy, 2017). It is worth mentioning that years of teaching experience correlate negatively with the difficulties that teachers encounter (Fein & Logan, 2003; Baran et al., 2011). Among these challenges, there

are some which are beyond their control, such as internet connection and availability, while other issues concerning the users' inability to use these tools can be circumvented through training. Then there is also the problem with product licensing. These services may or may not come with a hefty price that is ideal to be covered by the institution. In reality, it is common for teachers to accept these paywalls as an inconvenience or to dig into their pockets to buy a premium subscription for this software.

5.2. Discord as a potential online learning platform

Suppose the fundamental features required for the software to function as an online learning platform are voice communication, webcam and screen sharing, and text chat (Roos et al., 2020). In that case, Discord is well-qualified as a contender among other more popular tools. Data from the survey suggests that the technological infrastructures of Discord are up to the task, except for the webcam sharing feature, which has been reported as being lagged at times. Voice chatting and live streaming in Discord is considered much smoother than in the participants' counterpart, reinforcing the idea that Discord is indeed suitable for their teaching and learning needs.

What truly sets Discord apart is the availability and quality of its features relative to its pricing. As a free user, teachers can have access to unlimited meetings for longer learning sessions, breakout rooms to facilitate classroom activities similar to a face-to-face lesson, and a dashboard for managing and storing important notices even when the class is not live. These widgets are greatly appreciated by respondents, who utilize them rather frequently in their practices. This is great news for small independent educational institutions, especially those which are struggling to balance their operational cost and revenue when switching to Online Teaching. For larger-sized classes of over 15 students, which renders the webcam feature a bit lagged, Discord Nitro can be purchased at a relatively lower price compared to Zoom, the platform with comparable features to Discord.

5.3. Setbacks and limitations of Discord

The opinion remains that the user interface of Discord is rather overwhelming for those who are not used to these types of software, i.e., teachers who are technophobes (Murphy, 2009; Anderson et al., 2011; Kebritchi et al., 2017; Peachy, 2017). Nevertheless, users seem to become more comfortable navigating within Discord once teachers and students have been instructed on how to do so, as mentioned by the participants. From that point onwards, using Discord for Teaching and learning became a much easier task.

The other limitations of Discord come in the form of non-existent features, namely screen recording and doodling. Understandably, screen recording has its own value in allowing teachers to save their lessons for future use, perhaps to help out students who are absent that day. Doodling, meanwhile, simulates the act of freely noting and drawing that one does with a normal marker or chalkboard. This can be especially helpful when teachers wish to draw mind maps or quick illustrations. Teachers in the survey expressed a strong agreement towards implementing these features into Discord if at all possible. However, it is important to note that

these drawbacks do not cripple Discord's usage as an online learning platform since respondents are willing to use third-party software to achieve these purposes.

6. Conclusion

From the scientific data analysis, without a doubt, Discord as an English teaching and learning platform incur a huge potential. Despite setbacks in the fact that the platform does not have adequate internal applications, e.g., doodling and recording, the overall teaching and learning performance has been assured of suffering little, as there are add-ons and workarounds to the posed dilemma.

For teachers and students, Discord can serve as a versatile platform in the sense that it facilitates potentially better Teaching and learning process at a relatively cheap cost if any. Considering their advantages over the other apps, with outstanding functionalities, the two parties, i.e., teachers and students, have the opportunity to aim for better sustainability and efficiency in their respective educational environments. Despite the shortcomings in terms of the features mentioned in the above sections, i.e., doodling and recording, it is still viable to make use of the aid of additional apps which make up for this deficiency, as the participants are willing to do so.

Though larger educational institutions may, partly due to bureaucracy, be initially hesitant to try out the platform on any relevant scale, Discord – with its features and characteristics over pricing – is deemed ideal for smaller educational business models since they are sleek in design, familiar to students, and – as observed – teachers can adapt to what the platform has to offer in a relatively short amount of time.

This research is based on the free version of Discord, so problems concerning the class size, which correlates with demanding a wider bandwidth, have not been touched upon. Additionally, Discord is – in all sense and purpose – an online service, which means it will be susceptible to updates and modifications as time goes on. These are gaps that future research into the matter might explore further.

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Biodata

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Appendix

A detailed comparison of Zoom US, Google Meet, MS Teams, and Discord on the basis of free-license

	Zoom US	Google Meet	MS Teams	Discord
Voice/ video conferencing				
Maximum number of participants	100	100	20	50
Call duration	45 minutes	60 minutes	Unlimited	Unlimited
Video quality	Above 720p	720p	Above 720p	720p
Additional features				
Breakout room	No (available in paid licenses)	No	No (available in paid licenses)	Yes
Dashboard	No	No	No (available in Microsoft 365)	Yes
Recording	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Whiteboard/ Doodling	Yes	No	Yes	No

The Effects of Reading Habits on Writing Performance: A Case Study at Van Lang University

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Received: 27/05/2022

Revision: 17/07/2022

Accepted: 19/07/2022

Online: 20/07/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: reading habits, writing performance, correlation

Reading habits and writing performance reportedly share a close correlation; however, there has been less investigation on this aspect in Vietnam. The research aims to bridge the gap in the literature review with a description of Van Lang University English majors' reading patterns, a report of their writing ability, and a conclusion on the relation between these two elements. Quantitative data were collected through an online questionnaire discovering students' reading habits and a writing test administered to evaluate their writing performance. The test results were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26 (SPSS 26). Additionally, Pearson correlation and linear regression were applied to confirm the influences of five elements in reading habits on students' writing performance. Qualitative data were obtained through a structured interview and then quantified with Microsoft Excel 2019. The interview was carried out to generalize the reading patterns of different purposive samples categorized by their writing marks. The result of the study asserts a positive correlation between students' reading habits and their writing performance ($r_{\text{obtained}}=0.433$ to 0.542), and nearly 60% of the segments of the reading patterns were proved to have a great contribution to writing ability. The study indicates that a good reading habit entails improvement in writing achievement. The research suggests further investigation of factors influencing reading habits, the effects of teachers' instructions on students' writing performance, and the genres of essays that are most affected by reading patterns.

Introduction

It is well acknowledged among educators that the mastery of four language skills would support the acquisition of the second language since they are considered the basics of communication. A great deal of research, hence, has been conducted to find out how to improve students' language skills. Pham (2021) asserted the enhancement of students' reading comprehension obtained through their regular reading practices. The study carried out by Taufan (2020) indicated that sociodramatic play was in use to develop students' speaking proficiency.

Kartawijaya (2018) advocated the use of an outline technique to improve students' writing skills. Students' listening comprehension would be better if listening strategies were applied (Putri & Dewi, 2019).

Simultaneously, the correlation between these skills has also been the subject to be discussed in educational research. Several studies conducted investigations specifically about the influence of reading habits on students' academic performance. Santoso (2015) studied the relationship between reading habits toward vocabulary mastery of the English language among college students. Pham (2021) asserted the significant relationship between reading habits and reading comprehension. Akbar (2014) supplemented one aspect of the field with a study on the influence of reading habits on speaking skills. The notion of correlation between reading habits and writing skills was discussed in the research of Juriati, Ariyanti, and Fitriana (2018). These studies came to the same conclusion that maintaining good reading habits could lead to improvement in academic performance.

With considerable experience gained from several years of teaching English majors at Van Lang University, the researcher noticed that students showed low interest in reading. Only around 25% of the students read lessons before each class, and just above ten percent read further materials related to the lessons. With a total lack of further reading, students frequently had difficulties in discussing questions requiring higher cognitive skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom's Taxonomy). During break time or intermission between two classes, English-majored students discussed personal affairs, entertainment, or the latest news on showbiz instead of academic content. The other noticeable problem that captured the researcher's attention was that only a few students in her classes were confident to confirm they often went to the library to read books. Most of the students admitted that the only reason for spending time in the library was preparing for the exams. The researcher assumed that most English majors at Van Lang University paid little attention to reading and had no interest in maintaining reading habits.

Writing is an essential skill that EFL students need to master since it is extensively used in workplaces or higher education when students conduct research, do dissertations, or write articles (Klimova, 2012). Moreover, writing is reportedly considered the most challenging skill to master when acquiring a second language (Hyland, 2003) since it involves a complicated process of getting ideas, organizing the outline, drafting, and revising (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Therefore, students need to perform combined cognitive skills and language strategies (Rao, 2007) to produce a good piece of writing. In the curriculum developed by the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University, writing is taught intensively through five courses, including Writing 1, Writing 2, Writing 3, Writing 4, and Writing 5. The researcher assumed that second-year English majors could produce good essays when completing Writing 4, which focused on writing different genres of essays. Conversely, the Writing 4 Course's Grade Point Average (GPA) in the academic year 2020-2021 displayed offensive insights into students' writing ability. Specifically, twenty-five percent of the students got average marks (5 to 6.5), while only ten percent of them had high marks (8 to 9). Remarkably, twenty percent of the learners could

not pass the course.

The problem of lacking reading habits and the offensive writing performance of second-year English majors forced the researcher to conduct this study among sophomores and juniors to discover their reading patterns, get deeper insights into their writing ability and determine if there was any relation between retaining good reading habits and improving writing performance. In addition, this study aims to bridge the gap in the literature review when quite a few researchers in Vietnam investigate the correlation between reading habits and writing performance. Based on the findings, the study suggests several implications for enhancing students' reading interest and encouraging them to maintain reading habits.

Literature review

There have been various definitions of what the reading process is in contemporary literature. Okilagwe (1998) defined reading as a cognitive process in which students develop their critical thinking to gain meaningful interpretation of words, phrases, and sentences. Heilman (1967), as cited in Khoirunnisa and Safitri (2018), strengthened the notion when affirming that reading is a complicated process of acquiring knowledge that requires students to have a good cognition strategy for attaining the organization, the title, and the gist of the text. The performance of reading, hence, demands readers to interpret and assign meaning to the written characters (Aebersold and Field, 1997). Kidd and Castano (2013) completed the definition with the suggestion that reading develops cognitive skills.

Taking part in the reading process is reportedly believed to gain several remarkable merits. According to Singer and Alexander (2017), integrating reading into lessons helps students restore and retrieve knowledge better. Krashen and William (2012) posited that reading was a catalyst for boosting grammar and lexical resources. Okebukola (2004) complemented the notion when asserting that reading was a vehicle for transmitting knowledge from generation to generation. Therefore, besides improving students' level of fluency, enhancing their grammar competence, and boosting their lexical resources, reading also enlarges students' knowledge of the English-speaking world's cultures (Inderjit, 2014). Abiding et al. (2011) strengthened Inderjit's conclusion with an argument that performing an action of reading also sharpens readers' thoughts and raises their awareness of global issues and current affairs around the world. The literature has obviously proved a fact that reading performance has considerable influence on respective aspects, ranging from grammar and vocabulary achievement to enforcing various fields of individuals.

Reading habit

The notion of reading habit has been defined in varied ways. According to Wagner (2002), reading habit is measured in terms of the number of materials being read, the frequency of reading, and the time spent on it. Similarly, Rosidi (2006), as cited in Risman, Jufriзал, and Rozimela (2019) proposed that several crucial factors forming a person's reading habit include the amount of time that the person spent on reading, the frequency he did reading, the reading

materials he chose to read, the attitude he had toward reading materials, the purpose why he performed reading and the reading strategies he had during reading time.

Another definition was contributed by Issa et al. (2012). He asserted that reading habit was a permanent and continuous practice that became a part of a person's life. In line with this idea, Okwilagwe (1998) emphasized that the reading habit was a purposive activity in which a reader spent time reading for pleasure or academic purpose until he formed a desire for reading. Fatiloro, Adesola, Hameed, and Adewumi (2017) supplemented the definition with the idea that reading habit was an individual's preferred reading styles and genres.

Druckman (2016) added another side to the term, believing that reading habit was a long-term process starting from learning letters, words, phrases, sentences, and complete texts encouraged at the early stages. There was general agreement with Druckman's notion. Greene (2001) proposed that it was advisable to attain a reading habit at an early age so that it could develop into a long-life habit. Furthermore, when a good reading habit is established with a frequency of over five times a week, a positive attitude to reading, and a preference for different genres of books, readers will read with their willingness and pleasure (Sakinah, 2018).

Writing skill

Writing is believed as a productive skill in which meanings are expressed in written forms (Harl, 2013). Having the same mindset, Hedge (2005) argued that writing served as a communication need in which a writer's ideas, feelings, and arguments were delivered to a particular reader or a group of readers. It is supported by Flower and Hayes (1980), as cited in Luu (2012), who asserted that writing was a complex process of constructing thought or ideas to convey the message of the text.

Nunan (2003) affirmed that writing was a physical and mental activity. He proved that writing was called physical since it was related to collecting words in some ways and required more practice. Additionally, writing is a mental work of inventing ideas, organizing sentences and paragraphs, and arousing readers' attention. Writing is, hence, considered a complex cognitive challenge with a test of memory, language, and thinking ability (Kellogg, 2018).

Hyland (2003) accomplished the term with the belief that writing was the most difficult language skill in acquiring a second language. This notion is advocated by Gebharb (2000) with the statement that "the usual things associated with writing are word choice, use of appropriate grammar, syntax, mechanics, and organization" (p.221). As a result, writing is perceived as a combined task consisting of various steps starting from getting ideas, organizing ideas, drafting, and polishing (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Consequently, academic writing should be implemented in the school curriculum to help students deal with writing assignments effectively (Bailey, 2003).

Correlation between reading and writing

The ongoing literature asserts writing is a thoughtful consideration of word choice, syntax, and organization (Gebharb, 2000) in a complicated process of getting ideas, organizing the outline,

drafting, and revising (Oshima & Hogue, 2007). Therefore, it is undeniable that writing is the most difficult language skill in acquiring a second language (Hyland, 2003). Reportedly, reading can be integrated to facilitate the writing process. Horning and Kraemer (2013) developed a theory in which reading should be used as an effective method to teach or learn writing in high schools or colleges. In line with this notion, Luu (2012) affirmed that EFL students could improve their writing skills when there was an integration between reading and writing. Moreover, extensive reading was reported to have a remarkable impact on improving students' writing in terms of grammar accuracy (Alqadi & Alkadi 2013).

Consistently, it is strongly believed that writing has a significant correlation with reading, for reading is one of the steps belonging to the writing process, functioning as information collection (Khoirunnisa & Safitri, 2018). Having the same mindset, Harl (2013) strengthened the idea that reading considerably influences writing, for learners use reading as the standard of how writing is supposed to be done.

Ahn (2014) affirmed the prominent role of reading in developing writing ability. Based on the results of the study, he claimed that the application of critical reading as a pedagogical writing technique could help students improve their essay writing. Similarly, Plakans and Gebril (2012) emphasized the positive impact of reading on students' writing performance with the statement that students could construct ideas, shape their opinions, and learn language use through intensive reading sources.

Correlation between reading habits and writing performance

The contemporary literature advocates that reading habits can be measured through reading materials, reading purposes, reading attitude (Rosidi, 2006), reading frequency, and time spent on reading (Wagner, 2002). Most of these factors have been emphasized to have considerable impacts on writing performance.

Acheaw and Larson (2014) affirmed that reading materials were of use to help students generate and construct ideas for writing. In line with this notion, Plakans and Gebril (2012) claimed that reading sources got students to gain ideas for the writing topic easily, shape their critical thinking, and provide language support.

Based on the results of the study conducted in 2020, Linuwih and Winardi (2020) asserted that constant reading activity could improve writing performance because the reader gained deeper insights into how to write. Having the same mindset, Diem (2007), as cited in Risman, Jufrizal, and Rozimela (2019), claimed that frequent reading habits could help to enhance students' mastery of idea development outline organization, word choice, spelling, and grammar.

Also, the attitude toward reading was confirmed to have significant effects on writing ability. Lukhele (2013) proposed that students who considered reading pleasure and rewarding activity had excellent English proficiency, which resulted in better writing performance.

Additionally, it was reported that when students spent substantial time reading, they could enhance their writing style, lexical resources, and grammar accuracy (Arndt & Woore, 2018).

This notion matched the findings of the study conducted by Sukandi in 2013. He affirmed that Indonesian college students could not produce good writing pieces because of insufficient reading time.

Obviously, reading habits are convincingly believed to have a close interrelation with writing performance since it is the foundation of writing skills (Tampubolon, 1993), helping learners to generate ideas and information for their writing tasks (Li, 2015). Moreover, reading habits can help to develop readers' critical thinking and increase their high order of thinking, which leads to the development of writing performance (Moran & Billen 2014). In line with this notion, Gardier (2005) affirmed that reading habit was the most influential factor in writing because it could stimulate learners' creativity and improve their lexical resources as well as confidence in writing (Maula, 2005).

Related studies

A vast amount of research has been conducted to determine the correlation between reading habits and writing performance. Consistently, Mahyar (2012) pointed out a statistically noble relation between writing achievement and reading habits presented in the analysis of the variance test. At the level of 0.05, the F value was 10.446, which was higher than the F table of 3.15. The result confirmed that there was a significant difference among students who had the different quality of reading habits in the writing results. Also, the study showed that content was the most influential writing component from reading to writing, with a mean of 72.5.

The result of Kartal's research (2017) showed that with a level of significance of 0.01, the obtained value was 0.610. The study indicated a close relationship between reading habits and writing performance. The R square value demonstrated a 37.21% association between the two variables.

The study by Chuenchaichon (2011) revealed the major impact of intensive reading on improving students' writing performance in terms of grammatical accuracy, complexity, coherence and cohesion. With the p-values of the mentioned components were .04, .003, and .001, respectively, the Two-Sample-Tests displayed a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental groups when intensive reading was applied in writing classes. Reportedly, the integration of reading can help to improve writing achievement.

Additionally, related research was proceeded by Wati (2021). The correlation coefficient between reading habit and writing ability was higher than the r-table ($0.51 > 0.329$), which showed a positive correlation between the two variables. Additionally, the t-value was 4.01, which was higher than the t-table of 1.7 at the significance level of 5%. Hence, H_a was accepted, and H_o was rejected. In other words, there is a significant correlation between reading habits and writing performance.

On the contrary, the research by Risman, Jufrizal carried out, and Rozimela (2019) reached a different conclusion. With the r – obtained of 0.23 compared with the r-table of 0.329 at the 0.05 significance level, the study stated that there was no significant correlation between

reading habit and writing ability.

There have been a great number of well-organized studies on the correlation between reading habits and writing performance, most of which emphasized the significant relationship between these two variables. These studies, however, have not yet investigated the notion deeply and thoroughly. There was a lack of investigation on which reading habit factor most influenced writing achievement. Also, most authors did not apply both quantitative and qualitative methods in their studies to gain wider views. This is because the students' explanation for their reading patterns needs investigating by questionnaires and interviews to gain a thorough understanding of students' perspectives. For this reason, the present study was conducted to discover and clarify the reading habits of EFL students at Van Lang University and to determine the correlation between their reading habits and their writing performance through quantitative and qualitative methods. In light of the research's findings, EFL teachers at Van Lang University can have obvious insights into the impact of reading habits on students' writing performance, so they probably consider developing plans for encouraging English majors' reading habits and reviewing effective techniques for writing classes.

Research Questions

To achieve the above purposes, the study focuses on these research notions:

1. What are the reading patterns of EFL students at Van Lang University?
2. To what extent do the sophomores and juniors at Van Lang University perform their writing abilities?
3. Is there any relation between reading habits and writing performance?

Ha: Students' reading habits have effects on their writing performance.

Ho: Students' reading habits do not affect their writing performance.

Methods

Pedagogical Setting & Participants

Established in 1995, Van Lang University has gained several achievements in education and has become one of the first private universities in Viet Nam to win international recognition for its academic research. Based on Decision No.109/QĐ/VL-HĐT 18th, August 2020 of Chairman of the Van Lang University's Council about Educational Philosophy, the educational institution's philosophy of education consists of a holistic, lifelong, ethical, and impactful learning experience.

The researcher decided to choose the Simple Random Sampling method since it was the most suitable and practical way to collect data efficiently and could help to minimize any bias involved in the study. The research was carried out in the second semester of the academic year 2021-2022 with a population of 60 sophomores and juniors who were between the ages of 20 and 22 and majored in the English language at Van Lang University. The researcher's preference for this population lay in the fact that they have attained foundation and advanced knowledge

gained from several reading and writing courses. Sixty undergraduates participating in the study filled out the online questionnaire and took a writing test. From the result of the writing test and in accordance with the purposive and judgment sampling method, 15 students among 60 participants were selected to attend the subsequent structured interview. Fifteen samples in which three achieved excellent, 4 had good, 4 got mediocre, and 4 had poor scores were asked to share their ideas on their reading habits, explain the reasons for their reading patterns and express their perspectives on the correlation between reading habits and writing performance.

Design of the Study

The mixed-method approach was applied in the study, which means that both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered and analyzed to fulfill the objectives of the research. The quantitative data was collected by delivering an online questionnaire to determine students' reading patterns and a writing test to find out the correlation between reading habits and writing performance. Before students filled out the questionnaire, they had been informed of their writing test results. Qualitative data was obtained through a structured interview in which participants were asked to share their reading habits, their explanations for their reading patterns, and their opinions on the relationship between reading habits and writing performance. The mixed methods were implemented since it is useful to "capitalize on the strengths of each approach" and "offset their different weaknesses" (Spratt et al., 2004, p.6).

Data collection & analysis

The data collection process began with an online questionnaire designed on Google Forms and presented to 60 students who were in the second and third years of the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University. The question list was divided into six sections, including demographic information, attitudes toward reading, reading frequency, reading materials, time spent on reading, and the purpose of reading. The online survey was posted to the Facebook Group of the Faculty of Foreign Languages for two weeks and took participants around 5 minutes to complete all the questions. Regarding the merits of the quantitative method, Hinchey (2008) asserts that it is "an efficient way to gather larger amounts of data". In line with the notion, Wright (2005) emphasizes that conducting a survey benefits the researcher by saving time and effort since the data is collected automatically and simultaneously.

The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions divided into two parts. The first part has three questions regarding demographic information, including courses, genders, and ages. The second part, with 23 questions, explores students' reading patterns through five components: reading materials, reading purposes, reading attitudes (Rosidi, 2006), reading frequency, and time spent on reading (Wagner, 2002). These five indicators are presented in five sections. Specifically, section A with five items (Question 1 – 5), determines students' attitudes toward reading habits; section B having five questions (6-10), finds out the frequency of reading; section C, with four questions (11-14) concerns students' reading materials; section D consisting of 4 items (15-18) asks the amount of time spent for a reading activity, and section E including five questions (19-23) discovers students' reading purposes. The items of the questionnaire were

adapted from Balan, Katenga and Simon (2019) and Daniel, Esoname, Chima and Udoaku (2017), who had already tested and affirmed the validity of these questions.

The online questionnaire was administered to gather data regarding students' reading habits using a five-point Likert Scale in which participants were asked to choose one of the options (1 = totally disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neutral; 4 = agree; 5 = totally agree). Subsequently, the results were demonstrated through specific numbers and percentages (%) with the application of the software called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences 26 (SPSS 26). Based on the results, the study could determine Van Lang EFL students' reading patterns.

In order to determine the reliability of the data, the researcher applied Cronbach's Alpha and Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), consisting of KMO and Bartlett's Test on the data collected from the questionnaire.

Reliability Statistics

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha (N=60)

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	N of items
Participants' reading attitude	.860	3.173	5
Participants' reading frequency	.979	2.967	5
Participants' reading materials	.962	3.417	4
Time that participants spent on reading	.959	2.971	4
Participants' reading purposes	.976	4.020	5

Cronbach's Alpha was applied to compute the reliability of the five-point Likert Scale instrument used to explore students' reading patterns. It is shown in Table 1 that Cronbach's Alpha for reading attitude 5-item scale is .860. The 5-item reading frequency variable score is .979, followed by the 4-item reading materials variable with .962 Cronbach's Alpha. The Cronbach's Alpha scores of the time spent on reading consisting of 4 items and the 5-item reading purposes were .959 and 9.76, respectively. These Cronbach's Alpha scores indicate that the items on the questionnaire were undoubtedly reliable for the actual research. ($0.6 < \text{Cronbach's Alpha} < 1$).

Table 2. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.790
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1860.566
	df	253
	Sig.	.000

The researcher implemented KMO Test to examine how suited the data obtained from the

questionnaire was for factor analysis. As shown in Table 2, the KMO value of the sampling is .790, which presents a strong partial correlation between the variables. In other words, it is reasonable to conduct factor analysis. For factor analysis, Bartlett's test was also applied to determine whether the variables are unrelated and imperfect. With sig. =.000, which is less than 0.05. The table indicates that there is a correlation between variables in the data. Based on the KMO value of .790 (>0.5) and a significance level for Bartlett's test of .000, the data collected from the questionnaire was ideal for factor analysis without question.

To gather data for students' writing performance, the researcher administered a writing test on Microsoft Teams in which 60 participants belonged to the Research Team created by adding their emails. The participants were asked to write an essay on the assigned topic for a duration of 60 minutes. The researcher required all participants to turn on their cameras during the test to minimize the problem that students might cheat while doing the test. Moreover, the researcher got the IT Department to block access to any web browsers once the participants logged in to the system to take the test. Their works, then, were marked by two raters assessing four components: task fulfillment, organization, vocabulary, and grammar based on the Writing Rating Scale of Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP). The researcher and her colleague were the two raters who have been lecturers at Van Lang University for years and have gained considerable experience in rating writing tests in VSTEP. Additionally, the researcher applied the Inter-rater Reliability of the test using Pearson Correlation to ensure the reliability of the writing test results. The researcher subsequently used Pearson correlation with ANOVA and coefficients to determine the correlation between students' reading habits and their writing performance.

Table 3. Inter-rater Reliability of the test

		Rater 1	Rater 2
Rater 1	Pearson correlation	1	.714**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Rater 2	Pearson Correlation	.714**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60
Measure of agreement		Kappa value: .712	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As presented in Table 3, the Pearson correlation value, r , at the 0.01 level is .714, and sig. (2-tailed) was .000, which is smaller than 0.05. Based on these two values, it indicates that there is a significant correlation between the scores marked by the two raters. Additionally, the level of agreement between the two raters was analyzed using Cohen's Kappa (Descriptive statistics, SPSS 26). The Kappa value demonstrated in Table 3 is .712, which shows a strong agreement between the two raters.

The qualitative data was obtained through a structured interview in which 15 students were chosen in accordance with their writing scores. The population in which 3 got excellent, 4 had

good, 4 obtained mediocly, and 4 had poor writing scores was asked a list of 10 questions regarding students' reading patterns and their perspectives on the correlation between reading habits and writing performance. Each participant was invited to join the interview on Microsoft Teams, which lasted around 10 minutes, and was informed that the interview was video recorded. To gather most information and avoid misunderstanding, the interviewees were allowed to use Vietnamese whenever they had difficulties expressing ideas in English. The researcher subsequently translated the ideas into English during the analysis process. The qualitative data from the interview was interpreted with the support of thematic analysis in which the writer adopted open coding to capture noticeable ideas about the attitude toward reading, frequency of reading activity, reading materials, time spent for reading, purposes of reading, and the correlation between reading habits and writing ability. Subsequently, the researcher applies axial coding to generate themes relating to these issues and make generalizations about the relationship between students' reading habits and their writing achievements.

Results/Findings and discussion

Quantitative analysis

The quantitative analysis based on the online questionnaire and writing test scores consisted of descriptive statistics, including mean, minimum, maximum, frequency, percentages, and standard deviation. Moreover, reliability statistics were analyzed, covering Cronbach's Alpha, Pearson Correlation, Regression with Durbin, ANOVA and coefficients. The findings were presented under the headings: Reading habit (Reading Attitude, Reading Frequency, Reading Materials, Time spent on Reading and Purposes of Reading), Writing Test Scores, and the Correlation between Reading Habit and Writing Performance. These analyses were conducted to respond to the research questions exploring the reading patterns of EFL students at Van Lang University and determining the correlation between their reading habits and their writing achievements.

Demographic information

Demographic information collected from the questionnaire was analyzed with the application of descriptive statistics of SPSS 26, covering the frequency of participants' classes, genders, and ages.

Table 4. Demographic data on participants' classes, genders, and ages (SPSS 26)

		Frequency	Percentages
Classes	K25	42	70%
	K26	18	30%
Genders	Male	22	37%
	Female	38	63%
Ages	20	18	30%
	21	30	50%
	≥22	12	20%

A descriptive frequency analysis of respondents' classes, genders, and ages is presented in Table 4. It demonstrates that most of the participants (N= 42, 70%) belonged to K25, which were juniors, and the other 30% (N=18) were sophomores belonging to K26. The table also revealed that the majority of students responding to the survey were female (N= 38, 63%) compared with 37% of male participants (N=22). In addition, the findings displayed that half of the population, 50%, were 21, while the other 30% were at the age of 20. The age above 22 contributes 20% (N = 12) to the population.

Reading habit

Reading attitude

Table 5. Descriptive statistics of participants' reading attitude (SPSS 26)

Items	Questionnaire	1 (TD)%	2 (D)%	3 (N)%	4 (A)%	5 (TA)%	Mean	SD
1	In my opinion, reading is rewarding and interesting.	5	5	30	31.7	28.3	3.73	1.087
2	Reading helps to improve my vocabulary significantly.	8.3	21.7	35	20	15	3.12	1.166
3	I usually take notes of less-common words, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, or useful structures from the texts.	16.7	15	28.3	15	25	3.17	1.404
4	I'm into discussing the contents of the books with my peers.	15	23.3	36.7	11.7	13.3	2.85	1.219
5	I do not like it when I hear someone says that reading is time-consuming.	13.3	21.7	31.7	18.3	15	3.00	1.249

Statistics demonstrated in Table 5 shows the degree of each item on participants' reading attitudes. Sixty percent of the respondents agreed that reading was rewarding and interesting (M=3.73), while they neutrally stated that their lexical resource was enhanced through reading activity (M=3.12). The population was still neutral when expressing their ideas on the habit of taking notes of less-common words, idiomatic expressions, colloquialisms, or useful structures from the texts (M=3.17). The rates of the last two items are 2.85 and 3.00, respectively, which shows the participants were neutral in expressing that they were into discussing the contents of the books with their peers and they did not like it when someone said that reading was time-consuming.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics of participants' reading frequency (SPSS 26)

Items	Questionnaire	1 (TD) %	2 (D) %	3 (N) %	4 (A) %	5 (TA) %	Mean	SD
6	Despite being busy with my homework, I try to find some time to read every day.	6.7	16.7	30	31.7	15	3.32	1.127
7	I read at least two English articles or journals every week.	6.7	16.7	50	21.7	5	3.02	.930
8	I read at least one book once a month.	6.7	26.7	41.7	25	0	2.85	.880
9	In each semester, I read at least two English books (besides the coursebooks).	5	28.3	41.7	25	0	2.87	.853
10	I buy/borrow at least one new book every three months.	8.3	31.7	36.7	20	3.3	2.78	.976

As shown in Table 6, the rates of all items are around medium evaluation (2.61-3.40). With the mean scores of 3.32 and 3.02, respectively, the overall population neutrally claimed that they tried to find some time to read every day despite their busy schedule and they read at least two English articles or journals every week. The last three items 8, 9, and 10 have lower mean scores that are just around 2.8. These scores present that most respondents were neutral to state that they read at least one book once a month ($M=2.85$), read at least two English books (exceeding the coursebooks) each semester ($M=2.87$), and bought/borrowed at least one new book every three months ($M=2.78$).

Table 7. Descriptive statistics of participants' reading materials (SPSS 26)

Items	Questionnaire	1 (TD) %	2 (D) %	3 (N) %	4 (A) %	5 (TA) %	Mean	SD
11	I'm interested in books written in English more than ones written in other languages.	8.3	20	36.7	25	10	3.08	1.094
12	I prefer to read articles, journals, or short stories rather than comic books.	3.3	6.7	13.3	55	21.7	3.85	.954
13	I usually read English books on my major or books recommended by my teachers.	5	6.7	33.3	40	15	3.53	.999
14	I prefer to read e-books more than printed ones.	18.3	10	25	26.7	20	3.20	.853

It is revealed in Table 7 that the majority of participants (76.7%) firmly agreed that they preferred to read articles, journals, or short stories rather than comic books ($M=3.85$). They

were also in favor of item 13 that they usually read English books on their majors or books recommended by their teachers ($M=3.53$). The respondents continued to show their neutral idea that they were interested in books written in English more than ones written in other languages ($M=3.08$). They were also neutral in mentioning that they preferred to read e-books more than printed ones ($M=3.20$).

Table 8. Descriptive statistics of time participants spent on reading (SPSS 26)

Items	Questionnaire	1 (TD) %	2 (D) %	3 (N) %	4 (A) %	5 (TA) %	Mean	SD
15	I read 30 minutes – 1 hour every day.	1.7	8.3	30	35	25	3.73	.774
16	I read 1 hour – 2 hours every day.	1.7	23.3	55	16.7	3.3	2.97	.780
17	I read 2 hours – 3 hours every day.	8.3	26.7	36.7	25	3.3	2.88	.993
18	I read 4 hours every day.	11.7	26.7	45	13.3	3.3	2.70	.962

The results demonstrated in Table 8 present that most participants are willing to spend 30 minutes to one hour reading daily ($M=3.73$) while they express their neutral notions on spending a longer time on the activity. With the mean scores of 2.97 and 2.88, respectively, the respondents were neutral in spending from 1-2 hours and from 2 – 3 hours reading every day. The lowest mean score of the item 18 $M=2.70$, only slightly above 2.60, indicates that the students are obviously reluctant to spend such much time (4 hours) reading daily.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics of participants' reading purposes (SPSS 26)

Items	Questionnaire	1 (TD) %	2 (D) %	3 (N) %	4 (A) %	5 (TA) %	Mean	SD
19	I read books to refresh myself and reduce stress.	3.3	3.3	28.3	45	20	3.75	.932
20	I read books to widen my lexical resources and learn how to write sentences, paragraphs, and essays.	3.3	3.3	10	51.7	31.7	4.05	.928
21	I read books to acquire knowledge and get news about the world.	3.3	0	5	55	36.7	4.22	.825
22	I read books for learning purposes such as doing assignments, writing essays, or revision for exams.	3.3	0	10	51.7	35	4.15	.860
23	I read books to understand other people's viewpoints.	6.7	0	13.3	53.3	26.7	3.93	1.006

As shown in Table 9, most of the participants firmly agreed that their own reading purposes forced them to conduct the activity (M= 3.90 – 4.40). The primary purpose of almost every respondent (91.7%) is reading for knowledge and updated news about the world (M=4.22). They were also in strong agreement with the purposes of reading for doing assignments, writing essays or exams (M=4.15), and reading to widen lexical resources and learn how to write (M=4.05). These purposes are followed by reading to understand other people’s viewpoints (M=3.93), to feel relaxed, and reduce stress (M=3.75).

Writing Test Scores

The works of 60 participants in the writing test were marked by two raters. As discussed in the section on data collection and analysis, the reliability of the scores by two raters was assured with the Pearson Correlation value of .714 and the Cohen’s Kappa value of .712. These two values indicate there is a significant consistency and a strong agreement between the two raters. The researcher, therefore, took the average of the scores marked by the two raters as data to explore the research questions: “To what extent do the sophomores and juniors at Van Lang University perform their writing abilities?” and “Is there any relation between reading habits and writing performance?”

Table 10. Descriptive statistics of participants’ Writing Test Scores (SPSS 26)

N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. deviation
60	13.5	36	25.07	6.76

The 60-minute writing test in which the participants were asked to write an essay on the assigned topic was administered online with the support of Microsoft Teams. The student's scores from the test were the data for their writing performance. The results shown in Table 10 present that the mean is 25.07, the highest score is 36, and the lowest one is just 13.5. Based on the Writing Rating Scale of the Vietnamese Standardized Test of English Proficiency (VSTEP), the researcher ranked the scores into four groups ranging from poor 0-15 (under A2 to A2), mediocre 16-23 (B1), good 24-33 (B2) and excellent 34-40 (C1).

Table 11. Descriptive frequency of participants’ Writing Test Scores (SPSS 26)

Scores	Frequency	Percentage (%)
34-40	8	13.3
24-33	29	48.3
16-23	14	23.3
0-15	9	15

The findings of the analysis demonstrate that most of the participants (48.3%) have good writing performance, which means that their scores were in the range of 24-33 (B2). The number of students getting mediocre scores ranged from 16 to 23 (B1) was 14, which equals 23.3%. 15% of 60 students have poor writing ability, with scores in the range of 0-15 (under A2 to A2). The group of students getting excellent writing achievement with a range of scores between 34 and 40 contributes 13.3% to the overall population.

*The correlation between reading habits and writing performance***Table 12.** Pearson Correlation between reading habit and writing performance (SPSS 26)

No			1	2 (r _A)	3(r _F)	4(r _M)	5(r _T)	6(r _P)
1	Writing performance	Pearson Correlation	1	.433**	.501**	.400**	.542**	.412**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000
		N	60	60	60	60	60	60
2	Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.433**	1	.273	-.048	.351	-.016
3	Frequency	Pearson Correlation	.501**	.273	1	.174	.252	.303
4	Materials	Pearson Correlation	.400**	-.048	.174	1	.452	-.026
5	Time	Pearson Correlation	.542**	.351	.252	.452	1	.025
6	Purposes	Pearson Correlation	.412**	-.016	.303	-.026	.025	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Bivariate correlation analysis in SPSS 26 was applied to examine the relationship between participants' reading habits and their writing achievement. The statistics displayed in Table 12 show that the Pearson Correlation coefficients between two variables, reading habit and writing performance, range from .400 (Purposes) to .542 (Time). Among 5 independent variables, the reading time has the highest obtained coefficient with $r_T = .542$ followed by that of the reading frequency variable with $r_F = .501$. The correlation coefficient of the reading material is the lowest with an r-value of .400, while the others, reading attitude and reading purposes, have slightly higher obtained coefficients with $r = .433$ and $r = .412$, respectively. The results indicate a moderate correlation between two independent variables: Reading Frequency and Reading time, with the dependent variable: writing performance ($r_T = .542$, $r_F = .501$, belonging to .5-.7) at the 0.01 level. Writing performance is also positively related with reading attitude ($r_A = .433$), reading materials ($r_M = .400$) and reading purposes ($r_P = .412$).

*Regression Coefficients***Table.13.** Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.792 ^a	.627	.593	4.31533	1.931
a. Predictors: (Constant), X5, X1, X3, X2, X4					
b. Dependent Variable: Y1					

Regression Coefficients using SPSS 26 reveal that Adjusted R Square is .593, which means that 59.3% of the variance in writing achievement can be predicted from reading patterns. In other words, 59.3% of the factors of reading habits in the model influence writing performance levels.

Table 14. ANOVA

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1690.640	5	338.128	18.157	.000 ^b
	Residual	1005.593	54	18.622		
	Total	2696.233	59			
a. Dependent Variable: WRSCORES						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Purposes, Attitude, Materials, Frequency, Time						

The Table 14 shows that the data is statistically significant with $F = 18.157$ and $p = .000 < 0.01$. This indicates that the predictors (Attitude, Frequency, Materials, Time, and Purposes) significantly combine together to impact the writing performance positively.

Table 15. Coefficients in regression linear analysis (SPSS, 26)

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Coefficients ^a
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	-9.237	3.845		-2.421	.019
	Attitude	2.135	.650	.311	3.283	.002
	Frequency	1.442	.688	.196	2.097	.041
	Materials	1.774	.621	.278	2.855	.006
	Time	2.017	.835	.249	2.415	.019
	Purposes	2.785	.684	.359	4.071	.000

a. Dependent Variable: WRSCORES

As displayed in Table 15, all five variables: Attitude, Frequency, Materials, Time, and Purposes, significantly contribute to the equation for predicting writing performance with p values .002, .041, .006, .019, and .000, respectively, which are smaller than 0.05. Additionally, all the Standardized Coefficients, Beta, in the table are all positive numbers, which show a positive correlation between the independent variable: reading habit and the dependent variable: writing performance. The standardized coefficient of Reading Purposes is the highest one ($\beta_P = .359$), followed by Reading Attitude ($\beta_A = .311$) and Reading Materials ($\beta_M = .278$).

Qualitative analysis

The structured interview

The data obtained from the structured interview was analyzed with descriptive statistics analysis, SPSS, 26.

Table 16. Interviewees' attitudes toward reading

What is your attitude towards reading habits?	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Rewarding	3	12%	Positive
Interesting	7	28%	Positive
Relaxing	6	24%	Positive
Difficult	3	12%	Negative
Boring and tiring	3	12%	Negative
Time-consuming	3	12%	Negative

Table 16 describes 15 interviewees' opinions about reading habits. Most of the respondents (64%) take a positive attitude toward reading. Specifically, 28% of the interviewees described reading as an interesting activity they remained for a long time. The students also claimed that reading was rewarding (12%) since the activity brought good effects to their life, helping them relax (24%) and update news about the world. However, some students adopted a negative attitude toward reading when expressing that reading was time-consuming (12%). A few students (12%) asserted that they felt bored and tired from frequently reading for a long time, although they knew reading was beneficial for their study and their life. Other respondents affirmed that sometimes it was difficult to maintain reading habits, especially when they were distracted by other entertainments.

What usually attracts your attention when reading?

Most of the interviewees (85%) strongly affirmed that the content of reading materials was the primary factor that held their attention to the very end. They focused on the content to obtain knowledge or updated information or sharpen their imagination or get a fresh perspective on life. Apart from the content, lexical items and complex structures were also the factors getting respondents' focus. 50% of the interviewed students claimed that they usually took notes of less-common words, idiomatic expressions, colloquialism, or complex structures from the reading texts. Some other students (30%) affirmed that content was the only concern when reading, while the other 20% revealed they were only attracted to the lexical items or structures in the texts. Few students (nearly 14%), however, expressed their reluctance to read when stating nothing like the content, the vocabulary, or the structures of the texts kept their attention, but the pressure to pass the exam really did.

Table 17. Frequency of going to the library

How often do you go to read in the library?	Frequency	Percentages
2 or 3 times a week	1	7%
Once a week	2	13%
Once or twice a month	2	13%
Preparing for exam	3	20%
Never	7	47%

Regarding the frequency of going to read in the library, nearly half of the students (47%) admitted that they had never gone to the library to read. They explained their preference for reading at home due to the comfortable reading environment with a spacious reading room and

refreshments. Besides, they liked reading e-books with friends and discussing the contents with them verbally, while in the library, they had to comply with rules and keep silent. Twenty percent of the respondents stated that they just went to read in the library once they were preparing for exams since the quiet learning atmosphere in the library completely suited their needs. Five out of fifteen students (33%) formed a habit of going to read in the library. Three respondents (20%) said that they went to the library weekly: one kept a habit of going there 2 or 3 times per week, and the others went there once every week. Two other students (13%) claimed that they had the habit of coming to the library once or twice a month.

If you are busy with other activities, will you find some time to read every day?

It is reported that five interviewees (33%) strongly affirmed that they were willing to spend some time reading every day despite being busy with other affairs as they maintained the habit of reading for 30 minutes to one hour daily. They claimed that reading short stories or magazines before bedtime could quickly get them to sleep while reading right after wake-up could raise high morale for a new day. Forty-five percent of the respondents affirmed that they rarely read when they were swamped with other activities like doing homework, preparing for exams, or taking part-time jobs. If the affairs were not so challenging or they had some intermission to break, they would read for updated news or relaxation. The other 22% of the participants expressed their unwillingness to read if busy. They explained that they needed time and undivided attention for the work they were focusing on since finishing the task was their main concern at that time.²

How many English documents do you read in one month besides the coursebooks?

The reading materials in which most respondents have a keen interest are academic or major-related documents and fiction books. More than half of the interviewees (53%) claimed that they finished at least one book per month, while 20% even said that they read 2 or 3 books a month. They were interested in different kinds of documents ranging from reference books, science journals, and research papers to short stories and novels.

Regarding the frequency of reading non-fiction books, 40% of the interviewees affirmed that they did not have a habit of reading non-fiction documents. They only read when they were forced to or when they were under pressure to pass the exams. The other 60% claimed that they completed one non-fiction book every semester, and the subjects that caught their attention were history, fine arts, crimes, economy, and science.

Do you form a habit of reading slogans, labels, ads, or subtitles written in English?

The majority of interviewees (80%) strongly agreed that slogans, goods labels, ads, or subtitles written in English easily captured their attention. The explanation was they were impressed with the special use of English in slogans or ad titles. Others asserted that they could learn structures and lexical items or practice translation and pronunciation. The remaining 20% were neutral in mentioning that they occasionally noticed these short chunks, but the other time they might not be interested in these words.

What genre of books are you interested in? Why?

The collected data reported that 63% of the respondents prefer reading fiction documents rather than non-fiction ones. Short stories or novels are two genres that interviewees normally spent time reading as they could sharpen their imagination, develop their perspectives, and fulfill their wishes. Thirty percent of the students have a preference for non-fiction documents, including fine arts, history, economy, and science. Only one out of 15 students (7%) claimed that he did not concern about the kind of reading materials, and he performed the action of reading books without thinking much about the favorite genre.

Will you read books recommended by your teachers?

The responses obtained from the interview demonstrated different perspectives on the suggested documents. Forty-seven percent of the interviewees claimed that they were willing to read documents recommended by their teachers, including references, journals, or research papers to get deeper insights and better performance, while 33% affirmed that they rarely read external documents. These five students explained that they focused on coursebooks and just read other documents to find related information. The other 20% admitted they had never read any books suggested by their lectures since they thought they could pass the courses without further reading.

What are your purposes for reading?

Table 18. Interviewees' reading purposes

What are your purposes for reading?	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Relaxation	3	12%
Acquiring knowledge and getting news	8	32%
Learning and exams	10	40%
Understanding others' perspectives	2	8%
Develop imagination	2	8%

As shown in Table 18, interviewees affirmed their primary purposes (40%) for reading were doing assignments, writing essays, and preparing for the exams. The purposes of acquiring knowledge and getting updated news were also common. Thirty-two percent of the respondents agreed that reading could get them informed and knowledgeable. The other students claimed that their purposes for reading were to relax (12%): reading could help them reduce stress, get to sleep more quickly and keep balance in life. Eight percent of the interviewees read to develop their imagination and get new ideas quickly. The other 8% hoped to understand other people's viewpoints when they performed frequent reading activities. They explained that reading could develop their critical thinking, sharpen their thoughts, and broaden their perspectives.

Do you think there is a correlation between reading habits and writing performance? In what way does reading habit affect writing achievement?

The obtained data from the interview demonstrates that most of the respondents (80%) strongly believed that there was a significant correlation between reading habits and writing performance. According to these 12 students, the habit of reading could enhance their lexical

resources, get them to come up with ideas easily, and provide samples of how essays were organized. Therefore, they could use a wide range of vocabulary, elaborate valid points with lots of ideas, and organize their pieces of writing cohesively and coherently. On the contrary, the other 20% of the interviewees claimed that they were neutral in determining the influence of reading habits on writing achievement. They affirmed that their main purpose for reading was to relax; as a result, they did not often pay attention to lexical terms or text organization. Additionally, they believed their writing scores could improve if they spent time practicing. Two other students also affirmed that their writing performance was better thanks to the teacher's instructions, comments, and frequent practice.

Discussion

Question 1: What are the reading patterns of EFL students at Van Lang University?

The present study discovered the reading patterns of ELF students at Van Lang University in five aspects: reading attitude, reading frequency, reading materials, time spent on reading, and reading purposes. The findings of the study revealed that EFL students at Van Lang University perform the habit of reading to achieve their purposes. The primary purpose of the reading activity was to acquire knowledge and get updates on the world (M=4.22). Reading for learning was also the common purpose of EFL students at Van Lang University (M=4.15). Additionally, students read to enhance their lexical resources and to learn how to write (M=4.05). Students decided to build up good reading habits as reading could help them understand other viewpoints (M=3.93) and deal with stress (M=3.75)

The findings of this research completely match the results of the study by Balan, Katenga and Simon (2019), who affirmed that the main purpose of reading was to learn new things and to gain knowledge. The results support Akabuike and Asika's findings (2012), who believed that students purposely read to pass the quizzes and exams. These findings confirm the results of other studies such as Owusu-Acheaw (2014), Clark and Rumbold (2006), and Pham (2021) with the statement that students conduct the activity of reading when they get bored and when they need a recreation to deal with stress.

The results of the research describe that most Van Lang EFL students have positive attitudes toward reading habits. Sixty percent of the participants claimed that reading is rewarding and interesting (M = 3.73) since the activity brings good effects to their life, helping them relax (24 %) and update news about the world. These findings resemble the study by Lukhele (2013), who revealed that students who had good reading had excellent English proficiency. These results, however, contradict Akabuike and Asika (2012), who found that students in Anambra State University had a negative attitude toward reading when they considered reading a boring, time-consuming, and difficult activity.

Regarding the types of reading materials, the findings demonstrate that most students (76.7%) prefer to read articles, journals, or short stories rather than comic books (M=3.85). The data from the structured interview support the findings. Students had a preference for learning a

wide range of vocabulary, well-formed structures, and how to organize sentences cohesively, which comic books with short phrases could not demonstrate. They also firmly agreed that they usually read English books on their majors or books recommended by their teachers ($M=3.53$). These results match with the finding of the study by Oriogu et al. (2017), who affirmed that the majority of students were willing to read textbooks of their specialization and books assigned by the professors.

The present study finds that nearly half of the participants (47.5%) were willing to find some time to read despite being tied with other activities. The notion was clarified with the statement that most participants had a habit of spending 30 minutes to one hour reading daily ($M=3.73$). The data from the interview also describe a positive tendency in Van Lang EFL students when 53% of the respondents claimed that they read at least one book a month. Excellent-score students even affirmed they finished 2 or 3 books in one month. These findings demonstrate similarities with those of the study by Erdem (2015), who asserted that nearly half of students in Ankara University and Erciyes University read one book a month, and more than 20% finished two or more books a month.

Question 2: To what extent do the sophomores and juniors at Van Lang University perform their writing abilities?

In terms of writing performance, the findings revealed that 13.3% of 60 samples have excellent writing scores, and 48.3% have good writing ability. The other 23.3 % get mediocre writing scores, while 15% have poor writing skills. With a standard deviation of 6.76, students' writing scores varied. The results of the present study demonstrate that the writing performance of EFL students at Van Lang University is mediocre, with a mean of 25.07. This means that most of the participants get a level of B2 for their writing performance based on the Writing Rating Scale of VSTEP. Meanwhile, the English Outcome Standard for English Linguistics and Literature majors is normally IELTS 6.5+ or CEFR C1 or VSTEP C1. Undoubtedly, the writing performance of English majors at Van Lang University did not match the norm. That 30% of the participants of this study were sophomores, who did not finish all writing courses, could account for the result. Additionally, a total lack of a required certificate in English Learning Outcomes (ELO) of the Foreign Languages Faculty at Van Lang University contributes to the finding. Therefore, it is obvious that to reach the normal English Outcome Standard, Van Lang EFL scholars must improve their writing skills.

Question 3: Is there any relation between reading habits and writing performance?

Bivariate correlation analysis in SPSS 26 was implemented to measure the effects of reading patterns on writing performance. The results demonstrate that all the five reading factors: reading attitude, reading frequency, reading materials, reading time, and reading purposes have a positive correlation with writing ability ($r_A=.433$, $r_F=.501$, $r_M=.400$, $r_T=.542$, $r_P=.412$ respectively). These findings support the study by Linuwih and Winardi (2020), who affirmed that students' reading habits have a positive and significant effect on their writing skills. The present study confirms that students' reading time is the most significant factor affecting their

writing achievement ($r_T=.542$), followed by students' reading frequency ($r_F=.501$). This notion is also in line with the conclusion discussed in the research by Harl (2013). He affirmed that students who read constantly would be able to write well thanks to deeper insights into how to write.

The results obtained from Regression Coefficients analysis using SPSS 26 reveal that 59.3% of the factors of reading habit could explain the variance in writing performance. The findings match the results of the study by Linuwih and Winardi (2020), who reported that the influence of reading habits on writing skills was 82.3%. The Standardized Coefficients Beta displayed that students' reading purpose significantly affects their writing performance ($\beta_P = .359$), followed by Reading Attitude ($\beta_A = .311$) and Reading Materials ($\beta_M = .278$). The findings show similarities with those of the research conducted by Balan, Katenga and Simon (2019), who claimed that the purpose of reading has a significant correlation with academic results, including writing scores. The study complements Grabe's theory (2003) with a conclusion that students who willingly undertake intensive reading of magazines, newspapers, and books can improve their writing performance.

In summary, the statistics from Pearson Correlation and Regression Coefficients analyses display a moderate correlation between students' reading habits and their writing skills. Among the five factors creating a good reading pattern, the amount of time spent on reading and reading purposes have the most significant impact on writing achievement.

Conclusion

The research on the effects of reading habits on writing performance was conducted with the analyses of quantitative and qualitative data obtained from the online survey, the writing test, and the structured interview. The study results showed that students perform the action of reading to achieve their own purposes ($M=4.020$), including getting knowledge and updates, learning and examination, recreation, and understanding others' perspectives. Most of the students had positive attitudes toward reading habits when maintaining a habit of reading for 30 minutes to one hour daily (60%, $M=3.73$) and finishing at least one book a month (53% of the interviewees). The participants also had an interest in extensive reading of short stories, journals, or books more than comic ones to learn how to write ($M=3.85$). Most learners supported the idea that they were willing to read books to their specifications and ones suggested by their lecturers ($M=3.53$).

Descriptive statistics on the writing scores from the test delivered to 60 participants describe that the writing scores of Van Lang English majors varied from excellent performance to poor writing skill (standard deviation =6.76). With a mean of 25.07 ($Max=40$), it is concluded that the writing performance of EFL students at Van Lang University is at a mediocre level.

Based on Pearson Correlation and Regression Coefficients analyses, it can be determined that there is a moderate correlation between reading habit and writing performance, with r obtained from 0.4 to 0.542. Students' reading purposes and the amount of time they spend on reading are

the two factors that significantly correlate with writing achievement ($\beta_P = .359$, $r_T = .542$). Additionally, with an adjusted square R-value of .593, the study affirmed that 59.3% of the factors belonging to the reading pattern influence the writing scores. Obviously, H_a is accepted, and H_o is rejected. The research supports the assumption that Van Lang EFL students' reading habits positively affect their writing performance. The more the students read, the better their writing scores are.

Limitations

There remained some limitations of the present study. The participants were limited due to the pandemic Covid-19. As a result, the findings could not prove that the reading patterns and writing scores were similar to the whole population. The structured interview was delivered online, so some students might not feel comfortable and confident being recorded. Hence, sometimes their answers were not clear enough to be considered. Another limitation was that some participants belonging to group K26 still was not familiar with the online test and encountered some difficulties in performing the test. Therefore, to some extent, there were few papers that could not reflect students' writing abilities.

Suggestions

Future studies should investigate factors that influence students' reading habits. It is necessary to figure out what leads to various reading patterns so that teachers can find effective incentives to help students develop good reading habits. Additionally, research papers in the future should explore the effects of lecturers' instructions on students' writing performance since some studies confirmed that in-class instructions have an impact on students' writing achievement. Future researchers can also research the genre of essays most likely affected by reading patterns.

The study's results emphasize that students' reading habits significantly influence their writing performance. The lecturers, hence, should have plans to increase EFL students' interest in reading and arouse their awareness of forming good reading habits. Moreover, a welcoming reading environment with a quiet and comfortable reading room, the availability of unlimited book resources in the library, and frequent book reviews could enhance students' interest in reading.

Acknowledgments

The author of this article acknowledged the support of Van Lang University at 69/68 Dang Thuy Tram St. Ward 13, Binh Thanh Dist., Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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Biodata

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What is it like learning with an enthusiastic teacher? – A survey on university EFL students

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Received: 24/06/2022

Revision: 21/07/2022

Accepted: 22/07/2022

Online: 25/07/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords: teacher's enthusiasm, learning motivation, teacher's enthusiasm effects, student's learning motivation, student's perceptions

Students need effort and motivation to get outstanding scholastic achievements and to keep themselves motivated throughout their educational journey. Some students drop out of school owing to demotivation in class. Others struggle to find excitement or interest in their study. One of the most crucial things in keeping students inspired to learn while they are at school is the teacher. There is a lot of research that has studied the effects of teachers' enthusiasm on students' learning, especially learning motivation, but little has been done on EFL (English as a foreign language) students at university. This study aimed to investigate how EFL students feel in relation to their learning motivation when they learn with an enthusiastic teacher. The participants are 150 EFL students from a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. To collect and analyze the data needed for this investigation, the researchers used a quantitative method with a questionnaire employed as a measurement tool. The result has found that student's positive perceptions exceptionally outweigh negative ones. The study concludes by making some recommendations for better motivating students and for future research.

1. Introduction

The relationship between teacher characteristics (e.g., clarity, enthusiasm) and various student outcome measures (e.g., learning, motivation) is investigated in teacher effectiveness research (Wood, 1998). Teachers' attitudes have always had an impact on students' willingness to learn over the years. Teachers are also one of the factors to how engaged students are in an English e-learning class (Ngo, 2021). Indeed, a positive student-teacher relationship boosts students' motivation and learning (Lo, 2022). The most powerful element in students' intrinsic motivation and dynamism among the teacher factors is enthusiasm. Students who are given an actively delivered lecture are more likely to be internally motivated to learn about the course content.

Indeed, “students who received an energetically given lecture reported more intrinsic motivation about the lecture subject and experienced better levels of vitality.” (Patrick, Hisley & Kempler, 2000, p. 217). Teachers' emotions are recognized as an inescapable part of education that substantially impacts student motivation. It is commonly considered that teachers should exhibit good emotions while avoiding negative ones to make students feel more at ease while learning. Teachers engage in emotional labor so as to experience or show emotions that are considered desirable or mandated in the classroom. To this end, teachers frequently have to hide feelings (e.g., dislike for a student), pretend to feel emotions they don't feel (e.g., joy because a student has been successful), or make a great effort to experience an emotion they are supposed to experience (e.g., love and care for students despite their disrespectful behavior) (Burić, 2019).

An enthusiastic teacher can have a certain effect on students' learning (Ngo, 2021). She or he can create interest, enjoyment, and curiosity in the classroom, encouraging students to partake and explore. As a result, teacher excitement provokes students' interest and motivates them to learn. Teacher enthusiasm can result in higher teaching evaluations, good attitudes toward teachers, increased student performance, and better classroom behavior (Zhang, 2014). For years, there have been empirical studies on the effects of a teacher's enthusiasm on a student's motivation, but few studies focus on how university EFL (English as a foreign language) students feel about their enthusiastic teachers. In this paper, we will look at how teachers' enthusiasm is perceived by students regarding their learning motivation, with a focus on EFL students at university. It is hoped that the study will uncover students' typical feelings from an enthusiastic teacher.

2. Literature review

2.1. *What is the teacher's enthusiasm?*

Teacher enthusiasm has long been defined as a dynamic and motivating teaching style that involves a wide range of gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and voice intonations, as well as frequent use of humor, and demonstrates a strong interest in the subject (Collins, 1978; Murray, 1983). More recently, the emphasis has shifted to the pleasure teachers take from a subject or from teaching in general - a meaning that is more in line with the concepts of pleasure, passion, and experience (Kunter, 2013). As a result, a wide definition should include how teachers feel about teaching a subject (experienced enthusiasm) as well as how they transmit these emotions to students (displayed enthusiasm) (Keller et al., 2016).

2.2. *Motivation for learning*

According to Tohidi and Jabbari (2011), motivation supports "powering people to achieve high levels of performance and overcoming barriers in order to change." (p. 820). Motivation is the driving force behind guidance, control, and persistence in human behavior. Motivation is a passion for studying, acting, understanding, believing, or gaining specific skills. Motivation can also be defined as the desire to fulfill an individual's needs. One example of this is a student

who wants to learn how to read and count so that he or she would not be cheated when shopping. Other academics have defined motivation in a variety of ways. Motivation is the reason that pushes students to deal with different kinds of difficult situations (Gopalan et al., 2017). Furthermore, motivation has been described as a personality characteristic, a circumstance, or the activities in which every individual is involved (Svinicki & Vogler, 2012). Besides, motivation will be defined as the factor that drives students to dedicate their time freely to a particular activity. It motivates students to not only initiate the activity but also to continue working on the activity throughout their lives. These reasons are unique to each student and vary depending on the situation, and they may come from the students themselves (Espinar Redondo & Ortega Martín, 2015). The fact that there are numerous different definitions demonstrates how difficult it is to describe the motivation and its significance in the learning process (Filgona et al., 2020).

2.3. The effects of teacher's enthusiasm on students' learning

A teacher's enthusiasm can have a significant influence on the level of learning that students are able to achieve in the classroom. Teachers who are less enthusiastic about their subject matter will often have lower expectations for their students, while more enthusiastic teachers will exceed any expectations that the students may have had. There seems to be a broad consensus that teacher enthusiasm can improve students' attitudes in a positive way toward learning (Keller et al., 2016). Students might be motivated and inspired by a passionate teacher who can help them spend more time productively on learning tasks (Keller et al., 2014; Kunter et al., 2013).

Theobald (as cited in Johnson, 2017) states that motivation enhances students' learning. Some students may be very motivated by the idea of greater learning and growth, while teachers who are enthusiastic about their subject matter may be more likely to engage with all their students and expect good levels of engagement from them. "Teachers can increase students' motivation to learn by the support of students' autonomy, relevance, relatedness, competence, teachers' interests in the subject, and self-efficacy" (Ferlazzo et al., as cited by Johnson, 2017, p. 46). In terms of student accomplishment, teachers who were deemed more passionate were compared to teachers who were deemed less enthusiastic. Student accomplishment was higher for students with more enthusiastic teachers (Keller et al., 2013).

2.4. Studies about student's learning motivation

One of the most important aspects of teaching, according to Agee (2016), is for teachers to be excited about their material and how they teach it to students. Student engagement and motivation are key components of learning in the classroom. For certain children, a passionate teacher can make all the difference when it comes to education.

Much research has been conducted that supports Agee's point of view (P. Singh & M. Singh, 2021; Johnson, 2017). According to P. Singh & M. Singh (2021), while students might have a strong desire to study, the teacher's external help profoundly impacts their learning. The teacher's capability to enhance students' competency, interest in the subject studied, and feelings

of self-efficacy all affect students' motivation to study. Furthermore, the study reveals that comforting, loving, and trusting connections between teachers and students may motivate students to learn. Positive feedback from teachers motivates students to learn. A teacher who demonstrates excitement for a subject may create good feelings in students, increasing their desire to learn the subject. According to Adkins-Coleman (2010), students are enthusiastic about learning when teachers focus on student learning, encourage pleasant social connections, express concern for their students, and insist on students showing respect and care for one another, motivating students to participate in classroom activities.

Moreover, Johnson (2017) holds the same belief that motivation affects students' learning. Despite the fact that students are born with the aptitude to learn, much depends on the teachers' participation. Tanveer et al. (2012) add that several aspects of teachers' behavior and teaching methods influence students' motivation to study.

According to Zhang (2014), instructor enthusiasm had a tremendous impact on student participation and was a good predictor of students' intrinsic motivation. Students' willingness to learn may be increased by teachers' enthusiasm for their subject, as well as the level of enthusiasm and energy they display when teaching. Thoonen et al. (2010) claim that their findings support the hypothesis that teachers' self-efficacy affects students' motivation to study. Much research has been carried out and has supported Thoonen's point of view, including the study by Pan (2014) and by Mojavezi and Tamiz (2012). However, if students are not sufficiently supported in their motivation and learning, enthusiasm as an expressive behavior is unlikely to sustain long-term student engagement (Patrick et al., 2000).

It appears that there is considerable consensus that teacher enthusiasm can improve students' attitudes toward learning (Keller et al., 2016). However, one reason they may focus more on learning activities is that an enthusiastic instructor offers few possibilities for students to become bored and to misbehave. When the teacher speaks strongly and clearly, for example, it is difficult for students to talk with one another; and when students are sincerely engaged in the activities provided by an energetic teacher, they have little opportunity to disturb the lesson.

2.5. Research Questions

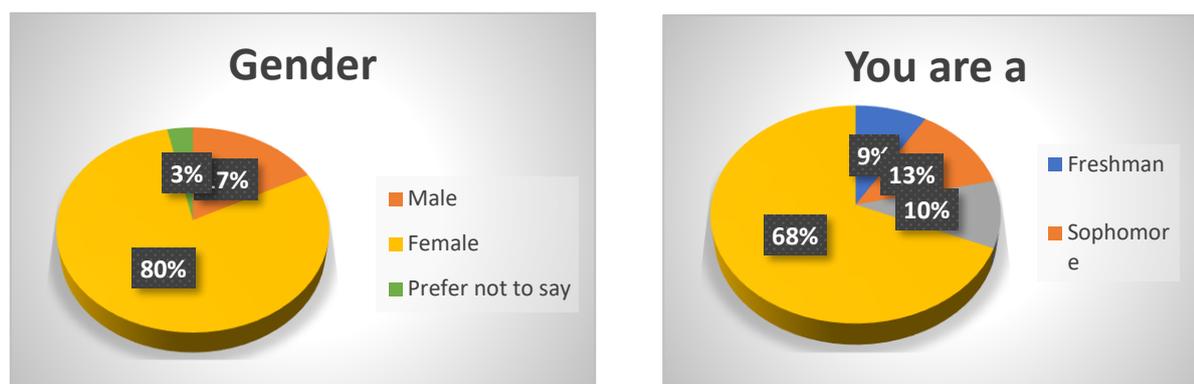
As mentioned above, the main purpose of the study is to examine how EFL students perceive their enthusiastic teacher in relation to their learning motivation. To achieve this, we are going to find the answer to these questions:

1. What are the positive perceptions of EFL students towards an enthusiastic teacher regarding their learning motivation?
2. What are the negative perceptions of EFL students towards an enthusiastic teacher regarding their learning motivation?

3. Methods

3.1. Pedagogical Setting & Participants

The study was conducted with the participation of 150 EFL students at the faculty of foreign languages of a university in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. They were chosen because they reflected the nature of the study. They are all university students with a major in the English language, and they all interact with different lecturers who have a certain sense of enthusiasm in their teaching style. The authors are also teaching or studying at this university, so it would be convenient to conduct the survey. As can be seen from chart 1, most of the participants are females, which is reasonable because the vast majority of students in this faculty are females. Also, the charts show two-thirds of the participants are in their final year at university.



Charts 1 and 2: Responders' identity

3.2. Design of the Study

This research was done using the quantitative method. The researchers created a questionnaire to ask about how students perceive an enthusiastic teacher. All the items in the questionnaires are original. The authors came up with the items after reviewing previous studies on an enthusiastic teacher's positive and negative effects on students' learning, especially learning motivation. To clarify, when we designed the questionnaire, many aspects were considered concerning learning motivation, including students' overall feelings, classroom involvement, and learning outcomes. The questionnaire was also reviewed by two other experienced colleagues in the field and finalized by the authors. All the items were also analyzed carefully using SPSS 25.0 to ascertain their reliability.

There are three parts to the questionnaire. Part one asks about the demographic features of the students with two questions. Part two focuses on positive aspects of students to an enthusiastic teacher with seven questions. Part three is about negative aspects with eight questions. The items about negative feelings are included to investigate all possible perceptions of students taking part in the survey. Part two and part three employ the five-point Likert scale to ascertain how much students agree with each statement. (1: strongly disagree; 2: disagree; 3: neutral; 4: agree; 5: strongly agree)

3.3. Data collection & analysis

To collect the data, the questionnaires were given to students studying in the faculty of foreign languages online. Due to the severe Covid-19 pandemic and the social distancing, it was not possible to conduct the survey offline. The questionnaire items were put into the google form, and the link was sent to students through Facebook (a social networking site) and Microsoft Teams (an online learning platform) that are administered by the staff of the faculty. The researchers made the link accessible until there were 30 responses when the link was locked. At this time, the data were put into SPSS version 25.0 for reliability analysis. Cronbach's Alpha is a scale reliability measure that is applied to a group of items. In most social science study contexts, a reliability coefficient equal to or greater than .700 is considered appropriate. The Cronbach's Alpha for the first 30 responses can be seen in table 1.

Table 1

The Cronbach's Alpha for Each Category of the Questionnaire (30 Responses)

No.	Categories	Cronbach's Alpha	No of Items
1	Positive learning outcomes	.738	4
2	Positive overall feelings	.735	4
3	Negative learning outcomes	.869	4
4	Negative overall feelings	.887	4

When looking closely at the second category, "positive feeling" (Table 2), the authors found that the corrected item-total correlation of the fourth item in this category was .260, which was lower than .300 (a minimum acceptable rate), so we decided to remove this item out of the category. This can make the Cronbach's Alpha of the whole group higher.

Table 2

Item-Total Correlation of the Category "Positive Feelings"

No.	Items	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
1	Positive: "An enthusiastic teacher makes me feel safe about my learning."	.644	.603
2	Positive: "An enthusiastic teacher helps me feel more relaxed."	.489	.699
3	Positive: "An enthusiastic teacher makes me more confident."	.746	.532
4	Positive: "An enthusiastic teacher makes me excited about learning"	.260	.800

There was a small change after reviewing the items. The total item number for the second category was three, not four, and this statement was removed "An enthusiastic teacher makes

me excited about learning."

The authors updated the content in the link and reopened the link again for about two months in order that there were as many respondents as possible. When the number of participants reached 150, we closed the link, put the data into SPSS 25.0 again, and started to make an analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha of the questionnaire completed by 150 students is as follows (Table 3).

Table 3

Cronbach's Alpha for Each Category Of The Questionnaire (150 Responses)

No.	Categories	Cronbach's Alpha	No of items
1	Positive: Learning Outcomes	.730	4
2	Positive: Overall Feelings	.772	3
3	Negative: Learning Outcomes	.846	4
4	Negative: Overall Feelings	.933	4

The Cronbach's Alpha for all categories is more than .700, which shows that the questionnaire was reliable.

4. Results/Findings

4.1. Research question 1: What are the positive perceptions of EFL students towards an enthusiastic teacher regarding their learning motivation?

To answer this question, we look at the student's learning process and learning outcomes as well as the student's overall feelings.

4.1.1. student's learning process and learning outcomes

Table 4 shows most of the students agree that an enthusiastic teacher can help them in the learning process and outcomes. The mean score ranges from 4.107 to 4.500, confirming the students' strong agreement.

Regarding the learning process, 91% of the students agree that an enthusiastic teacher gets them more involved in the classroom. Indeed, two-thirds of them had a complete agreement. This indicates that they enjoy themselves and become more active in class. An even higher percentage of students argue that an enthusiastic teacher motivates them to study better (93%). Being able to motivate students in their learning process is a positive effect of an enthusiastic teacher. (Note: SA: Strongly agree; A: Agree; N: neutral; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly disagree).

Table 4

Positive Perceptions Towards Learning Process and Learning Outcomes

No.	Item	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Percentage of agreement/ disagreement				
						SA	A	N	D	SD
1	An enthusiastic teacher gets me more involved in the classroom.	150	2.00	5.00	4.500	60%	31%	8%	1%	0%
2	An enthusiastic teacher motivates me to study better.	150	2.00	5.00	4.507	60%	33%	6%	1%	0%
3	An enthusiastic teacher makes me understand the lesson more clearly.	150	2.00	5.00	4.400	52%	36%	11%	1%	0%
4	An enthusiastic teacher helps me to have better scores.	150	2.00	5.00	4.107	40%	33%	26%	1%	0%
	Valid N (listwise)	150								

As for learning outcomes, nearly 90% of the students doing the survey state that an enthusiastic teacher helps them understand the lesson more clearly. This may lead to improvement in scores achieved by over 70% of the students.

Overall, only 1 percent of the students have some disagreement about the positive effects of an enthusiastic teacher on their learning process and learning outcomes, which shows the significance of teacher enthusiasm on student learning.

4.1.2. student's overall feelings

Table 5

Student's Overall Positive Feelings

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Percentage of agreement/ disagreement				
						SA	A	N	D	SD
1	An enthusiastic teacher makes me feel safe about my learning.	150	1.00	5.00	4.140	41%	36%	19%	3%	1%
2	An enthusiastic teacher helps me feel more relaxed.	150	1.00	5.00	4.173	44%	36%	16%	3%	1%
3	An enthusiastic teacher makes me more confident.	150	2.00	5.00	4.160	50%	28%	18%	4%	0%
	Valid N (listwise)	150								

Table 5 demonstrates that students develop positive thoughts toward an enthusiastic teacher. The mean score is just a little over 4.000 in all statements, which is enough to confirm the positive influence of teacher enthusiasm on students' feelings.

Looking into details, we can see that only a small number of students disagree that an enthusiastic teacher can make them feel safer, more relaxed, and more confident. In fact, nearly 80% of the respondents agree an enthusiastic teacher would make their learning secure; 80% believe he/she would create a comfortable atmosphere in the classroom; almost 80% argue they are more confident thanks to their enthused teacher.

The findings reveal almost all students have a good learning process and learning outcomes thanks to their enthusiastic teachers. Indeed, students get a lot of benefits from them. Students get more motivated in learning, and more involved in class activities, thus understanding the lesson better and having better grades. They also feel safer, more relaxed, and more confident about their learning. Therefore, an enthusiastic teacher has received positive perceptions from EFL students in relation to their learning motivation.

4.2. Research question 2: What are the negative perceptions of EFL students towards an enthusiastic teacher regarding their learning motivation?

4.2.1. student's learning process and learning outcomes

Table 6

Negative Perceptions of Student's Learning Process and Learning Outcomes

No.	Items	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Percentage of agreement/ disagreement				
						SA	A	N	D	SD
1	An enthusiastic teacher makes me lose focus on the lesson.	150	1.00	5.00	2.500	11%	12%	15%	36%	26%
2	An enthusiastic teacher demotivates me during the class.	150	1.00	5.00	2.800	16%	19%	17%	24%	24%
3	An enthusiastic teacher makes me confused about the lesson.	150	1.00	5.00	2.340	9%	7%	21%	31%	32%
4	An enthusiastic teacher doesn't help me get better scores.	150	1.00	5.00	2.400	9%	9%	26%	23%	33%
	Valid N (listwise)	150								

Table 6 shows students generally do not believe that an enthusiastic teacher has a negative impact on their learning process and outcomes. Looking into details, we can see that there are both agreements and disagreements on this issue. Nearly a quarter of students feel enthusiastic teachers can distract them from the lesson, whereas almost two-thirds of them feel he/ she

doesn't make them lose focus on the lesson. Exactly a quarter of the students say an enthusiastic teacher can demotivate them, and nearly half of them agree on the opposite. This is unreasonable because 93% in the survey say an enthusiastic teacher makes them more motivated to study better. Only 16% of the students believe their enthusiastic teacher can cause their confusion in the lesson, while over half argue they don't feel puzzled by teacher enthusiasm. Talking about learning outcomes, nearly one-fifth of the students don't get better scores when studying with an enthusiastic teacher, whereas approximately 60 percent may disagree with them. This result also contrasts with the findings in the previous research question, where three-quarters of the students would get better grades thanks to their enthusiastic teacher.

4.2.2. student's overall negative feelings

Table 7

Student's Overall Negative Feelings

No.		N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Percentage of agreement/ disagreement				
						SA	A	N	D	SD
1	An enthusiastic teacher makes me feel annoyed.	150	1.00	5.00	2.2933	8%	10%	17%	33%	32%
2	An enthusiastic teacher makes me feel exhausted.	150	1.00	5.00	2.3733	9%	11%	21%	29%	30%
3	An enthusiastic teacher hurts my self-respect.	150	1.00	5.00	2.1600	10%	6%	12%	34%	38%
4	An enthusiastic teacher makes me feel shy.	150	1.00	5.00	2.4867	9%	13%	37%	21%	30%
	Valid N (listwise)	150								

Table 7 explains that when it comes to negative feelings, a huge number of respondents responded 'disagree'. From these figures, with all the mean scores less than 2.500, the vast majority of students do not have negative feelings when being taught by an enthusiastic teacher.

Taking a closer inspection of the table, two-thirds of the participants argue that an enthusiastic teacher does not make them feel annoyed. However, there is still a small number of students who feel frustrated with how enthusiastic a teacher is. A similar number can be seen in one other aspect of feelings. More specifically, 16% of students feel enthusiasm can harm their self-respect, while nearly three-quarters of students may not agree with them. The table states nearly two-thirds of the respondents disagree with the fact that their enthusiastic teachers can make them extremely tired, whereas a fifth may support the opposite view. The figure shows almost one-third of students sharing a neutral viewpoint on shyness caused by enthusiastic teachers, which holds the largest number in four aspects of negative feelings. However, a larger number agree that their enthusiastic teachers do not make them shy, while a fifth disagree with this.

Overall, the results show that most students have positive perceptions of their enthusiastic teachers. There is just a small number of students who have negative feelings. In relation to learning motivation, the vast majority of students get motivated, which is shown by positive feelings and results in other aspects surveyed like more involvement, better understanding, improved performance, safety, relaxation, and more confidence. In relation to learning demotivation, not many students feel they are demotivated. Therefore, such feelings as an annoyance, exhaustion, shyness, confusion, distraction, and lessening self-respect don't exist in most participants.

5. Discussion

As can be seen from the above findings, most EFL students are more engaged in learning when they are taught by a teacher who is passionate about teaching. Furthermore, students believe that an enthusiastic teacher will assist them in improving their academic achievement. The above results show agreement with previous studies. According to Uluga, Ozdenb, and Eryilmaz (2011), "For a teacher, being able to interact with the student and display positive behavior such as asking questions, understanding their thoughts, showing interest and appreciation increases the students' motivation and success." (p. 739). Our research backs up the idea, just like the previous studies, that when an enthusiastic teacher teaches students, they are more driven to learn while simultaneously boosting their scores. Besides, students' overall attitudes to an enthusiastic teacher are mostly positive, which parallels findings from Keller et al. (2016) and Zhang (2014). Another aspect that is found to be consistent with other previous studies is the fact that EFL students' motivation for learning is boosted thanks to teachers who are enthusiastic. This means students' motivation is affected by the teacher's enthusiasm in a positive way (Thoonen, Slegers, Peetsma & Oort, 2010; Pan, 2014 and Mojavezi & Tamiz, 2012). In our study, although a few EFL students also say some enthused teachers demotivate them, the vast majority still state the positive motivation they develop from their teachers. When students are motivated, their learning will be affected in a positive way. Indeed, with all the positive perceptions from most participants surveyed, teachers may think again about changing their attitudes in a positive way towards their teaching and helping students be more motivated. Adkins-Coleman (2010) and Johnson (2017) should agree with this because they also share the same view that motivation has a good impact on student's learning. When students are motivated, they will be more involved and understand and then have better scores.

Our research also finds almost all EFL students will feel safe, relaxed, and more confident when they learn with an enthusiastic teacher. This is a possible result that is created from increased motivation. Engagement is something that needs to be maintained in order for students to get motivated (Patrick et al., 2000), so our result parallels this view. When they learn in a relaxed and safe environment, their confidence will also grow. Self-confidence matters in learning, for a student's motivation, will be lost if it is weakened (Lo, 2022).

As for the negative perceptions, our findings have found that some sense of students'

demotivation comes from enthusiastic teachers in some cases and that the improvement in scores is also questionable. These two aspects can be examined further to have a deeper understanding of the negative impact which teacher enthusiasm may have on EFL students.

6. Conclusion

The majority of EFL students don't perceive that their enthusiastic teacher has a harmful effect on their drive to learn, as well as their learning outcomes and overall feelings. Many students believe that an enthusiastic teacher has a beneficial impact on their learning motivation and has inspired them to participate in the learning process. However, there are a few students who would not have positive perceptions of teacher enthusiasm, the positives dominate.

One of the major factors in maintaining a student's desire to learn during their learning time is their learning motivation. In the long-term learning process, it's critical to keep students' motivation to study alive. Students like being taught by an enthusiastic teacher, according to our research. As a result, this is a typical and successful method of keeping students motivated. Students, on the other hand, appear to enjoy being taught by someone who is enthusiastic at the appropriate levels, for some students seem not to be really comfortable with an overenthusiastic teacher. It would be better if teachers were always enthusiastic supporters and leaders in assisting students on their learning journey. Teachers can contribute their knowledge and personal experiences in real-life situations to help students understand the lesson more clearly in a variety of ways. This would be useful knowledge that students would remember for longer, especially if it was presented with enthusiasm and inspiration. Moreover, teachers should try to motivate and encourage EFL students to learn as much as possible. Indeed, a great teacher must be able to motivate students to learn, and motivated students will be more motivated by self-disciplines. Finally, using a variety of teaching approaches, such as technology or teaching equipment, in the classroom will boost student interest and instructional efficiency. Therefore, teachers are really inspirational and role models for their students.

There are a few shortcomings in this study that should be mentioned. One of them is the short amount of time provided to get deeper insights. Specifically, despite the fact that both males and females were included, the information about the correlations between learning motivation and genders was not explored in our study. In addition, an interview should have been conducted to discover the student's views more deeply and effectively, especially the negative ones, if there had been more time arrangements. In this case, a qualitative method could be applied. Second, due to the limited sample size (only 150 respondents), the study's findings do not fully represent all tertiary EFL students. In any case, the researchers have put a lot of effort and time into this study to achieve the highest research goal. In the future, a bigger number of samples from multiple universities would be ideal in order to improve and reinforce students' learning motivation. The author hopes that new and more successful strategies for increasing student motivation will develop as a result of the teaching and learning process. Further research should also focus on correlations between learning motivation and genders and organize an interview with participants to have a more detailed and closer understanding of what they really perceive.

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank all the participants who took part in the survey, without whom we would not complete this article. We also would like to express our gratitude to Van Lang University at 69/68 Dang Thuy Tram Street, Ward 13, Binh Thanh District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, where we got funded for our research. Special thanks would also be given to two of our colleagues who gave us constructive comments on our original questions used for the survey.

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Biodata

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Students' retention on online learning: Establishing a predictive model at a private university in Vietnam

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.22249>

Received: 23/06/2022

Revision: 19/08/2022

Accepted: 22/08/2022

Online: 24/08/2022

ABSTRACT

Keywords:

students' retention;
online learning;
predictive model;
PLS-SEM; private
university

Low levels of student retention have become one of the most significant issues that online learning has brought about. Through the literature review, most studies have pointed out some factors contributing to student retention in online learning environments; however, few have focused on establishing a model that minimizes student dropout rates. Hence, this paper aims to formulate a predictive model to tackle this issue. Through the quantitative survey design and the PLS-SEM approach in data analysis, the research involved 100 students. After analyzing the data, it is suggested that some factors and their relationship with student retention. These were Academic locus of control, Flow experience, Satisfaction, and Learning strategies. Also, this study indicated that to improve the students' retention in online learning, Student satisfaction should be paid more attention rather than the others.

Introduction

Online learning, without a doubt, has been considered a global phenomenon since a long time ago. With the support of rapid technological advances, online learning has overcome its obstacles and has been accepted worldwide (Sorensen & Donovan, 2017). Many articles have recently praised online learning as the key to the new era due to its benefits. Notably, online learning could bridge the gap among areas within a country and beyond, provide a flexible learning environment (J. Watson & Johnson, 2011); develop critical and technological skills (Ngo, 2021; Wardani, Martono, Pratomo, Rusydi, & Kusuma, 2018); enhance the traditional classroom (Fadde & Vu, 2014; Tran & Nguyen, 2022). In the case of the institution employing online learning, Tareen and Haand (2020) list online learning as a new educational market with high profits and stable growth in the 21st century. However, some requirements and features of online learning, such as suitable infrastructure, different patterns of interactions, and learner autonomy, could lead to severe problems for educational organizations, including school dropouts (Hamid, SENTRYO, & Hasan, 2020). Therefore, it is suggested that student retention

needs to be considered.

Student retention has been a focus of higher educational institutions these days. Miller (2017) and Burke (2019) assert that college student dropouts could bring a significant financial loss for the stakeholders, including the schools, students themselves, their families, and society. Crosling (2017) indicates that many studies emphasize students' persistence in college education instead of focusing on the dropout rates. With the expansion of online learning in the current COVID-19 situation, the situation seems to be more critical. Research shows that the proportion of student dropouts in online learning is much higher than in the traditional learning environment (Friðriksdóttir, 2018; T. T. H. Nguyen, 2021; Patterson & McFadden, 2009; Xu & Jaggars, 2011). Therefore, this issue must be tackled by analyzing the factors impacting students' retention in online learning.

From the literature, many scholars have investigated the issues related to student retention by proposing the factors affecting student course completion. These factors include student characters and competencies, internal/external issues during college time (Rovai, 2003), school support and difficulty in the academic program (Muljana & Luo, 2019); personal, institutional, and situational factors (Fraser, Fahlman, Arscott, & Guillot, 2018). However, most studies examine these factors separately; in other words, as Mansfield, O'Leary, and Webb (2011) suggest, the causes of student withdrawals should be considered with the combination and multi-effects from various variables. In response to this conclusion, Y. Lee and Choi (2013) and H. Choi (2016) conducted a study that integrates many available factors into a complete model by carefully examining other related works. However, research with similar scopes remains rare in the field, especially in the Vietnamese context. Hence, there is a need to examine the impacts of multiple factors on student retention in the current situation.

Literature review

Online learning

As many scholars have defined, online learning uses the internet and other technology advances to enhance interaction and bridge the physical gap/distance between teachers and students. Also, online learning covers a wide range of activities that usually happen in ordinary classrooms, such as individual work, group work, Q&A, and assessment via the virtual environment (Curtain, 2002; K. Lee, 2017; Moore, Dickson-Deane, & Galyen, 2011). Additionally, these authors propose the essential elements of online learning, including technology, interactivity, time-synchronous and time-asynchronous. In this paper, the operation definition of online learning was identical to the above description.

School dropouts and online learning at the tertiary level

School dropout rates are one of the most significant issues that receive concern from many higher education institutions. According to Hout (2012), despite the advantages of being college graduates in the labor market, many higher education institutions experience plenty of dropout rates. Y. Choi (2018) indicates that a deep investigation of college dropouts becomes essential

for every country to maintain a qualified workforce. Hanson (2021) presents that the college dropout rate is 40%, of which 30% are freshmen before they finish their first year. In some Asian countries, such as Japan, it is reported that from April to December 2020, the number of student dropouts is 1,300 (Kakuchi, 2021). In Vietnam, VNS (2017) proposes that nearly 20 percent of students do not complete their last year in college.

Within the context of online learning and COVID-19, the situation seems to be more critical. Online learning offers more opportunities for students to participate in the learning environment via various tools, especially in the current context. However, many complain that online interactions are incompatible with all students. As a result, college dropouts become a challenge for online learning compared to traditional face-to-face classrooms (Mubarak, Cao, & Zhang, 2020; Pham & Van Nghiem, 2022; Simpson, 2018). Furthermore, with the sudden shift from offline to online mode, many higher education institutions are losing school profits due to this issue (Kakuchi, 2021). If the situation could not be improved, the school investment in online learning would be discouraged. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate students' dropout intentions.

Factors impacting school dropouts in online learning at the tertiary level

Many scholars have indicated the factors that affect the school dropouts in online learning in different higher education contexts. For example, Rovai (2003) proposes that school dropouts in college students are a complicated phenomenon that needs careful attention. The author concludes with a model consisting of four main factors: student styles before school entrance, student competence before school entrance, and external and internal influences after entering school. Additionally, H. Choi (2016) presents some factors in college dropouts, i.e., the learner (age, gender, social status, self-motivation), external factors (social encouragement, family finance, and support, personal problems), internal factors (academic performance, technological and motivational issues), and outcomes (GPA). It is apparent that these factors vary in each study; however, it could be concluded that they are mainly related to the teaching and learning environment, the learners, and the school assistance. In an attempt to give an overall look, Y. Lee and Choi (2013) draw out a five-latten-variable model, including (1) internal academic locus of control (ALOC) (the students' control of their learning), (2) student satisfaction (students' satisfaction towards their learning and related issues), (3) student flow experience (students' deep engagement in their learning activities), (4) use of learning strategies (the students' strategies employed in their learning process), and (5) student retention (the persistent of completing the online course). Additionally, Chongbang N. (2021) explains how parents' socioeconomic condition also affects the affordability, availability, and accessibility of virtual learning.

The locus of control was firstly proposed by Rotter (1954) as the personal control of a particular result. There are two aspects of perception: internal (if that person believes that their action causes the effect) and external (if that person assumes that the result is made by chance or other people's behavior. Concerning the educational context, Findley and Cooper (1983) confirm that students with the internal academic locus of control have better academic performance than

external ones. This is because, with the high internal academic locus of power, the students are more satisfied with their results and try to avoid failure.

Student satisfaction: The focus on student satisfaction arises from bringing the client-customer relationship to education (Mark, 2013). Elliott (2002) and Wu, Tennyson, and Hsia (2010) define student satisfaction as the result of the educational experience a particular institution gives to students.

Student flow experience: Csikszentmihalyi and Csikzentmihaly (1990) conclude that flow is a state of being involving the deep engagement in an activity. In terms of education, student flow experience refers to the intensive focus on a learning process that causes a student to be successful.

Use of learning strategies: Learning strategies refer to perceiving, storing, and using the given information (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998). McKeachie (1987) states that learning strategies could be classified according to student cognition levels, such as cognitive strategies and metacognitive strategies.

Student retention: Villano, Harrison, Lynch, and Chen (2018) propose student retention as the decision of remaining at school. In other words, it indicates the continuity of student education at an educational institution.

These latter variables are concluded by reviewing a variety of studies related to factors impacting student retention as well as their interrelationship (Joo, Joung, & Sim, 2011; Keller & Blomann, 2008; E. Lee, 2001; Levy, 2007; Morris, Wu, & Finnegan, 2005; Ro & Guo, 1988; Zimmerman, 1990). Also, via reviewing these studies, the relationship among these variables was established. Firstly, Rotter (1966) and Gianakos (2002) point out the relationship between internal locus of control and job satisfaction. In terms of educational context, Morris et al. (2005) confirm the influence of internal academic locus of control on student persistence in online learning courses. These authors also indicate that this variable effectively predicts students' course completion.

What is more, Levy (2007) adds the relationship between student retention and student satisfaction. Remarkably, he states in his research that the fewer students are satisfied with their online courses, the more they are likely to quit. Finally, in terms of locus of control, the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013) presents that student satisfaction has a mediating effect on the relation between the student's internal ALOC and retention.

Additionally, Joo et al. (2011) and Keller and Blomann (2008) identify the relationship between internal ALOC and flow experience. Specifically, providing that a person has more ALOC, they are likely to attain a high level of flow experience. Moreover, Shin (2006) and Joo et al. (2011) propose that flow experience positively affects student satisfaction. Mainly, in Joo et al. (2011), the mediating effect of flow experience in the relationship between ALOC and student retention exists.

E. Lee (2001) finds out that learning strategies positively impact students' flow experience. The

study concluded that learning strategies also affect student satisfaction, which is affected by the mediator "flow experience." In other words, learning strategies enhance student satisfaction via deep involvement in the learning process (flow experience). In addition, the learning strategies mainly deal with internal factors such as learning control (Gall, Gall, Jacobsen, & Bullock, 1990; Pintrich, 1988). As a result, student learning strategies are affected by internal ALOC.

Research Question

By looking closely at the current situation and the literature gap, this study aims to identify the predictive factors affecting students' retention in online learning within the context of a private university in Vietnam. Therefore, the following research question was formulated:

What factors affect students' retention in online learning at a private university in Vietnam?

Hypotheses and conceptual framework of the study

From the above review and the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013), this study aimed to re-examine the effects of internal academic locus of control (ALOC), student satisfaction, student flow experience, and use of learning strategies on student retention. Moreover, as mentioned in the literature review, the mediating roles of Student satisfaction and Student flow experience were considered. Hence, five hypotheses were established:

H1: Internal ALOC, student flow experience, and student satisfaction have a positive effect on retention.

H2: Internal ALOC and student flow experience positively affect student satisfaction.

H3: Internal ALOC and learning strategies positively affect student flow experience.

H4: Student satisfaction mediates the positive effects of Internal ALOC on student retention.

H5: Student flow experience mediates the positive effects of learning strategies on student satisfaction.

Also, the conceptual framework or the structural model of the study was drawn thank to these hypotheses:

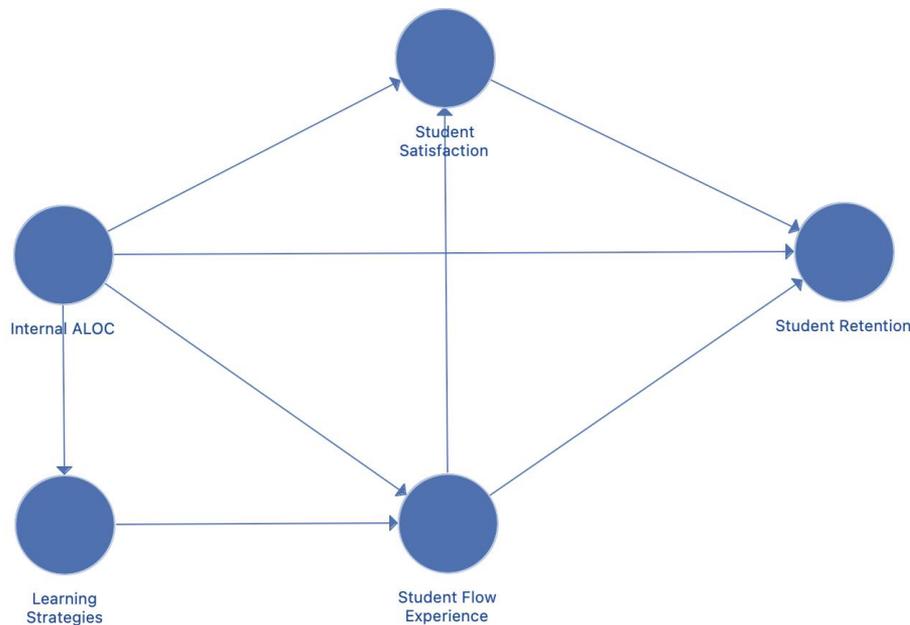


Figure 1. Conceptual framework/Structural model of the study

Methods

Setting and sampling method

The research was conducted at Van Lang University (VLU), particularly in the Faculty of Foreign Languages. The context of VLU and this faculty were familiar with the researcher; therefore, it was easier to reach the participants. In brief, due to COVID-19, all the VLU students had to change the form of learning from offline to online. Also, to recruit the participants, the convenience sampling method was used in the study.

Participants

The participants were mostly students at Van Lang University, especially at the Faculty of Foreign Language, where the researcher was working. After the distribution of the questionnaires via the convenience sampling method, 162 responses from the participants were recorded. A detailed description of the participants was included in the next section.

Research design

The quantitative survey was the design of this research. According to R. Watson (2015), quantitative research aims at exploring the phenomena using statistical approaches. Additionally, Straits (2005) and Creswell (2014) suggest that a survey study investigates human attitudes and opinions of participants through the responses to a set of questions. As a result, this design was suitable for identifying the factors that impact student retention in online learning.

Research Instrument

The main instrument of this study was a close questionnaire. In this research, the questionnaire was adopted from the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013). Some modifications were made to suit the current context, such as the institution's name and courses. Briefly, the questionnaire consisted of 23 items which covered six constructs as presented in the following table:

Table 1.

Constructs included in the questionnaires

No.	Constructs	Number of items
1	Demographic features	1
2	Academic locus of control	3
3	Flow experience	4
4	Satisfaction	6
5	Retention	5
6	Learning strategies	4

Construct 1 was designed into two multiple-choice questions. For the rest, all the items were responded to through a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data collection and analysis

Firstly, the questionnaire was distributed to all the participants via M.S. Teams, LMS of the university, and other social networks regarding the data collection process. Then, responses were collected for analysis. Finally, the PLS-SEM approach processed all the data via Smart PLS software. The PLS-SEM approach is a suitable method to identify the relationship among different latent variables and validate measurement and structural models (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2013; Sarstedt, Ringle, & Hair, 2017). According to these authors, there are three main stages in the data analysis, including (1) coding the data, (2) assessing the measurement model, and (3) assessing the structural model. In this research, these steps were conducted with the addition of hypotheses testing in the last stage.

Notably, in light of coding data, all the indicators of each latent variable were coded in the following table:

Table 2.

Codes used in the data analysis procedures

No.	Constructs	Code of items/indicators
1	Demographic features	GEN
2	Academic locus of control	ALOC1 and ALOC3
3	Flow experience	FE1 and FE4
4	Satisfaction	SAT1 and SAT6
5	Retention	RE1 and RE5
6	Learning strategies	STRA1 and STRA4

Next, the measurement model was assessed in terms of its reliability and validity. Hair et al. (2013) suggest that in this stage, the following statistical indexes were employed: Outer Factor Loading, Construct Reliability (C.R.), Convergent Validity (AVE), and Discriminant Validity. Finally, in assessing the structural model, the bootstrapping techniques with 5,000 resamplings were used to test all the statistical hypotheses through a t-test value with a significance of 0.05.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of the study were ensured by employing piloting and statistical techniques. Firstly, the measurement model and the questionnaire were validated from the study by Y. Lee and Choi (2013). Additionally, before distributing to the participant, 50 responses were recorded as part of the piloting process. Then, some minor adjustments were made to create the final version of all items in the questionnaires. The statistical indexes to assess the validity and reliability were also used and will be presented in the following section.

Results/Findings and discussion

Descriptive statistic

Table 3.

Participants' Demographic Feature

	Number	Percent (%)
Male	47	29
Female	115	71

162 participants were involved in the study. Specifically, there were 47 males and 115 males, which indicated that the percentage of females outweighed. However, gender factors were not

the focus of this research. Therefore, this would not have any effect on the result of the research.

Assessing the measurement model

In the stage of assessing the measurement model, firstly, the factor loadings were examined in order to eliminate the unsatisfied indicators. The factor loading of each indicator should be 0.7 and above. Therefore, in the current model, the indicators “SAT6”, “RE1”, “RE4”, and “FE2” were eliminated.

After the removal of unsatisfied indicators, Hair et al. (2013) and Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, and Ringle (2019) suggest that to validate the measurement model, the following statistical indices should be assessed:

- Composite Reliability (C.R.)
- Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
- Discriminant Validity
- Cross loadings of each latent variable
- The HTMT matrix

The results of all these indices were presented in the following sections with all the essential explanations.

Table 4.

The composite reliability (C.R.) and convergent validity (AVE) of the measurement model

	Composite (C.R.)	Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Internal ALOC	0.821		0.605
Learning Strategies	0.904		0.703
Student Flow Experience	0.884		0.717
Student Retention	0.842		0.639
Student Satisfaction	0.931		0.729

According to Hair et al. (2019), in a measurement model, C.R. must be above 0.78, and AVE should be 0.5 and above. In table 4, all the figures of C.R. and AVE of the current model met the requirements.

Table 5.

The cross-loadings of the measurement model

	Internal ALOC	Learning Strategies	Student Experience	Flow	Student Retention	Student Satisfaction
ALOC1	0.764	0.313	0.215		0.27	0.274
ALOC2	0.778	0.35	0.321		0.352	0.326
ALOC3	0.792	0.422	0.377		0.358	0.432
FE1	0.309	0.367	0.817		0.272	0.484
FE3	0.358	0.515	0.883		0.371	0.536
FE4	0.357	0.431	0.84		0.22	0.429
RE2	0.458	0.402	0.378		0.818	0.375
RE3	0.289	0.355	0.22		0.79	0.304
RE5	0.242	0.353	0.202		0.79	0.421
SAT1	0.438	0.522	0.518		0.354	0.876
SAT2	0.411	0.455	0.5		0.353	0.794
SAT3	0.332	0.448	0.445		0.379	0.872
SAT4	0.376	0.428	0.48		0.457	0.858
SAT5	0.377	0.556	0.5		0.419	0.865
STRA1	0.434	0.861	0.477		0.414	0.525
STRA2	0.421	0.845	0.394		0.443	0.469
STRA3	0.4	0.862	0.406		0.445	0.476
STRA4	0.325	0.783	0.47		0.255	0.419

Regarding cross-loadings, it is required that the square root of a construct should be higher than its correlation with any other constructs. According to table 5, all the figures reach the standard.

Table 6.

The HTMT matrix of the measurement model

	Internal ALOC	Learning Strategies	Student Experience	Flow	Student Retention
Learning Strategies	0.605				
Student Flow Experience	0.526	0.621			
Student Retention	0.575	0.585	0.427		
Student Satisfaction	0.56	0.638	0.666		0.563

The HTMT matrix was examined in order to ensure that the set of indicators of one construct was separated from each other. Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015) propose that all the figures

of the HTMT matrix should be smaller than 0.78. From table 6, all the figures of the model met the requirement.

Based on the results of statistical indices, it was apparent that the measurement model of the research was valid.

Assessing the structural model

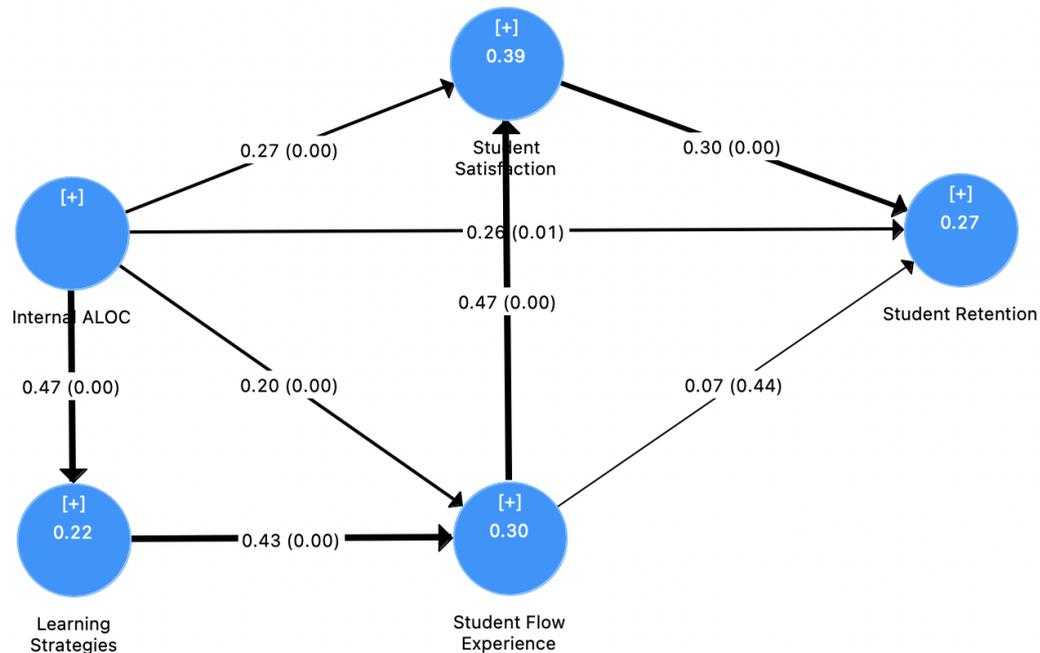


Figure 2. The structural model with path coefficient

Hair et al. (2013) and Sharma and Aggarwal (2019) suggested the procedures for assessing the structural model. Notably, there were four statistical analyses would be done, including:

- Collinearity;
- R² explanation of endogenous latent variables;
- f² effects size of path coefficients;
- and Predictive relevance Q².

Concerning Collinearity, VIF values were examined. In the current model, the maximum VIF value was 2.847, which was smaller than the threshold of 3.3 (Roberts & Thatcher, 2009). As a result, there is no risk of Collinearity. Then, when assessing the coefficient of determination (R² and R² Adjusted), the figure was above 0.25 and smaller than 0.5.

Table 7.

The results of R2 and R2 Adjusted

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Comment
Learning Strategies	0.224	0.219	Low effect
Student Flow Experience	0.304	0.296	Moderate effect
Student Retention	0.275	0.261	Moderate effect
Student Satisfaction	0.388	0.38	Moderate effect

H. Nguyen and Vu (2020) propose that R2 and R2 Adjusted values play a significant role in identifying to which degree the input variables explain the variation of the output ones. In the current research, four endogenous variables were listed in table 7. Based on the results of R2 and R2 Adjusted and the suggestions of Henseler et al. (2015), the in-sample predictive power of the current model was primarily moderate, except for the variable "Learning Strategies." In terms of f^2 effects size of path coefficients, the results were presented in the following table:

Table 8.

The results of f^2 affect the size of path coefficients.

	Learning Strategies	Student Flow Experience	Student Retention	Student Satisfaction
Student Satisfaction			0.078	
Student Flow Experience			0.004	0.297
Learning Strategies		0.203		
Internal ALOC	0.288	0.045	0.072	0.097

According to Cohen (2013), the size of the f^2 effect should be above 0.02 to indicate the significant impact of an input variable on the output one. Therefore, from table 7, it was concluded that nearly all variables had the power to explain the other variables, such as "Student Flow Experience" – "Student Satisfaction," "Internal ALOC" – "Learning Strategies," etc. However, the variable "Student Flow Experience" was not considered as effectively explain the variable "Student Retention."

To identify the model's predictive power within the samples in the research, Predictive relevance Q2 was examined (Dolce, Vinzi, & Lauro, 2017) via the Blindfolding process.

Table 9.

The Predictive relevance Q2 result

	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Learning Strategies	0.154
Student Flow Experience	0.205
Student Retention	0.15
Student Satisfaction	0.273

Tenenhaus, Vinzi, Chatelin, and Lauro (2005) propose that if the Q2 values of all latent variables are above 0, the structural model reaches the global quality. Also, Hair et al. (2019) recommend that if the Q2 value is from 0 to below 0.25, the predictive power is low, and if this value is from 0.25 to 0.5, the power of prediction is moderate. In the current model, all the Q2 values were above 0, and most of them were smaller than 0.25, except the Q2 value of the variable "Student Satisfaction." Consequently, the structural model has a global quality, and the within-sample predictive power was low.

Hypothesis tests

The hypothesis test result was conducted by running Bootstrapping technique with 5,000 resampling with a significance of 0.05. In brief, there were four hypotheses in the research, including:

H1: Internal ALOC, student flow experience, and student satisfaction positively affect retention.

H2: Internal ALOC and student flow experience positively affect student satisfaction.

H3: Internal ALOC and learning strategies positively affect student flow experience.

H4: Student satisfaction mediates the positive effects of Internal ALOC on student retention.

H5: Student flow experience mediates the positive effects of learning strategies on student satisfaction.

Table 10.

The hypothesis test results

Hypotheses	Relationship between variables	T-Values	P-Values	Result
H1	Internal ALOC -> Student Retention	5.889	0.000	Supported
	Student Flow Experience -> Student Retention	2.639	0.008	
	Student Satisfaction -> Student Retention	3.049	0.002	
H2	Internal ALOC -> Student Satisfaction	6.985	0.000	Supported
	Student Flow Experience -> Student Satisfaction	7.929	0.000	
H3	Internal ALOC -> Student Flow Experience	6.45	0.000	Supported
	Learning Strategies -> Student Flow Experience	5.985	0.000	
H4	Internal ALOC -> Student Satisfaction -> Student Retention	2.279	0.023	Supported
H5	Learning Strategies -> Student Flow Experience -> Student Satisfaction	4.959	0.000	Supported

As (Hair et al., 2019); Kock (2016) suggests, a supported hypothesis must satisfy two conditions: (1) the t-value is higher than 1.96, and (2) the p-value is smaller than 0.05. In table 10, it was apparent that all the hypotheses satisfied the requirements. Hence, all the proposed hypotheses were supported. However, there were some comments on each hypothesis in light of the combination of f^2 effects size.

Table 11.The direct effects between variables in hypotheses H1 to H3 and their f^2 effects size

Hypotheses	Relationship between variables	Path coefficient	f^2
H1	Internal ALOC -> Student Retention	0.261	0.072
	Student Flow Experience -> Student Retention	0.066	0.004
	Student Satisfaction -> Student Retention	0.304	0.078
H2	Internal ALOC -> Student Satisfaction	0.454	0.097
	Student Flow Experience -> Student Satisfaction	0.266	0.297
H3	Internal ALOC -> Student Flow Experience	0.202	0.045
	Learning Strategies -> Student Flow Experience	0.427	0.203

According to Cohen (2013), Hair et al. (2019), and H. Nguyen and Vu (2020) the f^2 should be

above 0.02 for low effects on output variables and above 0.15 for moderate effects. In table 11, in combination with the path coefficients, it was readily that the relationship of "Student Flow Experience -> Student Retention" (in H1) was the least powerful compared to the others.

What is more, regarding hypotheses H4 and H5, the mediation effects were examined. Notably, there were two mediating variables, including the variable "Student Satisfaction" in H4 and "Student Flow Experience" in H5.

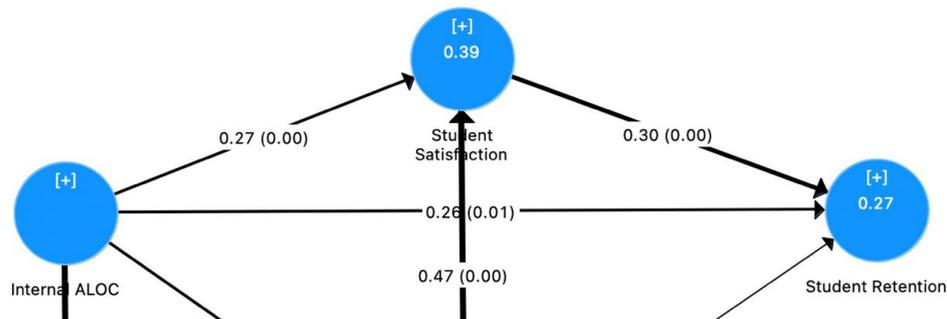


Figure 3. The moderating effect of Student Satisfaction on the relationship between Internal ALOC and Student relations in term of path coefficients

From the figure, the path coefficients of the hypotheses were:

Internal ALOC à Student Satisfaction = 0.27 (a)

Student Satisfaction à Student Retention = 0.3 (b)

Internal ALOC à Student Retention = 0.26 (c)

To examine the moderating effect, the path coefficients of these relationships were calculated with the following formula:

$a \times b \times c = 0.27 \times 0.3 \times 0.26 = 0.02106 > 0$ and $a \times b = 0.27 \times 0.3 = 0.81 \neq 0$ à significant

According to Hair et al. (2019), if $a \times b \times c > 0$, the moderating effect was partial and complementary. In other words, the effect of student retention strengthened the relationship between Internal ALOC and Student Retention.

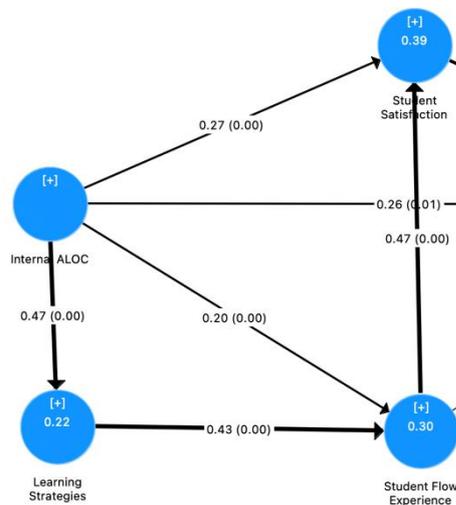


Figure 4. The mediating effect of Student Flow Experience on the relationship between Internal Learning Strategies and Student Satisfaction in terms of path coefficients

From figure 4, the path coefficients of the hypotheses were:

Learning Strategies → Student Flow Experience = 0.43 (a)

Student Flow Experience → Student Satisfaction = 0.47 (b)

In order to examine the mediation role of Student Flow Experience on the relationship between Internal Learning Strategies and Student Satisfaction, there were two conditions to examine. Firstly, the indirect effects of Learning Strategies on Student Satisfaction and their statistical significance of it. Hence, the following formula was calculated:

$a \times b = 0.43 \times 0.47 = 0.2021 \neq 0$; and the p-value of the coefficient between Learning Strategies on Student Satisfaction after bootstrapping process was 0.000 which was significant (below 0.05).

According to Hair et al. (2019), if $a \times b$ is not 0 and the indirect effect is significant, the moderating effect is partial mediation. In the current study, this requirement was satisfied. In other words, the variable “Student Flow Experience” partially affected the relationship between learning strategies and student satisfaction.

Discussion

The current research investigated the predictive factors affecting student retention in an online learning environment at a private university in Vietnam. Notably, the structural model was adapted from the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013), which indicated that there six variables and their relationships were proposed into five different statistical hypotheses:

H1: Internal ALOC, student flow experience, and student satisfaction have a positive effect on retention.

H2: Internal ALOC and student flow experience positively affect student satisfaction.

H3: Internal ALOC and learning strategies positively affect student flow experience.

H4: Student satisfaction mediates the positive effects of Internal ALOC on student retention.

H5: Student flow experience mediates the positive effects of learning strategies on student satisfaction.

After examining the responses from 162 participants, this research generally confirmed the original study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013), which examined the exact relationship among five variables, including Internal ALOC, student flow experience, learning strategies, student satisfaction, and student retention. To be more specific, all the hypotheses tested were supported through statistical assessment and analysis.

What is more, hypothesis H1 was confirmed in the study, which presented the positive effect of Internal ALOC and student flow experience on student retention (as found in the studies of Morris et al. (2005), Shin (2006), and Joo et al. (2011)). Specifically, all the indicators related to the student scores showed strong path loading factors, as Morris et al. (2005) found that student academic performance plays a significant role in their retention. In addition, Shin (2006), and Joo et al. (2011) indicate that student flow experience and Internal ALOC significantly impact student retention.

Regarding hypothesis H2, the study's finding was similar to Gianakos (2002), and Shin (2006), i.e., student satisfaction was impacted by Internal ALOC and student flow experience. Notably, Gianakos (2002) revealed that Internal ALOC, concerning positive thinking in overcoming difficulties (the indicator ALOC3), fostered student satisfaction. What is more, Shin (2006) concludes that student flow experience predictively manipulated student satisfaction. Providing that the more students concentrated on the lesson, the more satisfied they got.

For the last direct relationship among three variables, "Internal ALOC," "learning strategies," and "student flow experience", the study pointed out that Internal ALOC and learning strategies have a positive impact on student flow experience. Joo et al. (2011) and Keller and Blomann (2008) state that the direct impact of Internal ALOC on student flow experience was of significance. They conclude that ambitious students in achieve high academic performance engaged themselves more in their learning activities. Additionally, Joo et al. (2011) and E. Lee (2001) consider different ways of study positively affect student flow experiences. Also, the study confirmed the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013) that there were the moderating effects of Student satisfaction and Student flow experience on the relationship of Internal ALOC on student retention and Learning Strategies and Student Satisfaction, respectively.

Besides these similarities to the previous studies, this research also proposed some significant findings which manifested the in-depth exploration of the relationship of all variables in the model. Firstly, unlike the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013), this research confirmed the impact of student flow experience on student retention. Additionally, the strength of the relationship between variables was examined via f^2 effects size. Notably, within all relationships stated in the hypotheses, the effect of Student Flow Experience on Student Retention was the least

powerful in the research context.

Moreover, in the original article of Y. Lee and Choi (2013), the moderating role of the variables "Student Satisfaction" and "Student Flow Experience" were stated. However, the specific types of moderation were not mentioned. This study bridged this gap by indicating clearly that the moderation of Student Satisfaction on the relationship between Internal ALOC and student retention was complimentary. Specifically, Student Satisfaction strengthened this relationship. Finally, the effect of the moderating variable of student satisfaction on the relationship between learning strategies and student satisfaction was partial mediation. In other words, student satisfaction partly manipulated the effect of learning strategies on student satisfaction.

Regarding the power of prediction, based on the result of the Predictive relevance Q2, Student Satisfaction had the strongest power of prediction. From these results and findings, it was easier for the stakeholders to pay more attention to the specific variables in the structural model. For example, from the current data, the path coefficient of Student Satisfaction to Student Retention was more substantial than that of Internal ALOC and Student Flow Experience. In addition, Student Satisfaction had the most vital predictive power within the current context. Therefore, more consideration for student satisfaction should be taken in order to increase student retention.

To sum up, the findings of the data confirmed the factors affecting students' retention in online learning in the current context, including Internal ALOC, student flow experience, learning strategies, and student satisfaction. Also, among these factors, student satisfaction has the strongest power to predict whether the students continue their online learning or not.

Conclusion

This study was conducted to explore the factors affecting student retention in online learning. To achieve this purpose, the model of Y. Lee and Choi (2013) was employed, and five hypotheses indicated the relationship between Internal ALOC, Student Flow Experience, Student Satisfaction, Learning Strategies, and Student Retention was formed. Notably, the first three hypotheses related to the direct effects of variables, and the others concerned the moderation effects of Student Satisfaction and Student Flow Experience. Through the quantitative survey research design, 162 participants were involved, and the data were analyzed using the PLS-SEM approach with SmartPLS software. After completing data analysis, the research showed that all the hypotheses were supported, which made a solid confirmation of the previous studies. In terms of a new contribution to the literature, firstly, the study pointed out the effects of student flow experience on student retention, which was not mentioned in the study of Y. Lee and Choi (2013). Additionally, the types of moderation were mentioned, i.e., (1) Student Satisfaction strengthened the relationship between Internal ALOC and Student Retention, and (2) Student Satisfaction totally affected the effect of Learning Strategies on Student Satisfaction. Lastly, the study suggested that Student Satisfaction had the strongest power in predicting student retention. In other words, the stakeholder should pay more attention to this variable to keep students completing their studies.

Besides these significant findings, the research is limited in some aspects. First of all, due to the complicated of COVID-19 in the country, the researcher could not reach a larger number of participants. What is more, the sampling method for hypothesis testing would be better if the researcher employed the random sampling method; nevertheless, as stated above, it is hard for the researchers to do this because of the COVID-19 context. Hence, it is suggested that future research could involve more participants and a random sampling method in the related studies. Secondly, the result of the study might not be generalized to other contexts. Notably, the study established and validated the model for predicting student retention; however, the predictive power tested was in-sample only. Consequently, to use this model for predicting student retention, the same data analysis process should be replicated. Finally, in this study, the number of variables included only five primary variables. As a result, to establish a more powerful model, other researchers need to pay more attention to other variables.

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 <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.2224>

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**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
TESOL & EDUCATION**

ISSN: 2768- 4563