Giá: 75.000đ

TẠP CHÍ NGHIÊN CỨU NƯỚC NGOÀI

Vol. 39 - No. 4

# TẠP CHÍ NGHIÊN CỨU NƯỚC NGOÀI

## VNU JOURNAL OF FOREIGN STUDIES

TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ - ĐẠI HỌC QUỐC GIA HÀ NỘI
VNU UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

ISSN 2525-2445

Vol. 39 - No. 4
2023

# TẠP CHÍ NGHIÊN CỨU NƯỚC NGOÀI
## VNU JOURNAL OF FOREIGN STUDIES
### ISSN 2525-2445

*Xuất bản 01 kỳ/02 tháng*



***Giấy phép hoạt động báo chí in***
***Số 550/GP-BTTTT ngày 09/12/2016***
***của Bộ Thông tin và Truyền thông***



**Tạp chí *Nghiên cứu nước ngoài*, Tầng 3, Nhà A1, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam**
*** ĐT.: (84-24) 66886972 * Email: tapchincnn@gmail.com / tapchincnn@vnu.edu.vn**
*** Website: https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/**

VNU JOURNAL OF FOREIGN STUDIES
Vol. 39, No. 4, 2023

# CONTENTS

## RESEARCH



## BOOK REVIEW

**TẠP CHÍ NGHIÊN CỨU NƯỚC NGOÀI**
Tập 39, Số 4, 2023

# MỤC LỤC

## NGHIÊN CỨU



## ĐIỂM SÁCH

**RESEARCH**

# POLITENESS STRATEGIES IN THE CONVERSATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN THE COURSE BOOK "CAMPAIGN 2"

Le Huong Hoa*

*People's Police University, 36 Nguyen Huu Tho, District 7, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

Received 14 July 2023
Revised 17 August 2023; Accepted 30 August 2023

**Abstract:** This study is to focus on positive and negative politeness strategies in conversations of the course book "Campaign 2" by Simon Mellor-Clark and Yvonne Baker de Altamirano with an aim to help students improve their awareness of politeness strategies in conversational activities in military setting, thus to apply these strategies in their everyday conversations in English. Within this scope of this study, typical conversation activities are classified into Bald-on record; Positive Strategies; Negative Strategies and Off-record Strategies and then analyzed mainly in the light of the politeness theories of Brown & Levinson (1987). The research shows that the frequency of positive and negative politeness strategies depends not only on the purpose of the interactions but also on the relationship between speakers and hearers in communication.

*Keywords:* politeness strategies, communication, conversation, relationship

## I. Introduction

Nowadays English is considered as the second language and it is the most widely used language all over the world. In Vietnam, English is one of the compulsory subjects and it is getting more and more significant not only at universities in general, but also in military schools in particular. Along with cooperation and integration in some fields such as businesses, technology, tourism and education, Vietnam also has strengthened defense cooperation in the United Nations peacekeeping operations and in exchange officers in an English-speaking country's army. To meet these significant missions, army officers need to enhance awareness on inter-cultural communication as well as improve their language competence to avoid culture shock due to differences between Vietnamese culture and Western culture. Although army schools in Viet Nam affirm the significance of English teaching and learning as a foreign language, both teachers and students do not pay much attention to culture knowledge in English conversations in the course book "Campaign 2" which is used as the main book for military students. That leads to the fact that students sometimes appear impolite, unfriendly or even hostile. This study aims to investigate and draw out the important role of positive and negative politeness strategies in conversational activities of the course book "Campaign 2" by Simon Mellor-Clark and Yvonne Baker de Altamirano so as to improve the teaching and learning of communication in English.

* Corresponding author.
Email address: hoalehuong@yahoo.com

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Politeness*

Politeness is not a natural phenomenon but it is made, shaped and acquired through a process of socio-cultural communication which is constituted by an interactional relationship based upon a standard shared, developed and reproduced by individuals within a social group. In Thomas' opinion (1995), there has been a good deal of different ways to define the term of politeness. Watts, Ide and Ehlich (1992a, p.3) echoed the same idea in rather simple terms when they wrote, "one of the oddest things about politeness research is that the term "politeness" itself is either not explicitly defined at all or else taken to be a consequence of rational social goals such as maximizing the benefit to self and other, minimizing the face-threatening nature of a social act, displaying adequate proficiency in the accepted standards of social etiquette, avoiding conflict, making sure that the social interaction runs smoothly…"

Leech (1983) said that politeness involves making the recipient's messages feel good (polite as friendly). Brown and Levinson (1987) claimed that politeness means making the hearer not feel bad (polite as diplomatic); in Fraser's opinion (1990), politeness is "the expected state" (polite as socially correct). On the other hand, politeness is one of the fundamental socio-psychological guidelines for human to behave each other. Richard (1992) defined politeness into two notions including the first-order politeness or politeness and the second-order politeness or politeness. In the former, politeness corresponds to the different ways in which members of socio-cultural groups perceived and talked about in polite behavior, whereas in the latter, politeness is a theoretical construct which have a value within a general theory of social interaction. Furthermore, Watts also adds that the first-order politeness is action behavior and the second-order politeness is linguistic behavior. Some examples for action behavior are taken into consideration such as turning the head away when coughing; giving up one's seat in a bus to an older person; opening the door for others to enter. These are culturally specific as well as a part of the first - order politeness. By contrast, using linguistic behavior, namely saying "please"; "thank you"; "excuse me"; "I'm sorry"; "pardon me" belongs to the second-order politeness. Meanwhile, Kasper (1994, p.3206) pointed out another difficulty when mentioning the different meanings of the term of politeness in ordinary parlance and in pragmatics. Politeness in the former implies appropriate social conduct and skillful consideration for others, whereas in the latter, politeness is considered as a technical term in linguistic pragmatics aimed at a broader and more popular concept. What is being said is that in the ordinary parlance, politeness is just like "etiquette" and "manners". A person is polite when he or she has proper manners and behaves in a way that is socially suitable and takes notice of other people's feelings, while in pragmatics, politeness has rules, principles and strategies that communicators must follow if they want to make conversational activities smooth and successful.

### *2.2. Politeness Strategies*

Linguists have stated different ways to express politeness strategies. Nevertheless, they, basically, agree to some general principles for being polite in social interactions which are Politeness Rules of Lakoff (1990), Politeness Principles-Maxims of Leech (1983) and Politeness Strategies of Brown & Levinson (1987). Among them the most influential theory of politeness is to put forward by Brown & Levinson. In Brown & Levinson's Politeness Strategies, the concept of "face" is the central of their theory. A set of five strategies to minimize risk of losing face is suggested by these two authors. The choice of strategies will be made on the basis of the speaker's assessment of the size of the face threatening acts (FTAs), which are certain illocutionary acts liable to damage or threaten another person's face.

Brown & Levinson (1987, p.65) considers face-threatening acts (FTAs) as acts opposite the addressee's and the speaker's positive and negative 'face'. Orders, requests, threats, advice and suggestions are examples of acts which give a threat to 'negative face' because the speaker will be putting imposition on the listeners to do or refrain from doing a specific act. Expressing accepting offers and thanks could also be seen to threaten the speaker's 'negative face', as in the first case, the speaker will be compelled to accept a debt and to trespass on the addressee's negative face; in the second case, it could be understood as a way of admitting a debt and thus the speaker will be disgracing her/his own 'face' (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.67). Apologies and accepting compliments are said as face threatening acts to the speaker's 'positive face' because in the former, the speaker will be pointing out that she or he regrets doing a prior face threatening acts and therefore she or he will be damaging her or his own face; in the latter, the speaker feels that she or he has to requite the compliment in one way or another (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p.68). Kasper (1990, p.195) said that Brown & Levinson consider communication as 'fundamentally dangerous antagonistic behavior'. Like Leech, Brown & Levinson (1978, p.79) put forward a scale designed to assess the degree of politeness required in a specific context including: the social distance between the speaker and addressee, where the speaker and the hearer are on a scale of different horizon; the relative power between the communicator and recipient, where the participants are sited on a scale of vertical difference; and the absolute ranking of impositions in a particular culture, the level of intrinsic imposition to a particular act.

It is assumed that politeness strategies are really important in communication. When speaker employs politeness strategies, especially positive and negative politeness strategies appropriately, he/she may get success in intra-cultural and cross-cultural communication. Therefore, positive and negative politeness strategies are highlighted in this section, in particular and in the whole study, in general.

## 3. Research Approach

### *3.1. Data Source*

Campaign 2 is intended to suit both intensive and year-long courses, offering a skills-based approach to learning grammar and lexis which is immediately transferable to military exercises. Written according to NATO's STANAG language profile, Campaign Book 2 takes students from the elementary to exit intermediate level and equips them with sufficient knowledge of English to understand a wide variety of subject matters on everyday social and routine job-related topics. It meets the English language needs of military personnel on international operations, peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and training exercises and it has been recognized by two English language-awarding bodies: The English-Speaking Union and the British Council. It provides an accurate and up-to-date reflection of military life and language. With the purpose of this research, Campaign 2 is chosen as a suitable material for data collection during the course of defense studies.

### *3.2. Research Methods*

Quantitative method is employed in this research. 402 utterances from 12 Units mainly in the listening tasks in the course book "Campaign 2" were taken into consideration and classified into types of politeness strategies between the speaker and the hearer. These politeness strategies always appear in the military context including: the speaker with lower rank than the hearer or the hearer's inferior; the speaker with higher rank than the hearer or the hearer's commander; the speaker and the hearer with the same rank such as friends, classmates, roommates; lecturer and addressee.

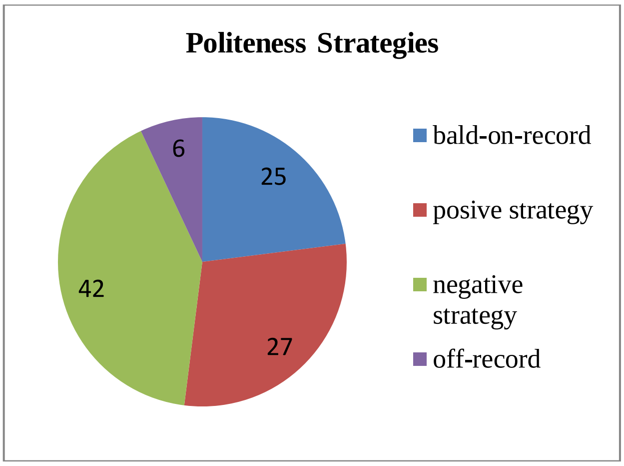
All statistics needed for this study were calculated and grouped into 4 categories of conversational relationships which were analyzed and presented in the following parts.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

### *4.1. Frequency of Occurrence of Politeness Strategies in Conversational Activities in the Course Book Campaign 2*

**Pie Chart 1**

*The Frequency of Occurrence*




The pie chart above illustrates the percentage namely bald-on record strategy; positive politeness strategies; negative politeness strategies and off-record strategies examined in the conversational activities from Unit 1 to Unit 12. It is clear that the number of occurrences of negative politeness strategies (NPS) account for the most major percentage, whereas the off-record strategies become the least – used strategy and positive politeness as well as bald-on record strategies occupy nearly the same.

To begin with, making up 42%, negative politeness strategy employed most of the four strategies. According to Brown & Levinson (1987:129), negative politeness refers to "redressive action addressed to the addressee's negative face: his want to have his freedom of action unhindered and his attention unimpeded". Agreeing with Brown & Levinson on definition of negative politeness, Quang (2003) emphasizes that "negative politeness is any communicative act which is appropriately intended to show that the speaker does not want to impinge on the addressee's privacy, thus enhancing the sense of distance between them". Taking place in the military environment, this view really draws our attention because in the army settings, people do not usually mention about personal affairs as well as they often keep a distance in communication

Accounting for the second largest percentage with 27%, positive politeness strategy usually used in the social situation proves the fact that people know each other fairly well like friends or family. Used in close relationship, this strategy tries to minimize the distance between the speaker and the hearer and minimize the FTAs. In addition to hedging and attempting to avoid conflict, some skills of positive politeness strategy including statements of friendship, solidarity, and compliments are also mentioned. Positive politeness strategies are used not only for the FTAs' redress, but also as a kind of social accelerator, where the speaker wants to "come closer" to the hearer.

By contrast, with only 6% of the four categories, off-record strategy becomes the least used-one in this course book. It is understandable that military setting is a special context where everything is clearly and exactly required and conversational implication seems to be avoided. Though bald-on record strategy occupied the third position of the four employed strategies under Brown and Levinson's model, it is still considered as one of the frequently used strategies, making up 25%. This result shows that, in army circumstances, both the speaker and the hearer agree that the relevance of face demands may be suspended in requests, offers or urgency. It is obvious that, in comparison with positive politeness and negative politeness strategies which attempt to minimize the FTAs, bald-on record strategy violates the hearer's face and it can make the hearer shocked or embarrassed. However, this strategy is most often utilized in military situations where the speaker is superior in power than the hearer.

From the figures above, it can be seen that the course book "Campaign 2" designed for the military environment shows a power distance between the superior and his or her inferior. Negative politeness strategies are firstly ranked and positive politeness strategies as well as bald-on record appear respectively. This seems to suggest that in military interactions, people tend to express their attention or deference to others. Besides, power and social status are also affirmed.

As presented in the previous part, the study focus on conversational activities of the four most typical and popular conversational relationships between the speaker (S) and the hearer (H) in the course book with politeness strategies including: the inferior and his/ her superior (S has lower rank than H or the hearer's inferior); the superior and his/ her inferior (S has higher rank than H or the hearer's commander); friend and friend (S & H are the same rank, classmates, roommates, friends); lecturer and addressee (…). Table 1 below presents the statistics of each strategy expressed in each conversational relationship which is carefully discussed in the next parts.

**Table 1**

*The Frequency of Politeness Strategies in Terms of Social Relationships*

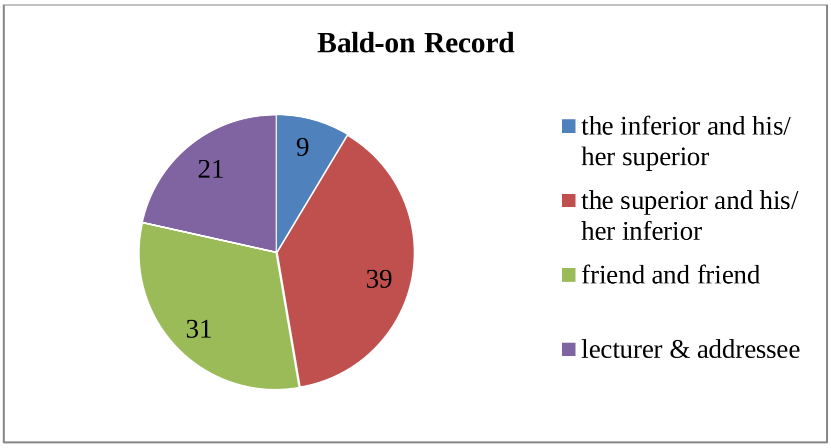
| **Relationship between S & H** | **Bald-on-record strategy (99/402)** | | **Positive politeness strategies (109/402)** | | **Negative politeness strategies (168/402)** | | **Off-record strategy (26/402)** | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Sum | % | Sum | % | Sum | % | Sum | % |
| **The inferior and his/ her superior.** | 9 | 9% | 9 | 8% | 85 | 52% | 3 | 11% |
| **The superior and his/ her inferior.** | 38 | 39% | 39 | 36% | 31 | 18% | 8 | 31% |
| **Friend and friend** | 31 | 31% | 58 | 53% | 5 | 2% | 15 | 58% |
| **Lecturer and addressee** | 21 | 21% | 3 | 3% | 47 | 28% | 0 | 0% |

### *4.2. Bald-on-record Strategy in Conversational Activities of "Campaign 2"*

The result shows a light difference between bald-on record strategy used in "Campaign 2" and its usage in other conversational relationships, in which bald-on record makes up 25% of the total. This indicates that this strategy is commonly employed among the four politeness strategies though it highly contains a face-threatening act to the hearer's face. It is understandable that in the military settings, utterances are orders, offers, requests, suggestions and they are short, clear, exact, and informative. In particular, in urgent situations or emergencies, minimizing the threat to the hearer's face does not occur. It can be seen from the pie-chart 1 that this strategy gets a quarter and only a bit less than 2% compared to positive politeness strategy (27%). Pie-chart 2 below shows how bald-on-record strategy is employed in conversational relationships between the speaker and the hearer.

**Pie Chart 2**

*The Frequency of Bald-on Politeness Strategy in Terms of Conversational Relationship Between the Speaker and the Hearer*




It is not surprising that bald-on record strategy is most frequently employed by the speaker whose ranking is higher than the hearer or the hearer's commander with 39% of the total. In fact, in military interactions, the commander usually orders or requests to express his/ her power to the hearer.

The second largest percentage which accounts for 31% belongs to relationship between friends**;** classmates**;** roommates or the people who have the same rank. Obviously, when the speaker and the hearer have close relationship with each other, they do not often attempt to minimize the threat to the hearer's face. They feel free to express their interests, needs, wants and feelings without saving the hearer's face. This makes conversations closer and friendlier in communication.

In contrast with the two relationships just mentioned above, bald-on record strategy is least employed by S and H who show the relationship between the inferior and his/her commander with 9%. This assumes that in military environment, the power distance between the inferior and the superior are really remarkable. It does not let the inferior order or impose something on his/ her superior. However, in some special cases such as great urgency, alerting or necessity for great efficiency, this strategy can be used. The following examples prove this fact**.**

B: Could I speak to Sergeant Cooper please?

A: Let me see if he's in, sir. *(Unit2. Bravo. Task 9 – Campaign 2)*

A: Let me repeat that please, sir. *(Unit2. Bravo. Task 9 – Campaign 2)*

A: I need these copied by 1030. Can you make the copies for me?

B: Yes, sir. Could you complete this for me please, sir? Just put your name and the number of copies and I'll make the copies. (*Unit 2: Bravo: Tasks 2 and 3)*

A: Good morning, welcome to Fort Carson. State your business, please.

B: Good morning, I'm Sergeant Jones. I'm here to process in. *(Unit 5: Task 2: Campaign 2)*

From these examples, although the speaker used bald-on record strategy to request or suggest his/her superior, these utterances seem to be mitigated the threat on the hearer's face by using the words *"please", "sir", "just".*

Accounting for 21%, bald-on-record strategy reveals the fact that the lecturer and the addressee can make questions, requests, offers, or suggestions directly with each other in the process of presentation or teaching. These following examples are typical:

Lecturer: Try to stay on your board as much as possible. *(Unit 1: Charlie: tasks 3 and 4: campaign 2)*

Lecturer: To load the weapon, first of all put the safety catch at the S position. Secondly, set the change level to R for Repetition. Next insert a full magazine. Have you all got that? Are there any questions? No questions? Ok! Let me ask you a few questions. Private Brice, to load the weapon, what should you do first?

Private Brice: Uhm, insert the magazine. *(Unit 1: Delta: task 6: Campaign 2)*

The conversations above are between a lecturer and an addressee in the meeting or in the lesson about military field. Obviously, bald-on-record strategy in this situation helps the speaker show an important content of presentation in giving regulations, rules and determination and it does not contain any threats towards the addressee. Furthermore, when using this strategy, the lecturer wants to focus on efficiency, accuracy and catch the addressee's attention.

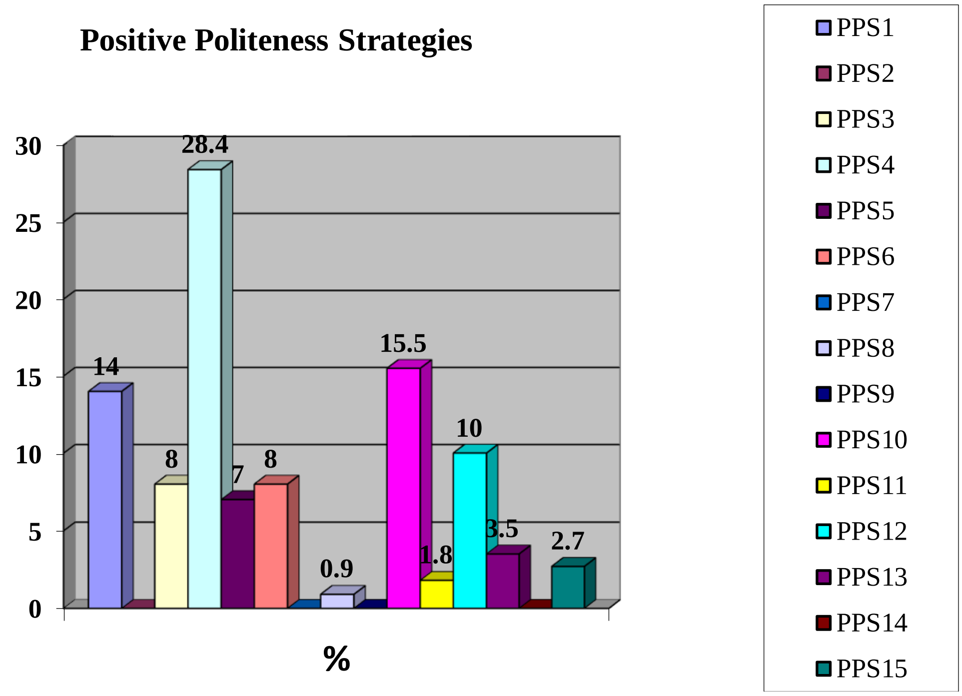
In conclusion, although bald-on-record strategy accounts for the least among the four ones, it is most employed in conversational activities of the coursebook "Campaign 2". This does not mean that the speakers want to create any strong threats to the hearers' face but it can be rules, regulations, orders in military activities which every army officer or soldier must obey, or the speaker wants to express his/her power to the hearer in some cases.

### *4.3. Positive Politeness Strategies in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*

According to Brown and Levinson's model (1987), there are 15 positive politeness strategies listed out and based on this model, the researcher grouped the utterances in the conversations into 15 categories. The result of positive politeness strategies found out in the selected conversations is shown in the bar-chart below:

**Bar-chart 1**

*The Frequency of Occurrence of Positive Politeness Strategies in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*




The bar-chart expresses the total percentages of positive politeness strategies used in the course book "Campaign 2" which is spent for military students at Vietnamese army schools. It is clearly seen that the most preferable strategies used in the course book are strategy 4, 10 and 1. Whereas, some strategies such as strategies 7, 9, 14 are not used and strategies like 8, 11, 13, 15 are employed with a quite small rate.

Accounting for 28.4%, strategy 4 (Use in – group identity markers) becomes the most employed strategy in positive politeness strategies under Brown and Levinson's model (1987). It is understandable that in military conversational activities, people are often called with their ranks such as Corporal**;** Sergeant**;** Major**;** Captain**;** and so on. Besides, some language or dialect, jargon or slang, and ellipsis or contraction is also used to convey in-group membership. Obviously, military context is a special environment where jargons or slangs can be used by only these people in this field. This is quite different from daily conversational activities and this is a new aspect that the researcher wants to investigate.

The strategy 10 (Offer, promise) is also considered as one of the most used strategies in positive politeness strategies with 15.5% and occupies the second largest portion. In this strategy, the speaker may choose to stress his cooperation with the hearer in another way and he/she wants to develop the relationship with his/her hearer by extending invitation and promise in order to satisfy the hearer's needs. From the chart, it can be easy to see that the third preference is strategy 1 (Notice, attend to H) with the rate of 14%. Using this strategy helps the speaker express his/ her relationship with the hearer. He/ she wants to take notice of the hearer's condition with noticeable changes or remarkable possessions. The following examples are typical**.**

A: <u>Sounds like you're busy</u>. *(Campaign 2: Unit 3: Task 8)*

B : I certainly am.

A: Major Pérez: I've already heard a lot about you. You're doing a great job here. *(Campaign 2: Unit 3: Charlie: Tasks 2 and 3)*

B: Well, let's see here, you're transferring in from the second armored cavalry at Fort Polk. Good scores on all your last exams. You have no history of disciplinary problems; that's very good. *(Campaign 2: Unit 5: Task 6)*

A: You seem to be lost. Do you need any help, sir? *(Campaign 2: Unit 8: Charlie: Tasks 2 and 3)*

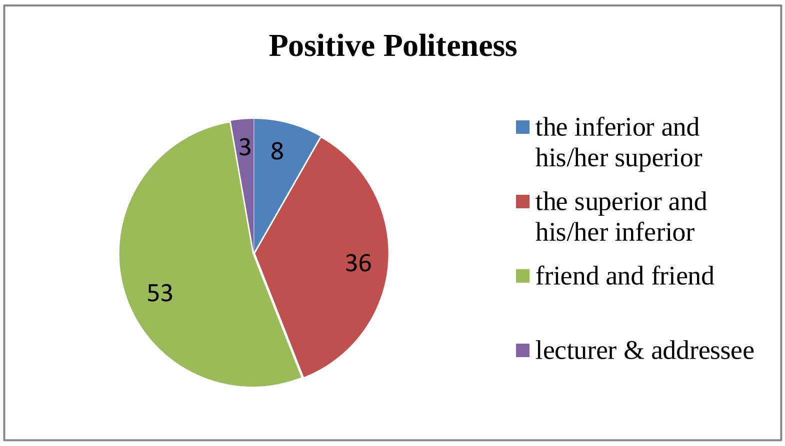
B: Yes, I'm looking for the Officers' Mess. Could you tell me where it is?

It can be seen that strategies 3, 5, 6 equally appear with the rate of 8%, 7%, and 8% for each type, respectively. To be honest, in military settings, conversational activities often happen at the Headquarter or in the field where conflict or disagreement are not frequent. The inferior always obeys his commander as a rule and the inferior always says "yes" for most of the cases. With 0.9% for strategy 8 (joke), 1.8% for strategy 11 (be optimistic), 3.5% for strategy 13 (give or ask for reasons) and 2.8% for strategy 15 (give gifts), it indicates that these strategies are seldom used in the course book. In addition, strategies namely 2, 7, 9 and 14 are not realized in the course book which asserts that military environment is a special setting. Therefore, utterances need clearness and reliance.

In brief, frequently employed in the course book, positive politeness strategies are used to express the speaker's concern to the hearer, to avoid the disagreement and to make closer relationships between S and H.

**Pie-chart 3**

*The Frequency of Positive Politeness Strategies in Conversational Relationships Between S and H in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*

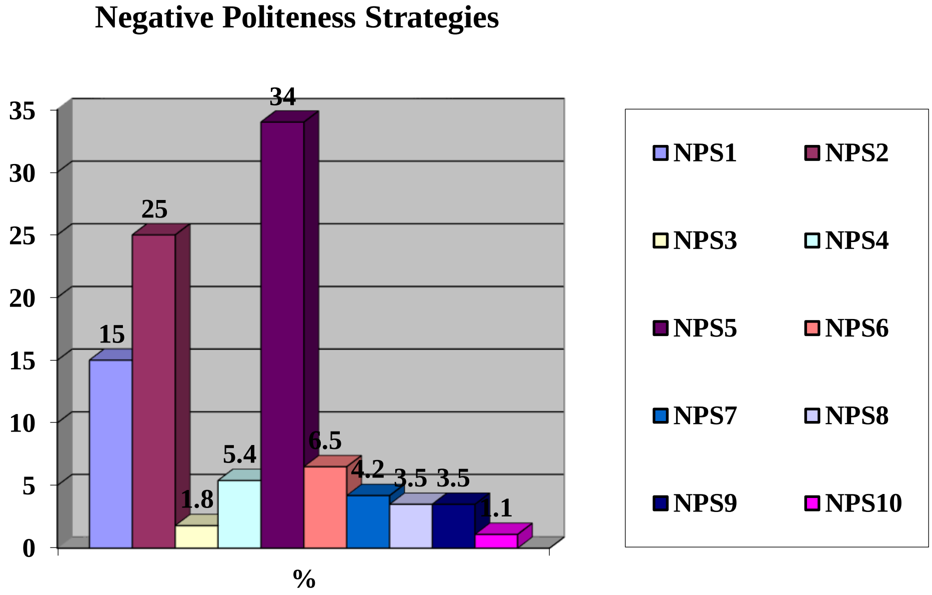



The pie chart 3 provides the fact that the majority of positive politeness strategies (53%) are used between S and H who are power-equals such as friends, classmates, roommates with the same rank. The positive politeness strategy is usually used by those who know each other rather well such friends or family (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Due to close relationship, this strategy tries to minimize the distance between S and H and minimize the FTAs. In addition to hedging and attempting to avoid conflict, some aspects of positive politeness strategy including statements of friendship, solidarity, and compliments are also mentioned. Positive politeness strategies are used not only for the FTAs' redress, but in general as a kind of social accelerator, where S wants to "come closer" to H.

### *4.4. Negative Politeness Strategies in Conversational Activities "Campaign 2"*

**Bar-chart 2**

*The Frequency of Negative Politeness Strategies in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*




The bar-chart 2 shows the frequent occurrence of negative politeness strategies in the course book "Campaign 2". It can be seen that strategy 5 (Give deference) and strategy 2 (Question, hedge) are most used strategies. Whereas, strategy 10 (Go on record as incurring a debt, or as not indebting H)**;** 3 (Be pessimistic), 9 (Nominalize)**,** are the strategies that S does not often use in the military context. Strategy 5 (Give deference) and Strategy 2 (Question, hedge) with 34% for the former and 25% for the latter are preferred to use. 31 times of occurrence "sir", 6 times of "Ma'am"; 5 times "ladies and gentlemen" and some high-level words such as "escort" "excuse me", "a vin d'honneur" are counted. This indicates that in military communication, giving deference is appreciated between S and H. Therefore, it is not surprising when strategy 5 takes up 34% of the total. In strategy 5 (Give deference), people tend to abase themselves first and raise the others before asking them to do something.

E.g.: *Excuse me, sir; I'm sorry, sir;* before asking something frequently.

Making up 25%, strategy 2 "Question, Hedge" is often employed to show little imposition on H. Therefore, strategy 2 "question, hedge" is quite effective which helps people feel more comfortable. With the rate of 15%, strategy 1 ranks the third among negative politeness strategies. Using strategy 1 (Be conventionally indirect), S wants to soften his request. S often seems to use "*Could/ Can…., (please)?" in* making request.

Besides, strategy 6 (Apologize) with 6.5% and strategy 4 (Minimize the imposition) with 5.4% are limited in the course book. The reasons arise from the fact that these strategies reduce FTA by apologizing, so the speaker can indicate his/her reluctance to impinge on the hearer's negative face and thereby partially redress that impingement. Strategy 4 minimizes the imposition to the hearer. Both these strategies are not frequently employed in military conversational activities where utterances are always orders, requests and contents are clear and understandable. However, in some cases, these strategies are also found. The following sentences are typical examples.

A: Can you come to my office a moment?

B: I'm sorry sir. Captain Marks told me to stay here. Strategy 6: apologize *(Campaign 2, Unit 2, Tasks 2 and 3)*

A: I'm sorry. You say that UNMOs are unarmed. So, you don't have weapons?

B: That's right. Strategy 6: apologize *(Campaign 2, unit 3, task 8)*

Looking at the bar-chart 2, strategy 7 (Impersonalize S and H), strategy 8 (State the FTA as a general rule) and strategy 9 (Nominalize) occur least and make up with 4.2%, 3.5% and 3.5% respectively. The following sentences are typical examples of these strategies.

A: It's important that the lads go over the obstacle course. Do you agree? Strategy 7: Impersonalize S and H *(Campaign 2, Unit 1: (echo): Task 2)*

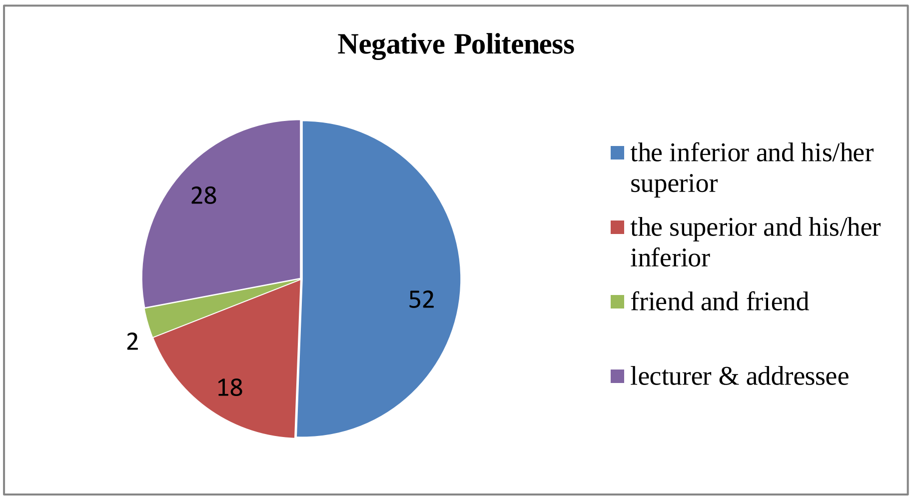
A: It's a good thing you made a reservation, I think the temporary quarters are full. Strategy 7: impersonalize S and H *(Campaign 2, UNIT 5: Task 3)*

In short, the speaker often prefers to use negative politeness strategies to positive ones in military conversational activities, in which, negative politeness strategies 5; 2; 1 are most employed while strategies 10 and 3 are least used and strategies 6; 4; 7; 8; and 9 are limited to use.

The pie chart 4 below provides a clearer view about how negative politeness strategies are employed in relationships between the speaker and the hearer.

**Pie-chart 4**

*The Frequency of Negative Politeness Strategies in Relationships Between S-H in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2".*




The pie-chart 4 shows the percentage of using negative politeness strategies in conversational activities in the course book "Campaign 2" in terms of the relationships between the speaker and the hearer. It can be clearly seen from the chart that negative politeness strategies are most used between the inferior and the superior, whereas, the negative politeness strategies used between friend and friend or between power-equals occupy the smallest portion of the chart.

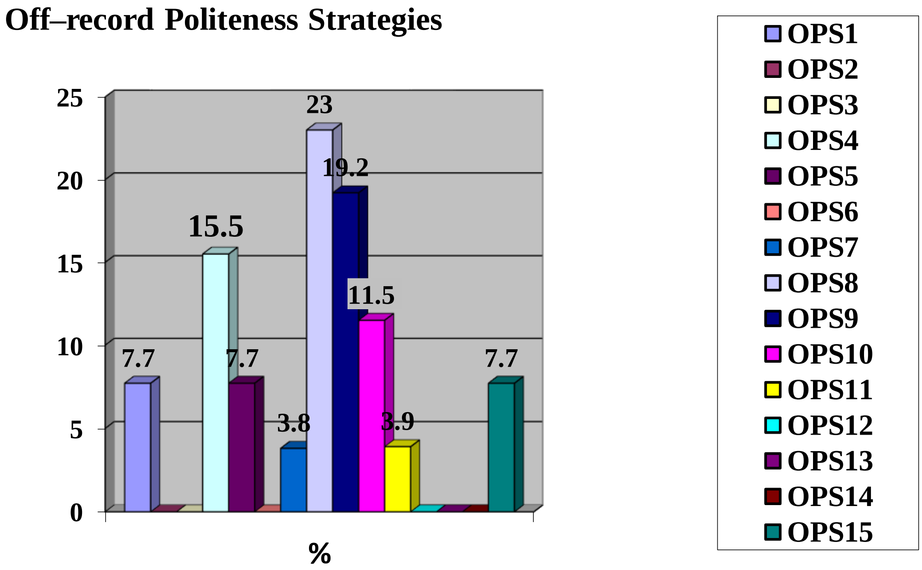
Accounting for 52%, negative politeness strategies are most used by those whose relationship is between the inferior and the superior under Brown and Levinson's model (1987).

This can be inferred from the statistic that in military field, power distance between the inferior and the superior is quite high. Thus, the inferior should express politeness and deference in communication with his/her commander as much as possible. Relationship between the lecturer and the addressee, similarly, also requires the addressee to show his politeness and keep distance, therefore it accounts for 28% in using negative politeness strategies. Making up with only 2% among the negative politeness strategies, the S and the H whose ranking is the same prefers positive politeness to negative ones as they want to express intimacy and solidarity.

### *4.5. Off - record Strategies in Conversational Activities "Campaign 2"*

**Bar-chart 3**

*The Frequency of Off - record Politeness Strategies is Used in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*




The figure demonstrates the percentage of off-record politeness strategies employed in conversational activities of "Campaign 2". It can be seen that the most and the second preferable off-record politeness strategies are strategy 8 (Be ironic) and strategy 9 (Use metaphor) while strategies 6 (Use tautologies); 12 (Be vague); 13 (Over-generalize); 14 (Displace H) do not occur in the course book. Accounting for 23% of the total 15 strategies, strategy 8 (Be ironic) becomes the most frequently used strategy in off-record ones. Applying this strategy in conversations, the speaker often says opposite to what he means, uses prosody such as nasality; kinesis like smirk to aim at ironicalness and being satiric.

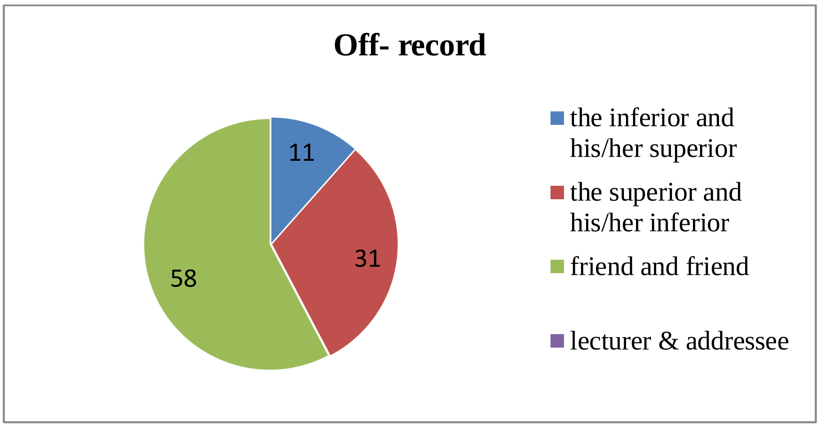
Chart 5 shows that strategies namely 6 (Use tautologies); 12 (Be vague); 13 (Over-generalize) and14 (Displace H) are not employed. Besides, strategies 7 (Use contradictions) and 11 (Be ambiguous) are rarely used with the same rate of 3.9% for each case.

In conclusion, off – record politeness strategy can be used where speaker asks someone to do something, but does not want to bear responsibility for doing the hearer's face threatening acts.

Considering the relationship between the speaker and the hearer in Off-record politeness strategy, it is clearly seen in the pie chart 5 below.

**Pie-chart 5**

*The Frequency of Occurrence of off-Record Politeness Strategy in the S – H Relationship in Conversational Activities in the Course Book "Campaign 2"*




The pie chart 5 demonstrates the percentage of off-record politeness strategy in the relationship between S and H in conversational activities in the course book "Campaign 2". It can be obviously seen that off-record politeness strategy used in the relationship between power-equals accounts for the highest rate. By contrast, off-record politeness strategy used in the relationship between the lecturer and the addressee is not employed in this book.

As mentioned in Pie chart 1, off-record strategy is not commonly employed in this course book. It only accounts for 6% among the four politeness strategies. This strategy is used in conversational activities among friends and friends or people with the same rank making up 58%; the inferior and the superior accounting for11% and the commander and his/her inferior with 31%.

Using off-record strategy, the speaker can leave it up to the hearer to decide how to interpret it. The S's utterance is too general for the H to get the meaning. Such off-record utterances are indirect uses of language. Therefore, the H must make every effort to infer what the S means.

In fact, this strategy is not suitable for military conversational activities where communication requires clearness, accuracy and explicitness. Therefore, it mainly appears in conversations between friends and friends or the people with the same rank.

From bar-chart 3 and pie-chart 5, it can be seen that the military environment is very sensible in which people always have to care about maintaining distance in social interactions. Hence, to fulfill this requirement, they are not only formal, polite, decisive but also careful about their utterances otherwise communication breakdown can easily occur.

## 5. Conclusion

The study aims at investigating positive and negative politeness strategies and examines their frequency of occurrence in some typical kinds of conversational activities in the course book "*Campaign 2*" on the theoretical ground of politeness proposed by Brown & Levinson (1987).

Through the data analysis of politeness strategies in the course book "*Campaign 2*", it is found that the frequency of occurrence of politeness strategies in conversational activities of this material is not always the same. Further analysis suggests that negative politeness strategies were preferred to positive politeness**.** The highest percentage of negative politeness strategies is examined in the relationship between the inferior and his/ her commander. Other positive politeness strategies are also employed but their rate is very small. This proves the fact that in military conversational environment, people tend to keep their distance and show their formality as well as politeness at the workplace.

Apparently, the data and classification of politeness strategies highlighted the importance of applying positive and negative politeness in communication as well as in cross-cultural communication for teachers and students of English. In order to teach and study English efficiently, it is essential to employ politeness strategies appropriately in certain situations in accordance with the purpose of communication. It would be hopeful that with the study result, the students of army schools could learn English through the course book "Campaign 2" efficiently and become good across-cultural communicators.

## References

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). *Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena*. Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge University Press.

Fraser, B. & Nolen, W. (1981). The association of deference with linguistic form. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language*, *27*, 93–109. https://doi.org/10.1515/ijsl.1981.27.93

Fraser, B. (1975). *The concept of politeness*. George Town University.

Fraser, B. (1990). Perspective on politeness. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14,* 219-235. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90081-N

Kasper, G. (1990). Linguistic Politeness: Current research issues. *Journal of Pragmatics, 14,* 193–218. https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(90)90080-W

Kasper, G. (1994). Politeness. In Asher, R. E. & Simpson, J. M. Y. (Eds.). *The encyclopedia of language and linguistics (pp. 3206–3211).* Pergamon Press.

Kroeber, A. L., & Kluckhohn, C. (1952). *Culture*: *A critical review of concepts and definitions*. New York.

Lakoff, R. T. (1990). *Talking power: The politics of language in our lives*. Glasgow: HarperCollins.

Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of pragmatics.* Longman.

Quang, N. (2003). *Intercultural and cross-culture communication.* VNU Press.

Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction: An introduction to pragmatics.* Longman.

Watts, R., Ide, S. & Ehlich, K. (Eds.), (1992a). *Politeness in language: Studies in its history, Theory and practice.* Mouton de Gruyter.

Watts, Richard. J. (2003). *Politeness.* Cambridge University Press.

# NHỮNG CHIẾN LƯỢC HỘI THOẠI LỊCH SỰ TRONG GIÁO TRÌNH "CAMPAIGN 2"

Lê Hương Hoa

*Trường Đại học Cảnh sát nhân dân, 36 Nguyễn Hữu Thọ, Quận 7, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này tập trung vào các chiến lược hội thoại lịch sự hòa đồng và chiến lược lịch sự lãnh địa trong giáo trình "Campaign 2" của tác giả Simon Mellor-Clark và Yvonne Baker de Altamirano với mục đích giúp sinh viên nâng cao nhận thức về các chiến lược lịch sự trong giao tiếp trong môi trường quân đội và có thể sử dụng các chiến lược này trong đàm thoại hàng ngày bằng tiếng Anh. Trong phạm vi nghiên cứu này, các hoạt động giao tiếp điển hình được phân loại thành các chiến lược: *thẳng thừng, lịch sự hòa đồng, lịch sự lãnh địa, lịch sự gián tiếp,* và được phân tích chủ yếu dựa theo lý thuyết Lịch sự của Brown và Levinson (1987). Nghiên cứu chỉ ra rằng tần suất của các chiến lược lịch sự hòa đồng và chiến lược lịch sự lãnh địa phụ thuộc không chỉ vào mục đích tương tác mà còn vào mối quan hệ giữa người nói và người nghe.

*Từ khoá:* chiến lược lịch sự, giao tiếp, hội thoại, mối quan hệ

# EXPLORING THE USE OF ADAPTIVE LEARNING TECHNOLOGY IN HIGHER EDUCATION WRITING CLASSES: STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha*, Hoang Thi Thanh Huyen

*University of Economics - Technology for Industries,*
*456 Minh Khai, Hai Ba Trung, Ha Noi, Vietnam*

Received 4 May 2023
Revised 21 August 2023; Accepted 30 August 2023

**Abstract:** This study investigates students' perspectives on using Adaptive Learning Technology (ALT) in writing classes in higher education. The ALTs used include Grammarly as an Automated Writing Evaluation (AWE), Quizizz as an Adaptive Content Application (ACA), and Google Docs and Miro as Digital Writing Platforms (DWP). Underpinning Bloom's Taxonomy, this mixed-methods research design combining a questionnaire adapted from Nguyen and Nguyen (2022), Gohar and El-Ghool (2016) as well as an observation checklist were employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data on students' overall attitudes toward ALT, perceptions of its utility, satisfaction with its implementation, challenges, and recommendations. The findings indicate that students generally had a positive attitude towards ALT, particularly its capacity to provide personalized feedback and support for specific learning requirements. However, obstacles such as technical difficulties and the need for both students and teachers to receive adequate training and support must be addressed. The study additionally suggests several recommendations for the implementation of ALT in writing classes.

*Keywords:* Adaptive Learning Technology (ALT), students' perspectives, Bloom's Taxonomy, writing classes, higher education

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, writing skills have become more critical than ever before (Gohar & El-Ghool, 2016; Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Zhou et al., 2012). The ability to write effectively is not only essential for academic success but also in professional and personal life. However, teaching and learning writing skills can be a challenging task for both teachers and students and Vietnam is not an exception. Writing classes are an essential component of language learning in Vietnam, with an emphasis on improving writing skills to meet the demands of academic and professional settings (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Do et al., 2022). However, Vietnamese students face several challenges in writing classes, which can hinder their progress and motivation.

One major difficulty is the lack of opportunities for practicing writing skills (Pham, 2019, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2022; Nguyen, 2023). According to Hoang and Hoang (2022), Do et al. (2022) and Pham (2019), many students are required to focus on memorization and rote learning, with limited opportunities for creative expressions or critical thinking. As a result,

* Corresponding author.
Email address: nttha.khoann@uneti.edu.vn

they may struggle with generating ideas, organizing their thoughts, and crafting coherent written texts. Another challenge is the lack of exposure to authentic materials and contexts (Calma et al., 2022; Do et al., 2022). Many Vietnamese writing classes rely on textbook-based activities, which can be disconnected from real-world contexts and fail to engage students' interests (Nguyen, 2023). Additionally, Pham (2019) illustrates that the use of outdated materials and teaching methods may not align with current writing practices and standards. Furthermore, Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) advocate that the fear of making mistakes and the pressure to conform to strict grammar rules can inhibit students' creativity and motivation. Writing classes in Vietnam often prioritize grammar and sentence structure over content and style, leading students to focus on avoiding mistakes rather than developing their writing skills (Tran & Nguyen, 2021).

To address these challenges, the use of technology, such as Adaptive Learning Technology (ALT), can be implemented to promote student motivation, engagement, and input knowledge (Calma et al., 2022; Jing et al., 2023; Wen & Aziz, 2022; White, 2020). ALT provides students with personalized feedback on their writing, helping them to identify areas for improvement and develop their writing skills. Moreover, Oyanagi (2021) illustrates that the use of authentic materials and contexts can be incorporated into writing classes, fostering students' interest, and enabling them to connect with real-world writing practices. Overall, the difficulties faced by Vietnamese students in writing classes highlight the need for innovative and student-centered approaches to writing instruction. According to Pham (2019), the use of technology, such as ALT, can provide a powerful tool for promoting student motivation, engagement, and input knowledge, ultimately supporting students' development of writing skills in the technology era.

The analysis of the difficulties in writing classes in Vietnam has shed light on the challenges that students face in their pursuit of learning writing skills. Although ALT has been implemented at the higher education level, there are still concerns about the lack of attention given to students' perceptions and the need for teachers to adopt new teaching techniques. It is crucial to conduct research to investigate these issues further. By doing so, educators can better understand the challenges and opportunities of teaching and learning writing skills in the technology era, and explore ways to promote student motivation, engagement, and input knowledge in writing courses. Therefore, the researchers decided to conduct this research to investigate students' perceptions of the implementation of ALT in EFL writing courses, and a research question was addressed "*What are students' perceptions of using ALT in EFL writing classes?*"

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Adaptive Learning Technology (ALT)*

#### 2.1.1. The Concepts of Adaptive Learning Technology

Adaptive Learning Technology (ALT) is a type of educational technology that uses data and algorithms to create personalized learning experiences for individual students (Munoz et al., 2022). Jing et al. (2023) and El-Sabagh (2021) state that it is a technology-based approach that seeks to tailor instruction to each student's unique needs, abilities, and learning preferences. The underlying idea behind ALT is that every student learns differently, and by using technology to gather data on each student's learning style and progress, the instruction can be adapted to fit the individual student (Daugherty et al., 2022).

According to Gohar & El-Ghool (2016), ALT is designed to provide students with a personalized learning experience that is tailored to their individual needs. It can adapt the content, pace, and level of difficulty of the instruction based on the student's progress, ensuring that they are challenged but not overwhelmed. This technology can also provide students with immediate feedback on their work, helping them to identify areas where they need to improve and providing them with specific suggestions for how to do so (Daugherty et al., 2022; El-Sabagh, 2021; Jing et al., 2023).

Jing et al. (2023), Munoz et al. (2015), and White (2020) share similar ideas that the main benefit of ALT is its ability to provide a personalized learning experience for each student, which can lead to increased engagement, motivation, and achievement. By providing students with content and instruction that is tailored to their needs and preferences, ALT can help them to take ownership of their learning and become more self-directed. Additionally, ALT can help to identify students who are struggling early on and provide them with the support they need to succeed (Jing et al., 2023; Daugherty et al., 2022). However, there are also some concerns about the use of ALT. Critics argue that ALT can be expensive to implement and that it may not be effective for all students or in all contexts (Jing et al., 2023; Ovanagi, 2021; Wen & Aziz, 2022). Additionally, there are concerns about the use of data and algorithms to make decisions about student learning, and the potential for bias and discrimination in these processes.

In conclusion, ALT is a technology-based approach to education that seeks to tailor instruction to each student's unique needs, abilities, and learning preferences. It has the potential to provide students with a personalized learning experience that can lead to increased engagement, motivation, and achievement. Nevertheless, the effectiveness and ethical implications of this technology are still being debated (Daugherty et al., 2022; El-Sabagh, 2021; Jing et al., 2023; Chan & Nguyen, 2021), and further research is needed to fully understand its impact on teaching and learning.

#### 2.1.2. Types of Adaptive Learning Technology

There are several different types of ALT, depending on the specific approach, methodology, and technology used.

According to Hockly (2018), ***Automated writing evaluation (AWE)*** is regarded as useful to develop writing skills. It uses artificial intelligence and machine learning techniques to provide a personalized learning experience. AWE can provide immediate feedback, identify areas of weakness, and provide targeted instruction to help students overcome specific challenges (Dizon & Gayed, 2021; Bailey & Lee, 2020; Ebadi et al., 2022).

Hockly (2018), Bailey and Lee (2020) clarify that AWE refers to the use of computer software to automatically evaluate and score written texts. AWE tools are designed to provide feedback on various aspects of writing, such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and coherence. The feedback can be used to help learners identify areas for improvement and to develop their writing skills.

One of the popular AWE tools is Grammarly, which is an online writing tool that checks grammar, spelling, punctuation, and style (Dizon & Gayed, 2021; Bailey & Lee, 2020; Ebadi et al., 2022). Grammarly uses advanced algorithms and natural language processing to detect errors and suggest corrections. It can be used by learners of all levels, from beginner to advanced, and it is available as a browser extension, desktop app, or mobile app. The use of Grammarly can provide several benefits for language learners. First, it can save time and effort for teachers who would otherwise have to manually correct and provide feedback on student writing. Second, it can help learners identify and correct errors in their writing, which can improve their overall writing skills. Third, it can provide personalized feedback to learners based on their individual strengths and weaknesses, which can help them focus on specific areas for improvement. Finally, it can provide learners with immediate feedback, which can increase their motivation and engagement in the writing process.

Park and Lee (2004) demonstrate that ***Adaptive content application (ACA)*** is a term used to describe content that is tailored to meet the specific needs of the user. This type of content, according to Lim and Yunus (2021), is designed to adapt and change based on the user's behavior, preferences, and interests. Adaptive content is often used in e-learning and educational contexts, where it is used to deliver personalized learning experiences to students. In a similar view to Lim and Yunus (2021), Wen and Aziz (2022), Quizizz is an adaptive content application that allows teachers to create and deliver engaging and interactive quizzes to students. This platform offers a wide range of features that enable teachers to customize their quizzes and create adaptive content that meets the unique learning needs of each student (Nguyen et al., 2021).

One of the key features of Quizizz as an adaptive content application is that it is dynamic and responsive, changing in real-time based on the user's interactions (Nguyen et al., 2021; Wen and Aziz, 2022). This means that as the user engages with the content, the system can adapt and modify the content to meet their specific needs. According to Pertiwi (2020), Quizizz helps to personalize learning paths for individual students. Teachers can assign specific quizzes based on the student's performance on previous quizzes or based on their learning goals. In other words, the teaching and learning content on Quizizz can be easily modified and updated, allowing for continuous improvement and adaptation. This feature ensures that students are receiving personalized instruction that meets their individual needs, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Moreover, Lim and Yunus (2021) illustrate Quizizz also allows teachers to monitor student progress and track their performance over time. This feature enables teachers to identify areas where students are struggling and adjust their instruction to meet their needs. Additionally, teachers can use the data from Quizizz to inform their instructional decisions and make data-driven decisions that promote student learning.

***Digital writing platforms (DWP)*** have become increasingly popular in recent years, offering students and educators the ability to collaborate and create written content in a virtual environment. Two popular examples of digital writing platforms are Google Docs and Miro (Do et al., 2022; Hoang & Hoang, 2022, Nguyen, 2023; Pham, 2019; Zhou et al., 2012).

According to Zhou et al. (2012), Nguyen and Nguyen (2023), Google Docs is a cloud-based word-processing application that allows users to create, edit, and share documents online. The platform offers several features that support collaborative writing, such as real-time editing, commenting, and chat functions (Pham, 2019; Hoang & Hoang, 2022). Nguyen (2023) supports that these features enable students to work together on written assignments, provide feedback to one another, and engage in discussions about the content.

Miro, on the other hand, is a digital whiteboard platform that allows users to collaborate and brainstorm ideas in a visual format (Do et al., 2022). While not specifically designed for writing, Miro can be a useful tool for students to map out their ideas and organize their thoughts before starting to write. The platform also allows for real-time collaboration, enabling students to work together to develop their ideas and refine their written content.

Both Google Docs and Miro offer benefits for digital writing and collaboration in educational settings. The use of these platforms can foster greater student engagement and motivation, as well as provide opportunities for peer feedback and collaboration. Moreover, the accessibility and convenience of these tools make them an excellent choice for remote or hybrid learning environments.

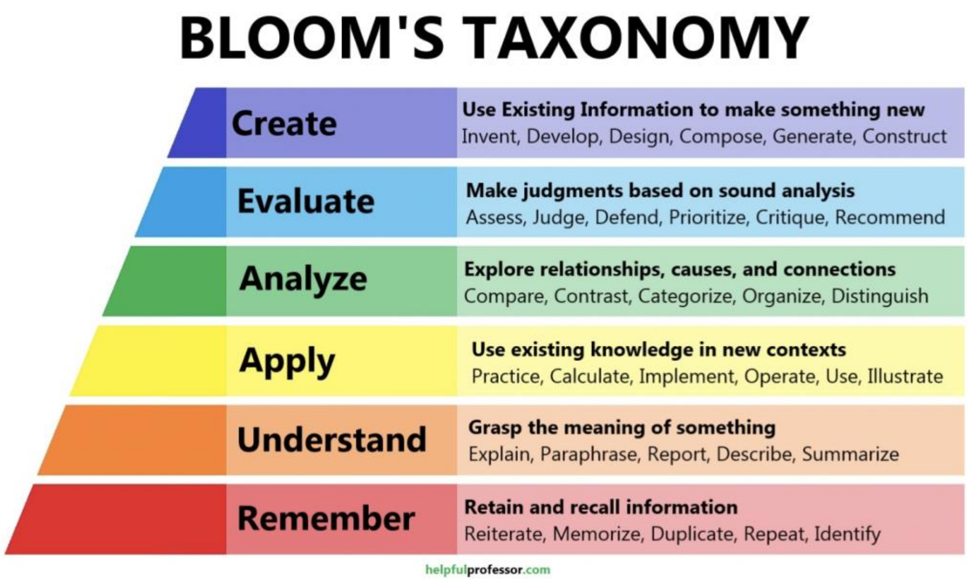
In a nutshell, AWE tools like Grammarly have demonstrated the effectiveness in providing immediate feedback, identifying areas for improvement and offering targeted instruction for learners. Additionally, ACA apps like Quizizz enable personalized learning experiences by adapting and changing content based on user interaction. Furthermore, DWP such as Google Docs and Miro offer collaborative environments that enhance student engagement, foster feedback and support idea generation and organization. Therefore, considering the relationship between writing skills and technology, it is recommended to apply ALT in the form of Grammarly, Quizizz, Google Docs, and Miro. By incorporating these technological tools, writing classes can address the challenges faced by Vietnamese students and promote the development of their writing skills in academic and professional contexts.

### *2.2. Theoretical Framework: Bloom Taxonomy*

ALT has the potential to transform EFL writing classes by providing individualized instruction, immediate feedback, and personalized learning paths (Daugherty et al., 2022; El-Sabagh, 2021; Gohar & El-Ghool, 2016). However, to effectively implement ALT in EFL writing classes, a theoretical framework is necessary to guide instructional design and ensure that learning outcomes align with students' needs and goals. One possible framework is Bloom's taxonomy (cited in Drew, 2023), which provides a hierarchy of cognitive processes that students can develop through writing. Figure 1 demonstrates Bloom’s taxonomy.

**Figure 1**

*Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956) (cited in Drew, 2023, extracted from helpfulprofessor.com)*




At the lowest level of Bloom's taxonomy are basic skills such as remembering and understanding, which can be enhanced through ALT tools that provide immediate feedback on grammar and vocabulary. According to White (2020), ALT can also support the development of higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and synthesis, which are necessary for effective writing. By providing personalized learning paths, ALT can help students progress through Bloom's taxonomy at their own pace, building on their existing knowledge and skills to achieve higher levels of proficiency.

Moreover, ALT can support the development of metacognitive skills, which are critical for successful writing. Metacognition involves the ability to reflect on one's own learning and to monitor and regulate cognitive processes. By providing immediate feedback and personalized learning paths, ALT can help students develop metacognitive skills, such as self-assessment and goal setting, which can enhance their writing performance.

In summary, the use of ALT in EFL writing classes can be guided by Bloom's taxonomy as a theoretical framework. By aligning instructional design with Bloom's taxonomy, ALT can support the development of basic skills as well as higher-order thinking skills and metacognitive skills. Ultimately, this can lead to improved writing performance and greater student engagement and motivation.

### *2.3. The Use of Adaptive Learning Technology in EFL Writing Courses*

#### 2.3.1. Benefits of Adaptive Learning Technology Implementation in EFL Writing Classes

The implementation of ALT in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing classes can bring numerous benefits.

Firstly, ALT can enhance EFL writing instruction by providing students with personalized feedback, fostering autonomous learning, and addressing individual learning needs (Bailey & Lee, 2020; White, 2020). By analyzing students' writing patterns, ALT can provide customized activities and feedback, allowing students to focus on their weak areas and work at their own pace. This personalized approach can significantly improve students' writing skills and overall achievement.

Secondly, the potential impacts of ALT on student motivation, engagement, and achievement are significant (Zhou et al., 2012). Do et al. (2020) advocate that ALT can create a more interactive and engaging learning environment, allowing students to receive immediate feedback and encouraging them to take ownership of their learning process. This can lead to increased motivation and a higher level of engagement in writing tasks, as students can see the immediate results of their efforts. Furthermore, the use of ALT can provide students with a sense of accomplishment, as they can track their progress and see their writing skills improving over time (Oyanagi, 2021; Nguyen, 2023).

Thirdly, the formative assessment supports provided by ALT can lead to more individualized instruction. ALT can analyze students' writing patterns and provide teachers with real-time data on their strengths and weaknesses (Do et al., 2022). This data can be used to tailor instruction to individual student needs, providing more targeted support and allowing teachers to focus on areas where students need the most help. This personalized approach can lead to more efficient use of instructional time and better outcomes for students.

In summary, the implementation of ALT in EFL writing classes can bring numerous benefits, including enhancing EFL writing instruction, impacting student motivation, engagement, and achievement, and providing formative assessment supports for more individualized instruction. By using ALT to support EFL writing instruction, teachers can create a more personalized and engaging learning environment that fosters students' writing skills and overall achievement.

#### 2.3.2. Challenges of Adaptive Learning Technology Implementation in EFL Writing Courses

The implementation of ALT in EFL writing courses brings various challenges that need to be addressed for effective integration. One significant challenge is technical and logistical issues, such as the need for reliable internet access and appropriate hardware and software. These technical challenges can limit the accessibility and effectiveness of ALT, especially in areas with limited technological infrastructure (Nguyen et al., 2021; Pertiwi, 2020; Lim & Yunus, 2021).

Another challenge is the pedagogical aspect, which involves the need for appropriate content and activities that align with the course objectives and learning outcomes. Additionally, the use of ALT requires a balance between technology and traditional instruction, which can be challenging for teachers who are not familiar with technology or traditional instruction. Furthermore, ALT may not always align with the teaching styles or preferences of teachers, which can result in resistance to adoption (Do et al., 2022).

Apart from technical and pedagogical challenges, several factors affect the successful implementation of ALT. These factors include students' and teachers' attitudes towards technology, institutional support for ALT integration, access to training and resources, and the availability of ALT software that meets the needs of the course objectives and learning outcomes (Bailey & Lee, 2020). Therefore, addressing these challenges requires collaborative efforts from various stakeholders involved in EFL writing instruction.

### *2.4. Previous Studies*

The rapid progression of technology has opened up new avenues in language education, particularly in the realm of teaching writing (Bailey & Lee, 2020; Dizon & Gayed, 2021; Do et al. 2022; Jing et al., 2023). Lim and Yunus (2021) support that a plethora of digital tools and platforms have emerged as valuable resources for enhancing students' writing abilities. Notably, Grammarly, Quizizz, Google Docs, and Miro have garnered considerable attention as efficacious tools for supporting language learners in their writing endeavors. The following part aims to delve into potential benefits and applications of these tools in language classrooms, shedding light on their role in providing automated writing evaluation, adaptive content delivery, and digital collaboration. By scrutinizing previous studies and their findings, the researchers can glean valuable insights into how these tools can contribute to the improvement of writing skills in English language learning contexts.

Ebadi et al. (2022), Bailey and Lee (2020), and Dizon and Gayed (2021) investigate the effects of utilizing Grammarly in a variety of language learning contexts. Ebadi et al. (2022) discovere that using Grammarly improve the quality of EFL articles written by Iranian students, specifically in terms of grammatical accuracy and fluency. Bailey and Lee (2020) discover that while the use of Grammarly has some favorable effects on language accuracy and complexity in writing based on tests and textbooks, there is no significant improvement in Facebook-based writing. Dizon and Gayed (2021) discover that using Grammarly significantly improves the quality of mobile second language writing, particularly in terms of grammatical and orthographical accuracy. In general, the studies indicate that Grammarly can be a useful instrument for enhancing language precision and quality in a variety of language learning contexts.

Several studies investigate the effects of the online learning and assessment instrument Quizizz on various aspects of language acquisition. Nguyen et al. (2021) examine the effects of

Quizizz on the vocabulary achievement of EFL students and discover that the use of Quizizz significantly increases students' vocabulary scores. In addition, learning quiz on this apps enables students to think critically and make instant decision. Wen and Aziz (2022) conduct a systematic review of the literature on the use of Quizizz as an online teaching and learning assessment tool in an ESL classroom and conclude that Quizizz can increase student engagement and motivation, promote self-directed learning, and facilitate formative assessment. Lim and Yunus (2021) conduct a systematic review of teachers' perceptions regarding the use of Quizizz in the teaching and learning of English and discover that teachers have generally positive perceptions of Quizizz, particularly regarding its potential to increase students' engagement and participation in the learning process. Pertiwi (2020) examines the students' perspectives on the use of Quizizz as an English-learning assessment instrument. Observations, interviews, and documentation are utilized to collect data for this qualitative study. The results indicate that the students view Quizizz positively, viewing it as a medium for learning and assessing English due to its appealing appearance. Overall, these studies suggest that Quizizz can be an effective tool for teaching and assessing English language learning, as it is perceived as an attractive and engaging medium for learning. However, more research is needed to fully understand the potential of Quizizz and its impact on language learning outcomes.

In terms of Google Docs and Miro, several educators have explored the use of those digital applications in language classrooms, highlighting their potential to enhance student engagement, facilitate feedback and streamline the writing process. Zhou et al. (2012) evaluate Google Docs for collaborative writing outside the classroom. Undergraduates were arbitrarily assigned to small groups to complete two out-of-class assignments using Google Docs and one task without the application. Prior to the survey, the majority of students were unfamiliar with Google Docs, yet 93% found it beneficial for collaborative work. Students' paper grades were unaffected by Google Docs, and half of them said they would use it again. According to the research, Google Docs facilitated student learning and collaboration. The research of Nguyen (2023) examines the use of Google Docs in collaborative writing and students' perceptions of it in writing courses. For the investigation, 21 freshman English majors completed surveys and writing exercises. Google Docs had no effect on the collaborative writing grades of students, but they enjoyed using it. Additionally, low-level students were taught technology and social skills. Students also mentioned excessive costs, internet issues, and Google document processing problems on mobile devices. Pham (2019) conduct an exploratory multiple-qualitative case study with twelve students working on an argumentative essay and a medical report in three groups of four. In each challenge, each group had its own interaction pattern, with distinct language functions, contributions, and scaffolding strategies. Due to ambiguous findings, it was impossible to determine the influence of assignment types on student interaction, and student cooperation had no effect on writing quality. Interviews with students revealed that Google Docs facilitated collaborative writing and learning. Hoang and Hoang (2022) investigate the impact of frequent Google Docs collaboration on the English academic writing skills of Vietnamese high school students enrolled in an online EFL academic writing course. 24-person mixed-methods study. Between pre- and post-tests, students' academic writing skills increased. However, neither cohesion and coherence nor grammatical breadth and correctness improved significantly. Students enjoyed interacting on the website but also found it useful for writing. The survey also revealed problems with student Google Docs collaboration. The study suggests further investigation. Do et al. (2022) conduct an action research study to determine the efficacy of using peer feedback activities on Miro applications to enhance the peer correction competency of higher education students. Thirty third-year English majors participated in the ten-week intervention, and their essays were reviewed by their peers on Miro. Peer reviewing had a positive effect on the frequency of errors found in student papers, and students' writing skills also improved. Positive student attitudes toward peer evaluation and the use of Miro for peer correction were also disclosed by qualitative results. However, the study demonstrated students’ difficulties in controlling the movement of their space on the platform or unintentionally duplicating their writing notes. As a consequence, both teachers and students sometimes found it confusing to navigate and interpret the information on the board. In a nutshell, these studies share commonalities, including investigating technology use namely Google Docs and Miro for language learning, utilizing mixed-methods research designs, involving English as a foreign language learner, assessing the effectiveness of technology-mediated writing activities, observing improvements in writing skills, and providing pedagogical implications for language educators and researchers. They have reported similar results regarding the effectiveness of Google and Miro in enhancing students' writing skills. The studies found that the use of technology had a positive impact on students' writing abilities. They showed improvements in students’ writing skills after participating in technology-mediated activities with Google Docs and Miro. Specifically, peer feedback and collaboration using Google Docs and Miro were found to be beneficial for students' writing development.

The literature review highlights the significance of writing skills in the current technology era and the challenges faced by EFL learners in writing classes in Vietnam. The use of ALT in EFL writing courses can be a potential solution to address these challenges and promote student motivation, engagement, and input knowledge. Key features of ALT include individualized instruction, immediate feedback, and personalized learning paths. However, the implementation of ALT in EFL writing classes faces several challenges, including technical and logistical issues, pedagogical challenges, and factors affecting successful implementation. Despite these challenges, the benefits of ALT implementation include enhancing EFL writing instruction, potential impacts on student motivation, engagement, and achievement, and support for formative assessment and individualized instruction. While there has been considerable research on the use of ALT in language learning, there is still a research gap regarding students’ perceptions of using ALT, specifically in writing classes. Previous studies have primarily focused on the impact of ALT on language learning outcomes, such as improved grammar accuracy, vocabulary acquisition or writing performance. Limited attention has been given to understanding how students perceive and experience the use of these tools in the context of writing instruction. Reasonably, understanding students’ perceptions of using ALT allows the researchers to gain insights into students’ attitudes, motivations and engagement levels when using ALT tools for writing tasks. Furthermore, exploring students’ perceptions helps identify any challenges or barriers they may encounter when using ALT tools for writing. In the following methodology section, a research design will be proposed to investigate the perceptions of students on the implementation of ALT concerning the use of Grammarly, Quizziz, Google Docs, and Miro in EFL writing classes.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Setting and Participants*

The authors conducted this current study at a public university in Hanoi, Vietnam among 116 English majors. The participants included 41 males and 75 females between the ages of 18 and 20. The students were considered to be at the pre-intermediate level, and their coursebook was Great Writing 2 by Keith Folse, published by National Geographic. The selected university and participants represent a representative sample of English language learners in Vietnam's higher education setting. The pre-intermediate level is a crucial stage in English language acquisition, and the Great Writing 2 coursebook is globally used in English language programs. These specifics facilitate a clear comprehension of the study's setting and the participants involved.

The participants come from diverse backgrounds and have different learning styles. They all had to pass an entrance exam to enter the university, revealing that they have a certain level of academic ability. However, many of them faced difficulties in writing as they were only taught grammar for testing and examination at high school. Additionally, they tended to depend heavily on essay samples and often resorted to imitation or copying. This suggests that the participants may have limited experience and confidence in writing, making it all the more important to explore how they perceive ALT in improving their writing skills. Furthermore, the participants and context information provide a specific context for the study and highlights the potential for the use of ALT in similar settings.

### *3.2. Research Design*

To address the research gap and gain a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of using ALT in writing classes, a mixed-method research design would be suitable. This design combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, allowing for a more holistic and nuanced exploration of the research topic (Creswell, 2014). The quantitative component of the research design would involve the administration of questionnaires or surveys to a large sample of students. Besides, the research design would incorporate qualitative methods to capture in-depth and contextual information. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed-method design would provide a complementary perspective and a more comprehensive view of students' perceptions of ALT in writing classes. By integrating these two approaches, the researchers can triangulate the findings and provide a more robust and comprehensive analysis of students' perceptions (Creswell, 2014).

### *3.3. Data Collection Instruments*

This study's methodology involved a two-step procedure. The initial phase consisted of administering a questionnaire to explore students' perceptions of ALT. The second stage involved observing students' use of ALT in writing classes.

#### 3.3.1. Questionnaire

According to Creswell (2014), questionnaires are a popular tool used in scientific research to gather data from a large group of people either online or in paper form. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) clarify questionnaires are a cost-effective way to gather large amounts of data when compared to other data collection methods. Reasonably, a questionnaire was deployed the first research instrument to gather quantitative data about students' perceptions and attitudes toward ALT. The questionnaire was adapted from Gohar and El-Ghool (2016) and Nguyen and Nguyen (2022), which includes 20 items of four main parts including overall attitude towards ALT, perceptions of the ALT utility, satisfaction with the implementation of ALT, and challenges of using ALT in EFL writing classes. The questionnaire used a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) with closed-ended questions to provide a clear and structured format for students to express their opinions. By adapting the questionnaire from previous studies, the researchers ensured either the validity or reliability of the instrument, while also tailoring it to the specific context.

Moreover, the use of a bilingual version of the questionnaire can help to avoid bias and misunderstanding during the collecting data process. As the participants are English-major students, they likely have a good command of English. However, there may be some technical terms or phrasing in the questionnaire that could cause confusion or misinterpretation. By providing a bilingual version, participants can read the questions and answer options in both English and their native language, which can ensure that they fully understand the questions and can provide accurate responses. Additionally, providing a bilingual version can also help to address any potential language barriers or limitations in the participants' English proficiency. This can increase the validity and reliability of the data collected and ensure that the findings accurately reflect the participants' attitudes and perceptions toward the use of ALT in writing skills. Concerning the reliability of the questionnaire, Cronbach's alpha is a measure of internal consistency, indicating how closely related a set of items is as a group (Creswell, 2014). A value of 0.73 indicates an acceptable level of internal consistency for the items on the questionnaire.

#### 3.3.2. Observation Checklist

The observation checklist used in the current study aimed to complement the data gathered from the questionnaire and supply a more in-depth understanding of the challenges faced by students when using ALT in their writing classes. The checklist consisted of both closed and open-ended questions and covered topics such as technical issues, user interface, training and support, integration with the writing lessons, affordability, and overall challenges. The close-ended questions allowed for easy quantification and data analysis, while the open-ended questions provided rich and detailed information that might have been missed by the questionnaire.

By using both the questionnaire and the observation checklist, the study was able to triangulate the data, which means that the researchers were able to compare and contrast the findings from both sources to arrive at a more complete and accurate understanding of the research question (Creswell, 2014). Triangulation of data, according to Merriam and Tisdell (2015), is important in research as it increases the credibility and validity of the findings, as well as enhances the reliability of the results. In this study, the use of both the questionnaire and the observation checklist allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by students when using ALT in their writing classes, which enables to improve the implementation of ALT in similar contexts.

The fact that different versions of the observation checklist were discussed, evaluated, and re-designed among five other colleagues is a fundamental aspect of the study's methodology. This process ensures that the checklist is reliable, valid, and able to capture all relevant aspects of the research question (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). By involving multiple colleagues, the researchers can obtain different perspectives and ideas on how to improve the checklist, which can lead to a more comprehensive and effective tool. This also helps to avoid any potential biases or limitations that might arise from a single researcher's perspective (Creswell, 2014). Collaboration among colleagues is also in line with good research practice, as it promotes transparency and helps to ensure the quality of the research findings.

To collect data from the observation checklist, the researchers conducted observations in two writing classes over a period of eight weeks. The classes were held twice a week, allowing for regular and consistent data collection. During each class period, the researchers actively observed the students' interaction with ALT tools while they engaged in writing activities. They carefully monitored the students' use of the tools, paying attention to their experience including ALT's utility, challenges related to technical issues, user interface, training and support, their satisfaction with the implementation of ALT; overall engagement and any other relevant factors outlined in the checklist. The checklist served as a guide to ensure that all pertinent aspects of the students' experiences with ALT were captured during the observation process. By observing multiple class periods each week, the researchers had the opportunity to witness the students' progression, observe any patterns or changes in their experiences, and gather a substantial amount of data for analysis.

### *3.4. Data Analysis*

The data collected from the questionnaire were interpreted using descriptive statistics. The responses from the questionnaire were analyzed using frequency distribution tables and percentages to determine the students' attitudes, perceptions, and challenges towards adaptive learning technology in writing skills. The Likert scale responses were analyzed via SPSS version 25.0, using mean and standard deviation to determine the level of agreement or disagreement of the students towards each item.

Thematic analysis is a qualitative data analysis technique that identifies, analyzes, and reports data patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The procedure consists of identifying themes or patterns across data, classifying the data into themes, revising, and refining the themes, and then analyzing and interpreting the data in light of the classified themes. The qualitative data from observation questionnaires were analyzed employing thematic analysis in this study. To identify recurring patterns, themes, and categories, the data were transcribed and read multiple times. The information was then coded into themes and categories, which were reviewed and refined, and subsequently analyzed in accordance with the research questions and objectives. The analysis was then presented and discussed in relation to the objectives and queries of the study. The observation data were analyzed qualitatively by categorizing the responses based on the identified themes and subthemes. The themes included technical issues, user interface, training and support, integration with the writing lessons, affordability, and overall challenges. The open-ended questions were synthesized using content analysis to identify common themes and patterns.

### *3.5. The Reliability and Validity of the Study*

The present study thoroughly assessed the reliability and validity of the research design and data collecting techniques to uphold the integrity of the results.

Reliability pertains to the degree of consistency and stability shown by the study design and methodologies used (Creswell, 2014). In order to bolster the dependability of the research, a mixed-methods methodology was used, encompassing the utilization of both quantitative and qualitative data gathering techniques. The use of this methodology facilitated the process of triangulation, whereby data obtained from various sources were systematically compared and contrasted in order to assure coherence and reliability in the research outcomes. Furthermore, the observation checklist used in the study underwent a meticulous design process and underwent rigorous assessment by many colleagues to ascertain its trustworthiness in collecting pertinent facets of the research inquiry.

Validity, in addition, refers to the precision and credibility of the study's results in accurately representing the desired research constructs (Creswell, 2014). The questionnaire included in the research was modified from previously conducted studies, therefore enhancing content validity via the inclusion of pertinent factors related to students' perspectives of using ALT in writing courses. The inclusion of the observation checklist in the study enhanced the construct validity by facilitating the collection of real-time data on students' engagement with ALT tools in the context of writing classes.

Moreover, the research used a purposive sampling technique to ensure the selection of participants who accurately represented the intended community, so augmenting the study's external validity. Comprehensive explanations of the study setting, individuals involved, and methodologies used were included, enhancing transparency and facilitating readers in evaluating the applicability of the results to comparable circumstances.

Overall, the study's emphasis on ensuring methodological rigor, using data triangulation, and meticulously adapting measuring methods enhanced the reliability and validity of the research, hence bolstering the credibility and trustworthiness of the study's findings.

### *3.6. Ethical Issues*

In any research study involving human participants, it is crucial to consider ethical concerns. In this study, several ethical considerations were taken into account. First and foremost, the researchers obtained informed consent from all participants. Participants were informed about the objectives, the research procedure, and their rights as participants. They were also assured of the confidentiality of their data and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

The researchers also ensured that the study did not cause any harm or discomfort to the participants. They were careful not to ask sensitive or intrusive questions in the questionnaire and to avoid any observation that could make students feel uncomfortable. The researchers also made sure to protect the anonymity of the participants by not asking for any identifying information and by keeping their data confidential.

Additionally, the researchers followed ethical guidelines for data analysis, ensuring that they accurately represented the views and opinions of the participants without misrepresenting or distorting their responses. They also gave credit to the sources used, ensuring that all ideas and concepts were properly cited and acknowledged. Overall, the ethical considerations taken in this study ensured the protection and respect of the participants' rights and well-being.

## 4. Findings and Discussions

The tables below present the results of a survey conducted to explore students' perceptions of the use of ALT in EFL writing courses. The data was analyzed using mean scores and standard deviation.

### *4.1. Students' Overall Attitude Toward ALT*

The integration of ALT in EFL writing courses has gained momentum for a few decades, as it is considered a promising solution to improve students' writing skills. Table 1 displays students' overall attitude toward the use of ALT to teach writing skills.

**Table 1**

*Students' Overall Attitude Toward the Use of ALT in EFL Writing Course*

| | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I find ALT to be a useful tool for improving my writing. | 3.4 | 16.7 | 79.9 | 2 | 5 | 3.97 | .716 |
| I find ALT easy to use. | 7.2 | 78.2 | 14.5 | 2 | 4 | 3.08 | .460 |
| ALT provides personalized feedback that is helpful for my writing. | 11.7 | 78.9 | 9.4 | 2 | 4 | 2.98 | .457 |
| ALT has increased my motivation to write. | 3.9 | 27.7 | 68.4 | 2 | 5 | 3.76 | .680 |
| I would recommend the use of ALT to other EFL writing students. | 2.6 | 7.7 | 89.7 | 2 | 4 | 3.89 | .368 |

The findings reveal that the majority of students (79.9%) agreed that ALT is a useful tool for improving their writing, with M=3.97 and SD= .716. This positive response indicates that students acknowledged the potential benefits of incorporating technology into their writing classes. However, only 14.5% of students found ALT easy to use, with a mean score of 3.08, indicating the importance of considering user-friendly interfaces and providing adequate training and support to ensure that students can effectively navigate and utilize ALT. Additionally, only 9.4% of students agreed that ALT provides personalized feedback that is helpful for their writing, with M=2.98. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in the feedback mechanism employed by ALT tools. In terms of motivation, 68.4% of students agreed that ALT has increased their stimulation to write, with M=3.76. Finally, the majority of students (89.7%) agreed that they would recommend the use of ALT to other EFL writing students, with M= 3.89 and SD=368. This high level of endorsement signifies a positive overall perception of ALT among the participants. Their positive experiences and satisfaction with the technology's potential benefits suggest that ALT can be a valuable resource in EFL writing instruction.

It is important to crosscheck students' overall attitude toward ALT implementation in EFL writing classes through various methods such as a questionnaire and observation checklist. While some students may show enthusiasm and actively participate in writing activities and discussions, others may express negative comments about ALT, noting from the observation sheet such as *"slow connection disrupted the writing process, much time to navigate the tools, someone tech-savvy, different interface and feature"*. The reasons for such negative comments could be due to technical difficulties, a lack of familiarity with the platform, or discomfort with the use of technology for learning purposes. Teachers need to address these issues and provide appropriate support and training to help students overcome these challenges. By gathering data through multiple methods, teachers can gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes and experiences with ALT in writing classes, which can inform future instruction and implementation.

### *4.2. Students' Perspectives of the ALT's Utility*

The following analysis examines students' perceptions of the ALT's utility. Table 2 demonstrates issues related to error identification, informative feedback, examples, and explanation, as well as interactive exercises.

**Table 2**

*Students' Perspectives of the ALT's Utility*

| | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALT helps me identify areas where I need to improve my writing. | 5.1 | 12.9 | 82 | 2 | 5 | 4.08 | .793 |
| ALT provides useful feedback on my word choice, grammar, and sentence structure. | 12.7 | 74.4 | 12.9 | 1 | 5 | 2.99 | .597 |
| ALT's use of examples and explanations helps me understand writing concepts better. | 14.8 | 53.3 | 31.9 | 2 | 5 | 3.22 | .744 |
| ALT's practice exercises or quizzes help me reinforce my writing knowledge and skills. | 13.7 | 62.4 | 23.9 | 2 | 5 | 3.13 | .640 |

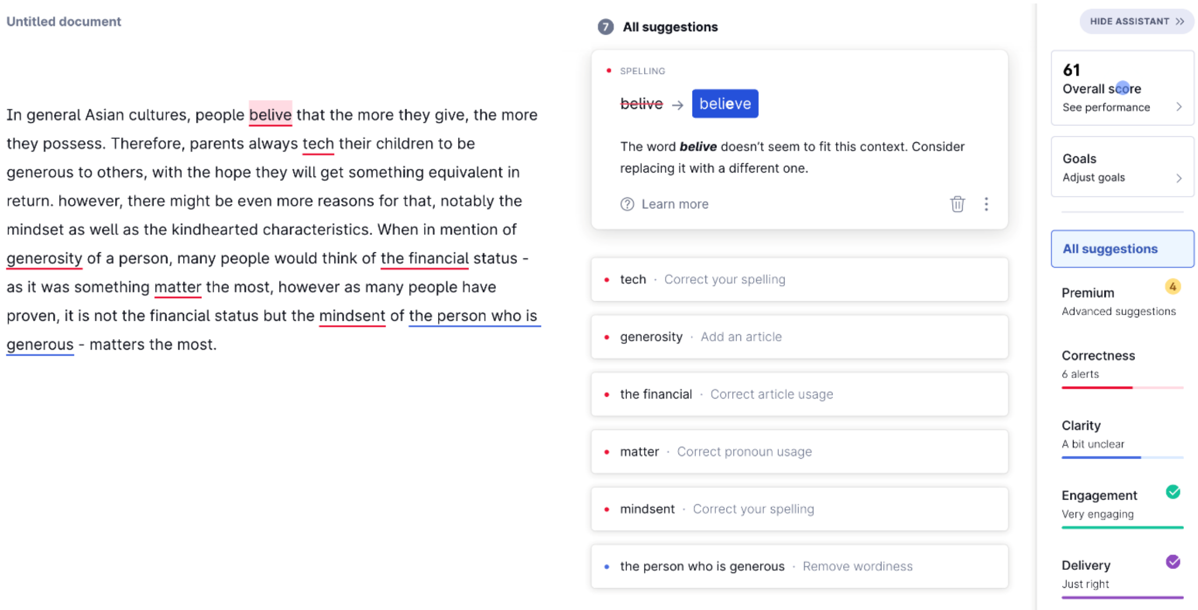
The majority of the students (82%) agreed that ALT helps them identify areas for improvement in their writing (M=4.08, SD=.793), which indicates that students perceived the tools as effective in providing feedback and guidance for enhancing their writing skills. A significant percentage (74.4%) expressed a neutral stance regarding the usefulness of ALT's feedback on their word choice, grammar, and sentence structure (M=2.99, SD=.597). This suggests that while some students may find the feedback helpful, a considerate number of students may not perceive it as valuable or informative. In addition, a substantial portion of students (53.3%) remained neutral regarding ALT's use of examples and explanations to enhance their understanding of writing concepts (M=3.22, SD=.744). This indicates a lack of consensus among students regarding the effectiveness of these features in facilitating comprehension and learning. Regarding the effectiveness of ALT's practice exercises or quizzes in reinforcing their writing knowledge and skills, more than half of the students expressed an undecided standpoint (M=3.13, SD=.640). The findings suggest a mixed perception among students regarding the impacts of ALT in various aspects of writing improvement. While there is a strong agreement that ALT helps identify areas for improvement, the feedback, the use of examples and explanations, and practice exercises received more neutral responses. These findings highlight the need for further exploration and improvement in the design and implementation of ALT devices to better cater to students' needs and enhance their writing abilities.

Accordingly, observation analysis confirms that ALT provided rapid feedback on writing is consistent with the fact that installing Grammarly on students' computers instantaneously corrected and highlighted their writing errors in red. Figure 2 illustrates students' writing errors recognized by Grammarly.

The fact that the app also provided corrections is further evidence that ALT could be used to provide individualized lessons to students. In the literature review, the influence of ALT on student motivation and engagement was acknowledged, and this is consistent with the fact that writing-related questions in Quizizz motivate students to think critically and make decisions (Nguyen et al., 2021).

**Figure 2**

*An Example of Students' Writing on Grammarly*




### *4.3. Students' Satisfaction with the Implementation of ALT*

The previous part has explored students' overall attitude and satisfaction with ALT implementation in EFL writing courses. The following analysis will highlight students' opinions about the effectiveness of ALT's integration into the course, the clarity of instructions, the timeliness of feedback, the teacher's support for using ALT and overall satisfaction.

**Table 3**

*Students' Satisfaction with the Implementation of ALT*

| | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALT is integrated effectively into the writing course. | 21.5 | 64.6 | 13.9 | 2 | 4 | 2.92 | .592 |
| The instructions for using ALT are clear and easy to follow. | 8.5 | 27.7 | 63.8 | 2 | 5 | 3.61 | .732 |
| ALT provides timely feedback on my writing. | 17.2 | 11.9 | 70.9 | 2 | 5 | 3.67 | .912 |
| The teacher provides adequate support for using ALT. | 12.2 | 24.8 | 62.8 | 2 | 4 | 3.51 | .704 |
| I am satisfied with the implementation of ALT in the writing course. | 6.8 | 23.4 | 69.8 | 2 | 5 | 3.75 | .756 |

Table 3 demonstrates that students regarded the use of ALT positively in their writing class. The majority of students (64.6%) had a neutral stance on the effectiveness of ALT integration into the writing course, but a notable proportion (21.5%) disagreed (M=2.92, SD=.592). The mean score for the statement "*I am satisfied with the implementation of ALT in the writing course*" was 3.75, indicating that students were satisfied with the implementation of ALT in their writing course. However, qualitative analysis from observation seems to contrast the quantitative data. Students appeared to view the integration of ALT into their writing class as effective with some notes from observation such as *"interesting than paper-based exercises, be fast to give answers".* They were more confident when writing on Google Docs and Miro. In addition, the students tended to be enthusiastic about the use of the Quizizz games, suggesting that the gamification of learning activities might be an effective method for engaging students with ALT. The qualitative analysis indicates that the students appeared to view the integration of ALT as effective, particularly when using platforms such as Google Docs and Miro. This increased confidence in using these platforms may indicate that students find them more user-friendly and intuitive compared to other aspects of ALT. The quantitative data, on the other hand, presents a different perspective, with a notable percentage of students expressing disagreement or neutrality regarding the effectiveness of ALT integration. This disconnect could be attributed to various factors, such as the limitations of the data instrument or the possibility that students' opinions vary based on specific aspects of ALT.

With a mean score of 3.61, "The instructions for using ALT are clear and easy to follow" has the highest quality of life rating. This indicates that the ALT user manuals were beneficial and easily understood by students. The average score for the statement "ALT provides timely feedback on my writing" was the lowest (3.67 out of 5). Some students appeared to believe that they did not receive timely feedback on their written assignments. Observational data confirms that students rarely requested re-instruction and that they received timely feedback on their writing through the use of ALT, adding credibility to the questionnaire results. Figure 3 illustrates students' active engagement in peer-checking their writing on Miro apps.

**Figure 3**

*An Example of Students' Leaderboard on Quizizz*

The students were able to navigate the ALT platform with ease and did not frequently ask for clarification or additional instruction on how to use it, which indicates that they were comfortable and familiar with the platform. Moreover, it could be confirmed through the interactions between students and the ALT system, where they would submit their answers and then receive feedback, correction, scores, and ranking promptly. However, it is essential to remember that the observation may only capture a limited perspective and may not reflect the experiences of all students. Therefore, it is essential to triangulate data from multiple sources in order to increase the study's credibility and reliability.

### *4.4. Students' Challenges with the Use of ALT*

The following part will analyze students' obstacles to implementing ALT in their EFL writing classes. It seeks to identify the main difficulties that the participants faced when using ALT tools and how these challenges may impact their learning outcomes. The items addressed serval aspects including technical issues, training and guidance, user interface, limitations of the free version, and the cost of the professional version.

**Table 4**

*Students' Challenges of Using ALT in EFL Writing Course*

| | Disagree (%) | Neutral (%) | Agree (%) | Min | Max | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| I experienced technical difficulties when using ALT during class. | - | 11.1 | 88.9 | 3 | 5 | 4.27 | .637 |
| I did not receive enough training or guidance on how to use ALT for EFL writing activities effectively. | 4.7 | 36.8 | 58.5 | 2 | 5 | 3.78 | .863 |
| The layout of the user interface was confusing to me. | 18.8 | 81.2 | - | 2 | 3 | 2.81 | .394 |
| The free version of ALT is limited in its capabilities, which makes it difficult to use effectively for my EFL writing assignments. | - | 3.4 | 96.6 | 3 | 5 | 4.54 | .550 |
| The professional of the ALT provides more features that would help me to improve my EFL writing skills. | - | 10.2 | 89.8 | 3 | 5 | 4.48 | .666 |
| I cannot afford the cost of the professional version of ALT | - | 6.8 | 93.2 | 3 | 5 | 4.80 | .531 |

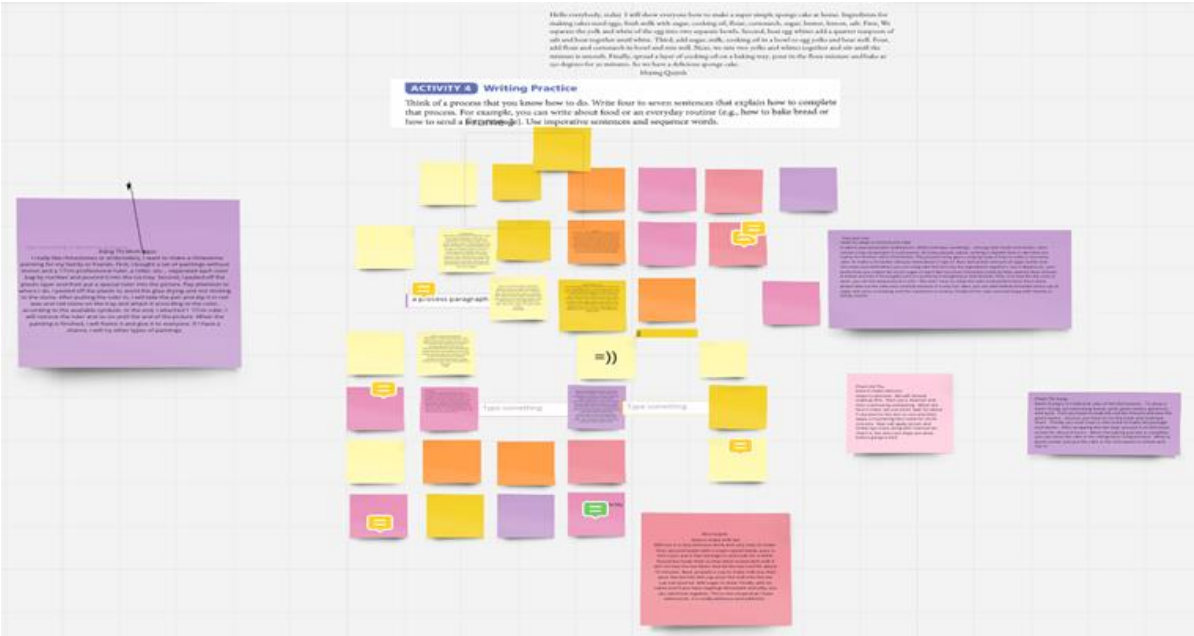
The table above exhibits the results of a 5-point Likert scale survey regarding the obstacles students face when using ALT in EFL writing courses. The majority of students (88.9%) agreed that they did not experience technical difficulties when using ALT in class, and the mean score for this statement was 4.27. However, responses to the statement regarding the lack of training or guidance on how to effectively use ALT were more variable, with 58.5% concurring, 36.8% being neutral, and 4.7% disagreeing; the mean score was 3.78.

The statement regarding the perplexing user interface received a greater proportion of disagreeing responses (18.8%) and a lower mean score (2.81). The majority of students (96.6%) agreed that it was difficult to use the free version of ALT effectively for their EFL writing assignments, with a mean score of 4.54.

It is encouraging that the results of the surveys corroborate the observations. Students' reports of encountering technical issues and the lack of training and guiding opportunities when initially utilizing Miro point to a possible need for further training and education on the technical elements of using ALT. This supports the findings in Do et al. (2022) that raise instructional difficulties related to arranging writing space for each student, their doubling writing space, or uncontrollable movement of writing notes.

**Figure 4**

*An Example of Students' Collaboration in a Writing Task on Miro Apps*




Miro apps allow users to create and place sticky notes on the board. In some cases, students may unintentionally or mistakenly duplicate their sticky notes, resulting in clutter and confusion. This can make it challenging for both students and instructors to navigate and interpret the information on the board effectively. This corresponds with the instructional difficulties discussed in Do et al. (2022). However, the fact that students enjoyed using Miro and Quizizz's interface shows that they could become invested in the technology with the right amount of guidance and practice.

The statement concerning the affordability of the professional version of ALT received a mean score of 4.80 and a high percentage of agreement (93.2%). This suggests that expense may be a significant barrier for students to access the complete spectrum of features that would assist them in enhancing their EFL writing abilities. While technical issues with ALT may not be a significant concern for students, training, interface design, and cost may hinder their effective use of the tool in their writing classes.

Crosschecked the observation, the data appears to support the findings of the survey regarding the prevalence of Grammarly's free version. As previously mentioned, the free version of Grammarly may not identify the structure of sentences and may suggest perplexing terms. This result aligns with Calma et al. (2022), Ebadi et al. (2022), Nguyen et al. (2021). This data corroborates the survey's findings regarding the number of users of the free version of Quizizz. According to reports, the free version of Quizizz has fewer available activities and possibly less access to exercise and assignment sources.

## 5. Conclusion, Implications, Limitations, and Recommendations

### *5.1. Conclusion*

In a nutshell, the majority of EFL writing students viewed ALT as an effective instrument for enhancing their writing abilities, and they would recommend it to other EFL writing students. However, the students encountered obstacles when using the technology, such as a difficult interface, a lack of personalized feedback, and the inability to comprehend how to use ALT effectively. These obstacles could affect the efficacy of ALT in enhancing writing skills, underscoring the significance of confronting them in EFL writing classes. Particularly, students believed ALT provided constructive feedback on their word choice, grammar, and sentence structure, but they were less effusive about the platform's ability to provide examples and explanations. This indicates that students may require additional guidance and support to comprehend how to use ALT to enhance their writing abilities. Additionally, the study discovered that gamification of learning activities, such as the use of Quizizz games, was an effective method for engaging students with ALT. This is consistent with previous research on the application of gamification in education (Lim & Yunus, 2021; Nguyen et al., 2021; Pertiwi, 2020; Wen & Aziz, 2022), which demonstrated that gamification could increase student motivation and engagement. Furthermore, the majority of students did not encounter technical difficulties when utilizing ALT in EFL writing classes, according to the findings of the study. However, many students felt they lacked training or direction on how to use ALT effectively. This emphasizes the significance of providing adequate support and training to pupils so that they can effectively utilize the technology.

### *5.2. Implications*

This study has important implications for both educators and students. As ALT becomes more prevalent in education, it is crucial to comprehend how it can be utilized to enhance student writing abilities. This study found that students viewed technology favorably and believed it helped them enhance their writing. Educators can use these findings to inform their use of adaptive learning technology in the classroom and to develop strategies for enhancing students' writing skills. In addition, this study emphasizes the need for ongoing research into the efficacy of adaptive learning technology in education. On the basis of these findings, future research can provide a deeper comprehension of how adaptive learning technology can be used to improve student learning outcomes.

### *5.3. Limitations and Recommendations*

The study sheds light on several hindrances that impede the seamless utilization of ALT for enhancing writing skills. Firstly, the study's sample size of 116 students could be considered small for drawing generalizable conclusions about students' perceptions of ALT in writing skills. A larger sample size would have increased the study's external validity, allowing for more precise and representative findings. However, the researchers may have had practical limitations such as time, resources, and access to participants, which influenced their sample size selection. Secondly, it specifically highlights challenges like technical issues and the necessity for comprehensive training and support. While the identification of these barriers is valuable, the research falls short in presenting concrete strategies to overcome these challenges.

A more comprehensive exploration of potential solutions could have provided educators and institutions with actionable insights to effectively address these obstacles and ensure the smoother integration of ALT into writing classes. Furthermore, a notable limitation of the study is its reliance on self-reported data collected from students and observation. Self-reported data, while offering valuable insights into participants' perspectives, can also be susceptible to biases, inaccuracies, or subjective interpretations. This could potentially affect the credibility of the findings and introduce an element of uncertainty into the study's conclusions, or limit the depth and breadth of the data collected. Incorporating multiple data sources, such as focus groups, interviews with teachers and administrators or even writing tasks, could have complemented the self-reported and observed data and provided a more diverse and well-rounded understanding of the issues at hand. In addition, the study lacks a comparative analysis of the effectiveness of ALT in comparison to traditional teaching methods or alternative technology solutions. Without such a comparison, it becomes challenging to discern whether the improvements observed in students' writing skills are solely attributed to the use of ALT or could be influenced by other factors. A comparative approach could have provided a clearer picture of how ALT fares against existing pedagogical methods, contributing to a more nuanced interpretation of the study's outcomes. Lastly, the study's short duration may have limited the extent to which students' perceptions of adaptive learning technology in writing skills were fully understood. The researchers conducted the study over a period of eight weeks, which might not be enough time for students to fully engage with the adaptive learning technology and develop their perceptions. A more extended research period might have captured a wider range of experiences, attitudes, and behaviors regarding the use of ALT in writing skills.

In summary, while the study offers valuable insights into the obstacles related to ALT's implementation and its impact on students' perceptions, the humble size of the population, the absence of specific solutions to challenges, potential biases in self-reported data, the lack of comparative analysis warrant careful consideration, and the research’s short duration. Addressing these limitations could enhance the study's overall robustness and the applicability of its findings to both academic and practical contexts. These recommendations can help to provide a more nuanced understanding of the role of adaptive learning technology in language learning and inform the development of more effective pedagogical practices.

## References

Bailey, D., & Lee, A. R. (2020). An exploratory study of Grammarly in the language learning context: An analysis of test-based, textbook-based, and Facebook corpora. *TESOL International Journal*, *15*(2), 4-27.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2006). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods.* Allyn & Bacon.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77-101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Calma, A., Cotronei-Baird, V., & Chia, A. (2022). Grammarly: An instructional intervention for writing enhancement in management education. *The International Journal of Management Education*, *20*(3), 36–75. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijme.2022.100704

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Sage publications.

Daugherty, K., Morse, R., Schmauder, A. R., Hoshaw, J., & Taylor, J. (2022) Adjusting the future of adaptive learning technologies via a SWOT analysis. *Intersection: A journal at the intersection of assessment and learning*, *3*(2), 54-79.

Dizon, G., & Gayed, J. M. (2021). Examining the impact of Grammarly on the quality of mobile L2 writing. *The JALT CALL Journal*, *17*(2), 74-92. https://doi.org/10.29140/jaltcall.v17n2.336

Do, T. G., Pham, T. D. L., & Nguyen, T. T. H. (2022). Implementing peer correction activities on Miro apps in writing classes. In VNU University of Languages and International Studies (Ed.), *Proceedings of 2022 international graduate research symposium* (pp. 200-214). Vietnam National University Press.

Drew, C. (April 24, 2023). *119 Bloom's taxonomy examples*. Helpful Professor. https://helpfulprofessor.com/blooms-taxonomy-examples/

Ebadi, S., Gholami, M., & Vakili, S. (2022). Investigating the effects of using Grammarly in EFL writing of articles. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Practice, Theory and Applied Research*, *40*(1), 85-105.

El-Sabagh, H. A. (2021). Adaptive e-learning environment based on learning styles and its impact on development students' engagement. *International Journal of Education Technology in Higher Education*, *18*, Article 53. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-021-00289-4

Gohar, R. H. A. A., & El-Ghool, R. M. A. (2016). Designing an adaptive learning environment to improve writing skills and usability for ESL students at the Faculty of Education. *International Journal of Internet Education*, *5*(3), 63-93.

Hoang, T. N. D., & Hoang, T. (2022). Enhancing EFL students' academic writing skills in online learning via Google Docs-based collaboration: A mixed-methods study. *Computer Assisted Language Learning.* https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2022.2083176

Hockly, N. (2018). Automated writing evaluation. *ELT Journal*, *73*(1), 82-88. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccy044

Jing, Y., Zhao, L., Zhu, K., Wang, H., Wang, C., & Xia, Q. (2023). Research landscape of adaptive learning in education: A bibliometric study on research publications from 2000 to 2022. *Sustainability*, *15*(4), 3115. https://doi.org/10.3390/su15043115

Lim, T. M., & Yunus, M. M. (2021). Teachers' perception towards the use of Quizizz in the teaching and learning of English: A systematic review. *Sustainability*, *13*(11), 6436. https://doi.org/10.3390/su13116436

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. John Wiley & Sons.

Munoz, J. L. R., Ojeda, F. M., Jurado, D. L. A., Pena, P. F. P., Carranza, C. P. M., Berrios, H. Q., Molina, S. U., Farfan, A. R. M., Arias-Gonzales, J. L., & Vasquez-Pauca, M. J. (2022). Systematic review of adaptive learning technology for learning in higher education. *Eurasian Journal of Education Research*, *98*(3), 221-233.

Nguyen, T. H. N., & Nguyen, T. T. H. (2022). Use of Google Docs in teaching and learning English online to improve students' writing performance. *International Journal of TESOL & Education*, *2*(2), 186-200. https://doi.org/10.54855/ijte.222210

Nguyen, T. T. H., Do, T. T. Y., & Vu, V. P. (2021). The effects of web-based technology Quizizz on EFL students' vocabulary achievement. *Journal of Inquiry into Languages and Cultures*, *5*(3), 245-254.

Nguyen, T. H. (2023). Students' perceptions and practice of the blended learning approach to writing skills: Using Google Docs. *ICTE Conference Proceedings*, *3*, 52–67. ICTE Press. https://doi.org/10.54855/ictep.2335

Oyanagi, W. (2021). The influence of an adaptive learning support system on the lesson design and practice of elementary school teachers. *International Journal of Educational Media and Technology*, *15*(1), 34-45.

Park, O., & Lee, J. (2004). Adaptive instructional systems. In D. H. Jonassen (Ed.), *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology* (2nd ed.) (pp. 651-684). Lawrence Erbaum Associates, Pub.

Pertiwi, A. P. (2020). Using the Quizizz as an assessment of students' English learning. *Journal of English Teaching, Applied Linguistics and Literatures*, *3*(1), 37-43.

Pham, Q. N. (2019). *EFL student collaborative writing in Google Docs: A multiple case study* [Doctoral dissertations, University of South Florida]. Digital Common @ University of South Florida. https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/8403

Stake, R. E. (2010). *Qualitative research: Studying how things work*. Guilford Press.

Tran, T. M. L., & Nguyen, T. T. H. (2021). The impacts of technology-based communication on EFL students' writing. *AsiaCALL Online Journal*, *12*(5), 54-76.

Wen, M. N. Y., & Aziz, A. A. (2022). The use of Quizizz as an online teaching and learning assessment tool in an ESL classroom: A systematic literature review. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, *11*(1), 1076-1094.

White, G. (2020). Adaptive learning technology relationship with student learning outcomes. *Journal of Information Technology Education: Research*, *19*, 113-130.

Zhou, W., Simpson, E., & Domizi, D. P. (2012). Google Docs in an out-of-class collaborative writing activity. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *24*(3), 359-375.

# ÁP DỤNG CÔNG NGHỆ HỌC TẬP THÍCH ỨNG TRONG CÁC LỚP HỌC VIẾT BẬC ĐẠI HỌC: QUAN ĐIỂM CỦA SINH VIÊN

Nguyễn Thị Thanh Hà, Hoàng Thị Thanh Huyền

*Trường Đại học Kinh tế - Kỹ thuật Công nghiệp,*
*456 Minh Khai, Hai Bà Trưng, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu quan điểm của sinh viên về việc áp dụng Công nghệ học tập thích ứng (ALT) trong các lớp học viết bậc đại học. ALT ứng dụng trong nghiên cứu bao gồm Đánh giá viết tự động (AWE) với Grammarly, Ứng dụng nội dung thích ứng (ACA) với Quizizz, và Nền tảng viết kỹ thuật số (DWP) với Google Docs và Miro. Dựa trên khung lý thuyết phân loại tư duy Bloom, nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp hỗn hợp này kết hợp sử dụng bảng câu hỏi được điều chỉnh từ Nguyễn Thị Hồng Nhung và Nguyễn Thị Thúy Huệ (2022), Gohar và El-Ghool (2016); và quan sát lớp học để thu thập dữ liệu định lượng và định tính, chú trọng vào thái độ chung của sinh viên với ALT, nhận thức về tiện ích của ALT, sự hài lòng với việc triển khai ALT, và những khó khăn sinh viên gặp phải. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên nhìn chung có thái độ tích cực với ALT, đặc biệt là khả năng cung cấp phản hồi được cá nhân hoá, và hỗ trợ cho các yêu cầu học tập cụ thể. Tuy nhiên, những trở ngại như khó khăn về kỹ thuật, và nhu cầu đào tạo và hỗ trợ cho cả sinh viên và giảng viên cần phải được giải quyết. Nghiên cứu cũng đề xuất một số khuyến nghị cho việc triển khai ALT trong các lớp học viết.

*Từ khóa:* Công nghệ học tập thích ứng (ALT), quan điểm của sinh viên, phân loại tư duy Bloom, lớp học viết, giáo dục đại học

# AN INVESTIGATION INTO SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH IDIOMS

Bui Thi Kim Loan*

*Binh Dương University*

*504 Binh Duong Avenue, Thu Dau Mot City, Binh Duong Province, Vietnam*

Received 26 February 2023
Revised 22 August 2023; Accepted 31 August 2023

**Abstract:** The purpose of this study is to investigate syntactic and semantic features of English idioms. The data of this study were 6,500 English idioms collected from Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, the eighth edition (OALD8) and described quantitatively and qualitatively. The data were analyzed and presented with statistics, percentages, and content analysis. The findings demonstrated syntactic and semantic features of English idioms. Syntactically, English idioms were categorized into nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional and interjectional idioms. Semantically, the findings showed the meanings of idiomatic variants, idioms used as slang, humorous idioms, idioms with proper names, idioms used in various fields, idioms used formally and informally, and so forth. The results of this study are beneficial to teachers of English, foreign language students as well as translators who have difficulty in identifying English idioms and translating them into Vietnamese. In addition, the study gives some implications for teaching and learning English idioms in Vietnamese contexts.

*Keywords:* syntactic, semantic, features, English idioms, translation

## 1. Introduction

It is undeniable that English idioms are considered difficult for English as a foreign language (EFL) learners to translate. Baker (2011) maintains that:

> The main problems that idiomatic and fixed expressions pose in translation relate to two main areas: the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly; and the difficulties involved in rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language. These difficulties are much more pronounced in the case of idioms than they are in the case of fixed expressions. (p. 68)

It is observed that EFL learners in Vietnam encountered numerous challenges with the identification and interpretation of English idioms. Especially, in the second semester of 2021-2022 school year, the researcher was assigned to teach six Translation 2 classes at the Faculty of Foreign Languages at Van Lang University, and the students from these classes had difficulty in translating English idioms into Vietnamese because they could not identify syntactic and semantic features of the English idioms. This encouraged the author to carry out this study with the aim of investigating syntactic and semantic features of English idioms to help EFL learners learn and use English idioms more effectively and communicatively.

* Corresponding author.
Email address: buithikimloanpt@gmail.com

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Definition of Idiom*

There have been numerous definitions of idiom. OALD8 defines an idiom as a group of words whose meaning is different from the meanings of the individual words, and this dictionary also presents another semantic sense of idiom as the kind of language and grammar used by particular people at a particular time and place. Larson (1984, p. 20) defines that an idiom is 'a string of words whose meaning is different from the meaning conveyed by the individual words'. It can be inferred that an idiom must contain at least two words. Several idiom dictionaries classify idioms as phrases as well as clauses or sentences, therefore, idioms also consist of proverbs, sayings and maxims.

Baker (2011, p. 67) distinguishes that 'idioms and fixed expressions are at the extreme end of the scale from collocations in one or both of these areas: flexibility of patterning and transparency of meaning'. He explains that idioms allow 'little or no variation in form' and 'often carry meanings which cannot be deduced from their individual components'. From the above definitions of the idiom, it can be said that idioms are used with distinctive meanings (e.g., literal and figurative), grammar and use.

### *2.2. Syntactic Features of English Idioms*

Syntactically, Baker (2011) thinks that speakers and writers cannot (1) change the order the words in an idiom, (2) delete a word from an idiom, (3) add a word to an idiom, (4) replace a word with another, and (5) change idioms' grammatical structure. It can be understood that there are few variations of idioms in terms of the replacement of lexical items and grammatical structures. Besides, Makkai (1972) maintains that an idiom is composed of at least two words and conventional expressions. Baker (2011) adds that some idioms having 'situation- or register-specific formulae perform a stabilizing role in communication' (p. 68). For example, some of them are 'Many happy returns' (*Chúc mừng sinh nhật*), 'Merry Christmas' (*Chúc mừng Giáng sinh*), and 'Yours sincerely' (*Trân trọng*). Flavel and Flavel (2000, p. 6) maintain that idioms are 'very fixed grammatically'. It can be said that constituents of idioms cannot be separated in most cases.

Baker (2011, p. 68) highlights that 'a person's competence in actively using the idioms and fixed expressions of a foreign language hardly ever matches that of a native speaker', and it is not easy to know 'when and how an idiom can be manipulated'. As regards the importance of idioms, Larson (1984) states that the translators need to 'use idioms fluently and competently in the TL', i.e. target language (p. 116). Therefore, it is believed that if EFL learners are exposed to English idioms in a variety of communicative situations, they will acquire a certain number of English idioms and be able to use them in daily communication and for professional purposes.

It can be said that recognizing English idioms syntactically or structurally is important. Arnold (1986, p. 172) classifies idioms based on syntactic structure or parts of speech into seven kinds. These comprise (1) nominal idioms, (2) verbal idioms, (3) adjectival idioms, (4) adverbial idioms, (5) prepositional idioms, (6) conjunctional idioms, and (7) interjectional idioms. Unlike Arnold, Koonin (1970, p. 140) divides English idioms into four types from a functional perspective. These consist of (1) nominative idioms, (2) nominative-communicative idioms, (3) interjectional idioms, and (4) communicative idioms. In this study, only Arnold's (1986) categorization of idioms was used to investigate syntactic features of English idioms with the scope of 484 idioms with body parts extracted from OALD8. The classification of

English idioms with body parts based on syntactic structure helps EFL learners identify English idioms with body parts in specific communicative situations. EFL learners need to locate English idioms in the text and infer their functional use so that they can translate them into Vietnamese easily and lively.

### *2.3. Semantic Features of English Idioms*

Semantically, Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) find that figurativeness is one of the typical features of idioms. Figurative meanings can be expressed by using simile, metaphor, metonymy, rhetoric and exaggeration. They add that English idioms can express meanings positively, neutrally or negatively. They also maintain that meanings of appreciation and attitude are integrated into idioms to express meanings of respect, approval, disagreement, disregard and sympathy. Besides, Ambrose (2008) maintains that learning vocabulary of English requires being aware of denotative and connotative meanings to infer figurative meanings of idioms.

In the context of teaching and learning English, Chen and Lai (2013) argue that rote learning and memorization of idioms are a waste of time and effort because learners learn idioms without associating forms with meanings. They maintain that meanings of idiomatic expressions are arbitrary and not predictable. From this view, it can be easily seen that it is essential for teachers of English to design tasks that help their EFL learners recognize and use English idioms in a variety of communicative contexts. Additionally, Baker (2011, p. 75) finds that English idioms are used in a variety of text types; serious, international magazines; advertisements; promotional materials and tabloid press. Teachers of English should introduce English idioms in various contexts so that they can use them in real communication in future, whereas EFL students need to actively learn English idioms through learning sources (e.g., books, movies, YouTube videos and so forth) that they can be exposed to.

More importantly, Thyab (2016) adds that all speakers of English language should know and be proficient in employing idiomatic expressions in English. Some people argue that idioms are only used in spoken language or informal conversations; however, Laflin (1996) insists that idiomatic expressions are utilized in both formal and informal situations. Baker (2011, p. 75) states that ‘using idioms in English is thus very much a matter of style’. He also distinguishes ‘written and spoken discourse’ and argues that ‘written mode is associated with a high level of formality, tend, on the whole, to avoid using idioms in written texts’. In reality, idioms can be used in both formal and informal situations according to communicative purposes. In general, using idioms in real communicative situations is a signal of a proficient and fluent learner like native speakers of language. EFL learners should take ‘questions of style, register and rhetorical effect’ into consideration when using English idioms to serve communicative purposes (Baker, 2011, p. 76). Therefore, English idioms are of great importance in the process of learning EFL.

In addition, there have been a great number of studies on difficulties or challenges in learning and using English idioms. Gibbs et al. (1997) emphasizes that even native speakers find learning and understanding idioms hard. In other words, there are some cases in which speakers would not like to express their ideas explicitly and literally, so they have to use idioms to express their ideas implicitly. This can avoid hurting other people’s feelings and saving their face. Kövecses and Szabó (1996) remark that idioms are a challenge for L2 learners. Later, Chen and Lai (2013) observe that learners who are less exposed to target language have difficulty in understanding conceptual metaphors because of not knowing cultural conventions. This means that the lack of background knowledge such as cultural knowledge also brings some challenges for EFL learners to communicate successfully if they only base on literal meanings of idioms without being aware of origins of these culture-specific idioms. Furthermore, Baker (2011) shows difficulties in translating idioms because they are sometimes 'transparent, opaque or misleading' (p. 71), and stresses a transparent idiom can be more difficult than an opaque one. Newmark (1988) maintains that idioms had better 'never be translated word-for-word' (p.125), which means that the meaning of idioms cannot be inferred literally in most cases. Baker (2011, pp. 71-75) summarizes some difficulties of rendering idioms as follows:

(1) An idiom or fixed expression may have no equivalent in the target language.
(2) An idiom or fixed expression may have a similar counterpart in the target language, but its context of use may be different; the two expressions may have different connotations, for instance, or they may not be pragmatically transferable.
(3) An idiom may be used in the source in both its literal and idiomatic senses at the same time. Unless the target-language idioms correspond to the source-language idiom both in form and in meaning, the play on idiom cannot be successfully reproduced in the target text.
(4) The very convention of using idioms in written discourse, the contexts in which they can be used, and their frequency of use may be different in the source and target languages.

Baker (2011, p. 69) places an emphasis that 'the more difficult an expression is to understand and the less sense it makes in a given context, the more likely that a translator will recognize it as an idiom'. The easily recognized idioms are 'it's raining cats and dogs' (*trời mưa như trút nước*), 'throw caution to the wind' (*không còn thận trọng*), 'storm in a tea cup' (*việc bé xé ra to*), 'jump down someone's throat' (*phản ứng rất giận dữ*), and 'food for thought' (*điều đáng suy nghĩ*)'. Moreover, some ill-formed idioms include 'put paid to' (*phá hỏng*), 'by and large' (*đại loại*), 'the world and his wife/friends' (*mọi người*)'. Lastly, some literally untranslated idioms with simile-like structure are 'like a bat out hell' (*rất nhanh*) and 'like water off a duck's back' (*như nước đổ đầu vịt*)'. Moreover, Baker (2011, pp. 69-70) maintains that idioms easily misinterpreted are caused by the fact that some idioms are 'misleading', and have similar surface counterparts but convey 'partially different meanings'. Also, Duff (1989) points out that translating fixed expressions such as simile structure, metaphor, idioms, proverbs, sayings, slangs, and verbal idioms are challenging for translators. It is thought that introducing these idioms and fixed expressions along with their meanings in the target language is of importance to help EFL learners acquire English idioms easily.

Moreover, Baker (2011) points out two main problems of translating idioms. These comprise 'the ability to recognize and interpret an idiom correctly' and 'rendering the various aspects of meaning that an idiom or a fixed expression conveys into the target language' (p. 68). This means that recognizing idioms in contexts is vital to interpret and choose the most appropriate meanings of idioms. It is known that a great number of English idioms can convey a variety of meanings; therefore, translators need to choose proper semantic senses. Knowing how to use a dictionary to look up idioms is required for EFL learners to make sense of the idioms. According to Komissarov (1985, as cited in Arono & Nadrah, 2019), translators need to pay much attention to figurative, literal and affective meanings; register, and national color in the process of translation. Additionally, Rizq (2015) comments that idioms are culture-based because they convey numerous meanings related to culture, heritage, history and customs of native speakers. It can be said that EFL learners should not translate idioms literally in most cases and they have investigated hidden figurative meanings in most idioms. Besides, they should use English idioms to be appropriate for different communicative situations, which means that they have to choose proper idioms to be used formally and informally in various registers/fields and cultures.

To deal with numerous challenges related to identifying, understanding and utilizing English idioms, multiple researchers suggest a variety of effective ways to translate English idioms into another language. First, Baker (2011, p. 76) suggests six strategies to translate idioms as follows:

(1) Using an idiom of similar meaning and form.
(2) Using an idiom of similar meaning but dissimilar form.
(3) Borrowing the source language idiom.
(4) Translation by paraphrasing.
(5) Translation by omission of a play on idiom.
(6) Translation by omission of entire idiom.

Additionally, Nida and Taber (1969) distinguish two sorts of equivalence including formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. They maintain that dynamic equivalence is more effective than formal equivalence because the former focuses on the similar force of meaning while the latter pays attention to the message. Indeed, it is difficult to find all totally equivalent idioms, even no found equivalent idioms in several cases because some idioms originate from history, geography and culture. Hence, translators sometimes translate these idioms by paraphrasing or ignoring them.

In fact, Baker (2011, p. 69) advises that translators should approach ‘good reference works and monolingual dictionary’. Or it is better to ‘consult native speakers of the language’ to make sense of the meanings of the idioms in a particular context. Nevertheless, it is argued that using monolingual dictionary greatly helps EFL learners’ idiom comprehension. Besides, in EFL contexts it is difficult for students to have many chances to communicate with native speakers to comprehend English idioms.

Boers (2008) suggests that it is difficult for teachers to teach students how to memorize idioms by heart and that teachers should teach them systematically, which makes comprehension and memorization of idioms far easier. It is essential for teachers of English to find innovative and motivating methods to design various tasks to help their EFL learners realize, understand and use idioms in formal and informal communications properly.

### *2.4. Previous Studies*

There have been numerous studies, theses and dissertations on English idioms from different perspectives in the world and Vietnam. Gass and Selinker (2001) pointed out the importance of idioms. They observed that non-native speakers found lexical errors more than grammatical ones when they communicated with native speakers. They suggested that formal instruction of idiom input was essential.

Similarly, Thyab (2016) carried out a study on the necessity of idiomatic expression to EFL learners. He found that recognizing the image and origin of idioms could help figure out figurative meanings of idioms in contexts. He also observed that non-native speakers of English were not able to use idiomatic expressions because they could not understand and use idiomatic meanings appropriately. He suggested that interpreting the original contexts in which the original image was based on helped understand meanings of derived idioms.

Chen and Lai (2013) investigated the teaching of English idioms in an EFL class from cognitive approach. They analyzed the students’ written essays before and after the instruction of English idioms. The findings revealed that the students used more idioms that were conceptual metaphors. The results also showed the students employed English idiomatic expressions that had conceptual metaphor equivalences in the source language. They highlighted the significance of culture and teaching English idioms cognitively.

Alrishan and Smadi (2015) investigated the challenges that foreign language students faced when they translated English idioms into Arabic. The findings revealed that the students found it hard to translate these English idioms due to vague contexts. This could be explained by the fact that the students lacked background knowledge to express English idioms with cultural meanings into Arabian and they did not have an interest in English idioms.

Amos and Abas (2021) examined elementary school students' comprehension of English idioms in Nairobi. Their study was aimed to find out at which age the students began to identify and interpret L2 idioms. Sixty students were grouped into three age ranges such as 5-8, 9-12 and 13-16. The findings revealed that the students could understand a few idioms at the age of 5, and they could comprehend idioms literally. However, when they were from 12 to 16, they understood non-literal meanings of idioms properly. They found out that the factor of age had an impact on the students' idiom comprehension. They thought that it was essential for the students to be exposed to language and acquire it at the early age. Their study also gave some implications for language teachers, material designers and language learners.

In Vietnam, Nguyen (2009) examined grammatical and semantic features of English idioms expressing happiness. She found that some English idioms including 'in seventh heaven', 'on cloud nine', 'on top of the world', 'over the moon', 'thrilled to bits' and 'walk on air' were used informally and expressed happiness. The study suggested that translators should pay attention to the meanings of these idioms based on contexts.

Nguyen and Nguyen (2019) explored English idioms with human-body parts and their Vietnamese equivalents. They used a case study to compare and contrast the translation of versions of two English novels. The findings showed that there were some equivalent and non-equivalent references found in Vietnamese translation of English idioms in these two novels. The findings indicated that there were 106 English idioms with 31 human-body parts in which six parts such as eye (14 idioms), hand (12), head (10), heart (8), foot (8) and face (7) were used the most in the two English novels.

Nguyen and Phan (2000) studied the syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms containing 'Go". It was a quantitative and qualitative research. They analyzed the idioms collected through Google books and demonstrated the combination of idioms containing 'Go' with its components. They found that both English and Vietnamese idioms were expressed in the forms of nominal, adjectival and adverbial phrases. They explored that English idioms in the forms of nominal, verbal, prepositional, and adverbial phrase had a rapport with semantic features. Syntactically, the findings revealed that idioms containing 'Go' could combine with simple and complex nominal phrases; preposition; adjective, and adverb. Semantically, the findings showed that English and Vietnamese idioms expressed hidden meanings and were metaphorical expressions to avoid hurting other people's feelings in some cases. The study also gave some implications for translation, teaching and learning foreign languages.

Nguyen (2021) investigated translation challenges with English phraseological units into Vietnamese. The qualitative study analyzed 241 English phraseological units with proper names. The findings revealed that these units were culture-specific and metaphorically used. The study showed some difficulties in translating these idioms and suggested appropriate translation strategies for cross-linguistic phraseological units with proper names from English into Vietnamese.

Based on some gaps from the previous studies related to the size of surveyed data and research methods, this study was conducted to investigate the syntactic and semantic features of English idioms. To fulfill the purposes of the study, the study was seeking to answer the following research questions:

(1) What are the syntactic features of English idioms?
(2) What are the semantic features of English idioms?

## 3. Methods

This study was carried out to help EFL learners at the faculty of foreign languages at Van Lang university be aware of syntactic and semantic features of English idioms in order that they could translate English idioms into Vietnamese effectively in Translation 2 course. The main study subjects of this study were 6,500 English idioms collected from OALD8 which was updated and translated into Vietnamese.

At first, the researcher collected all English idioms from the dictionary called OALD8, and then the data of these idioms were typed and synthesized into a compiled file with 6,500 English idioms. To answer the two research questions, the researcher only analyzed 484 with body parts of these 6,500 idioms to investigate the syntactic features of English idioms due to time constraints, whereas the data with 6,500 English idioms were sorted out to examine the semantic features. All the idioms were collected, typed, and saved as a Microsoft Word file.

This study employed quantitative and qualitative methods to seek the answer for the two research questions. The research used frequencies, percentages, tables and content analysis to present the findings of the study.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1. Syntactic Features of English Idioms*

This study employed Arnold (1986)'s classification of idioms to find out the answer for the first research question. Table 1 presents the categorization of 484 English idioms with body parts based on syntactic structure. The English idioms are grouped into seven types including nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional, and interjectional idioms. The syntactic categorization of English idioms helps EFL learners recognize where the idioms are in the clause, and then they can guess the meanings of idioms in some situations.

**Table 1**

*Classification of English Idioms With Body Parts*

| **Classification of English idioms with body parts**<br>(The data collected from OALD8) | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Nominal idioms** | - the long arm of sth<br>- a firm hand | quyền lực, thẩm quyền<br>kỷ luật sắt |
| **2. Verbal idioms** | - keep an eye on sb/sth<br>- turn a blind eye (to sth) | chăm sóc; trông chừng<br>vờ không biết |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **3. Adjectival idioms** | - weak at the knees<br>- easy on the ear/eye | bủn rủn<br>dễ nghe/ưa nhìn, dễ nhìn |
| **4. Adverbial idioms** | - at your mother's knee<br>- (straight) from the horse's mouth | khi còn rất nhỏ<br>từ nguồn tin đáng tin cậy |
| **5. Prepositional idioms** | - in the public eye<br>- for sb's eyes only | nổi tiếng<br>chỉ cho ai xem |
| **6. Conjunctional idioms** | - on the one hand / on the other hand | trái lại/ ngược lại |
| **7. Interjectional idioms** | - my foot! | cái con khỉ! |

The statistics in Table 2 indicate that there are 292 out of 484 English idioms with body parts in the form of verbal phrase. The verbal idioms make up the highest percentage of 60.33%, followed by prepositional phrase with 72 idioms (14.88%) and nominal phrase with 50 idioms (10.33%). Noticeably, 25 idioms with body parts in the form of clause. The findings reveal that most of the English idioms with body parts are verbal idioms, which can bring some translation challenges to EFL learners. This finding is in line with Duff's (1989) study that translating verbal idioms is problematic.

**Table 2**

*Statistics of English Idioms With Body Parts*

| Kinds of phrase | English idioms with body parts (Quantity) | Percentages |
|---|---|---|
| Adjectival phrase | 27 | 5.58% |
| Adverbial phrase | 18 | 3.72% |
| Nominal phrase | 50 | 10.33% |
| Verbal phrase | 292 | 60.33% |
| Prepositional phrase | 72 | 14.88% |
| Clause | 25 | 5.17% |
| Total | **484** | **100%** |

Moreover, the analysis of 484 English idioms with body parts demonstrates that 21 body parts are found in the analyzed data in Table 3 below. It can be seen in Table 3 that some body parts are used much more than others. Particularly, English idioms with 'hand' have the highest percentage of 18.39%, followed by head (13.02%), eye (12.60%), face (8.81%), back (7.88%), and foot (6.61%). It can be inferred that people often use these body parts in daily activities; therefore, most English idioms with body parts use these six body parts.

**Table 3**

*Statistics of Body Parts in 484 English Idioms*

| Number | Body parts | Numbers of English idioms with body parts | Percentages |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Arm | 12 | 2.48% |
| 2 | Back | 38 | 7.85% |
| 3 | Chin | 3 | 0.62% |
| 4 | Ear | 23 | 4.75% |
| 5 | Elbow | 5 | 1.03% |
| 6 | Eye | 61 | 12.60% |
| 7 | Face | 43 | 8.88% |
| 8 | Foot | 32 | 6.61% |
| 9 | Forearm | 1 | 0.21% |
| 10 | Hair | 4 | 0.83% |
| 11 | Hand | 89 | 18.39% |
| 12 | Head | 63 | 13.02% |
| 13 | Hip | 2 | 0.41% |
| 14 | Knee | 7 | 1.45% |
| 15 | Leg | 11 | 2.27% |
| 16 | Mouth | 26 | 5.37% |
| 17 | Neck | 16 | 3.31% |
| 18 | Nose | 21 | 4.34% |
| 19 | Shoulder | 12 | 2.48% |
| 20 | Thumb | 7 | 1.45% |
| 21 | Toe | 8 | 1.65% |
| Total | | 484 | 100% |

Additionally, 5 out of 6.500 English idioms are not used in passive voice. This indicates that grammatical structures of these idioms are fixed, so the order of constituents in the idioms cannot be changed. EFL learners should pay attention to the translation of these idioms by not using 'bị' or 'được' in Vietnamese.

**Table 4**

*English Idioms Not Used in Passive Voice*

| English idioms not used in passive voice | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| snap out of it/sth<br>snap sb out of it/sth | cố gắng thoát khỏi buồn khổ; giúp ai thoát khỏi buồn khổ |

| | |
|---|---|
| steal a march (on sb) | làm trước/đi trước ai một bước |
| steal the show | thu hút sự chú ý hoặc tán thưởng hơn người khác |
| wet the/your bed | tè dầm |
| wet yourself/wet your pants/knickers | đái són |

Fifth, 56 out of 6,500 English idioms are used with exclamation marks. The findings reveal that most of these English idioms with exclamation marks are used in informal situations. EFL learners should update these idioms so that they can communicate well with native speakers and interpret what the speakers mean in daily conversations.

**Table 5**

*English Idioms With Exclamation Marks*

| English idioms with exclamation marks | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| (just) you wait! | hãy đợi đấy! |
| big deal! | không có gì ghê gớm |
| button it! | câm miệng, im mồm! |
| shut your mouth/face! | im mồm! |
| so there! | cứ thế thôi! |

Finally, 70 out of 6,500 idioms have the form of questions with question marks. Using English idioms with question marks help speakers express their ideas functionally. Normally, questions are used to ask information from the listener; however, some English idioms are not used for asking information but for expressing things and states functionally.

**Table 6**

*English Idioms With Question Marks*

| English idioms with question marks | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| Any luck? | có thành công không? |
| Heads or tails? | sấp hay ngửa? |
| What's his/her face? | người mà không nhớ tên |
| What's in aid of? | để làm gì? |
| What's the deal? | có chuyện gì thế |
| What's up with that? | thật ngu ngốc/vô lý |

In general, in the investigation of syntactic features with the data of 484 English idioms with body parts demonstrates that most of the English idioms have the forms of verbal phrase (60.33%), prepositional phrase (14.88%) and nominal phrase (10.33%). Some English idioms containing exclamatory and question marks express functionally different meanings, whereas others are not used in passive voice.

### *4.2. Semantic Features of English Idioms*

Based on the above synthesized literature review related to the semantic features of idioms in general, particularly English ones, the second research question of this study is addressed. Semantically, the findings reveal that in addition to idioms whose origin are British English and American English, there are also some idioms from Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Wales. This suggests that EFL learners should use idioms properly in specific communicative situations like the saying ‘when in Rome, do as Romans do’ (*Nhập gia tùy tục*). For instance, to express someone having trouble, EFL learners can use the expression ‘have trouble’ in British English and American English, but they have to use the idiom ‘come short’ in South African English. EFL learners are required to be aware of language variation so that they can communicate well in international communications in which English is used.

**Table 7**

*Idiomatic Variants in English*

| Idiomatic variants in English | Vietnamese meaning | Australia | New Zealand | South Africa | Wales |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| not much chop | không tốt/hữu ích lắm | X | X | | |
| within cooee (of) | không xa | X | X | | |
| not have a bar of sth | không làm gì; cho qua; bỏ qua | | X | | |
| come short | gặp tai nạn/ rắc rối | | | X | |
| make a plan | lên, lập kế hoạch | | | X | |
| by there | ở đó, đến đó | | | | X |

Second, some English idioms are used as slangs. Slangs are used by a group of people for some purposes; for example, the idiom ‘be on the game’ (*làm gái mại dâm*) is mainly used by people involved in prostitution. The findings reveal there are 54 slangs out of 6.500 English idioms.

**Table 8**

*English Idioms Used as Slangs*

| English idioms used as slangs | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| a crock of shit | đồ giả |
| a piece of piss | việc ngon ơ/dễ ợt |
| be on the game | làm gái mại dâm |
| be/ go up the spout | hỏng; bị hỏng, không hoạt động |
| beat it | cút đi |
| beat the rap | tẩu thoát |
| blow chunks | nôn |

Third, the data analysis of OALD8 demonstrates that 93 among 6,500 English idioms are used with humorous meanings. It can be said that communicative purposes determine the choice of idioms that are used formally, informally, humorously or ironically. Some humorous idioms are ‘a big cheese’ (*nhân vật quan trọng*), ‘a knight in a shining armour’ (*anh hùng đội trời đạp đất*), or ‘an early bird’ (*người thức dậy rất sớm, người đến rất sớm*). The findings show that if EFL learners translate these idioms literally, they cannot comprehend what the idioms are about. EFL learners are advised to read a variety of materials in which English idioms are used humorously to create a comfortable atmosphere for communicative participants.

**Table 9**

*English Idioms With Humorous Meanings*

| English idioms with humorous meanings | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| a big cheese | nhân vật quan trọng, quyền lực |
| a gentleman/lady of leisure | người đàn ông/phụ nữ rỗi việc/nhàn hạ |
| a knight in shining armour | anh hùng đội trời đạp đất |
| a point of humour | thể diện |
| a shrinking violet | người rất nhút nhát/rụt rè, con cầy sấy |
| a/the pecking order | hệ thống thứ bậc |
| an early bird | người thức dậy, đến …rất sớm |

Fourth, 31 of 6,500 English idioms contain proper nouns which denote people, things, places and countries. Normally, proper nouns are capitalized anywhere in a clause and maintained in the translation; however, some proper nouns in the English idioms in Table 10 are not kept in the target translation. The idioms such as ‘when in Rome (do as the Romans do)’ and ‘Rome wasn’t built in a day’ containing the proper noun ‘Rome’ are translated into Vietnamese without mentioning the place ‘Rome’.

**Table 10**

*English Idioms With Proper Nouns*

| English idioms with proper nouns | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| (on) Shanks’s pony | đi bộ |
| a/the sword of Damocles | mối nguy hiểm chực chờ |
| any/every Tom, Dick or Harry | người bình thường |
| as American as apple pie | rất Mỹ, đặc Mỹ |
| not for all the tea in China | bất kể phần thưởng lớn đến đâu |
| when in Rome (do as the Romans do) | nhập gia tùy tục |
| work like a Trojan | làm việc cật lực |
| before you can say Jack Robinson | rất nhanh; trong chốc lát |
| Rome wasn’t built in a day | có công mài sắt, có ngày nên kim |

Fifth, 16 out of 6,500 English idioms are used as taboos. Online Oxford dictionary defines taboo as ‘a cultural or religious custom that does not allow people to do, use or talk about a particular thing as people find it offensive or embarrassing’. EFL learners need to be careful to use English idioms with taboo meanings.

**Table 11**

*English Idioms Used as Taboos*

| English idioms used as taboos | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| can't be arsed (to do sth) | chả thèm làm |
| lick sb's boots<br>lick sb's arse | xu nịnh |
| my arse | có ngu mới tin |
| not know your arse from your elbow | rất ngu ngốc |
| work you arse off | làm việc cật lực |

Sixth, the analysis of 6,500 English idioms reveals that the idioms are employed in various fields and registers in Table 12. There are 45 idioms used in the field of literature, two for law, one for sports, two for business, four for computer, two for army, two for ship, eight for clothes, four for automobile, two for drinks, four for machine, one for meat, three of food, two for meals, and one for music. The findings also show that English idioms are used in formal and informal fields/registers. The findings of this study are similar to Baker's (2011) study on English idioms having situation- or register-specific formulae. For instance, some examples of register-specific formulae include 'a/the still small voice' (*tiếng nói của lương tâm*) used in the register of literature, 'aid and abet' (*tòng phạm*) in the field of law, or 'under separate cover' (*trong bao thư riêng*) used in the register of business.

**Table 12**

*English Idioms Used in Various Fields or Registers*

| Fields/Register | English idioms used in various fields | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|---|
| **Literature** | a/the still small voice | tiếng nói của lương tâm |
| **Law** | aid and abet | tòng phạm |
| | of unsound mind | không chịu trách nhiệm vì mất năng lực hành vi (bị bệnh tâm thần) |
| **Sports** | out of bounds | ra ngoài đường biên |
| **Business** | under separate cover | trong bao thư riêng |
| **Computer** | be/come on line | dùng hoặc được kết nối với máy tính / Internet / liên lạc bằng máy tính |
| **Army** | (stand) at ease | nghỉ |
| **Ship** | leave into sight/view | hiện ra, nhô ra |
| | take the helm | bắt đầu lái tàu thuyền |
| **Clothes** | off the peg (Br.)<br>off the rack (NA.) | may sẵn |
| **Automobile** | nose to tail | chạy chậm sát nhau và theo hàng dài |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Drinks** | on the house | miễn phí |
| **Machine** | on the blink | không còn hoạt động đúng cách |
| **Meat** | on the hoof | bán khi thú vẫn còn sống |
| **Food** | melt in your mouth | mềm và ngọt |
| **Meal** | on the side | món phụ |
| **Music** | to the accompaniment of sth | theo nhạc đệm |

Seventh, there are 10 out of 6,500 English idioms which are used as old idioms. This suggests that EFL learners should be aware of these old English idioms so that they use them in appropriate situations. It can be easily seen that the old idiom 'your obedient servant' (*kính thư*) is not much used in formal letters and emails nowadays. Other formulaic expressions such as 'yours sincerely', 'sincerely yours', 'yours faithfully' and 'yours truly' can replace 'your obedient servant', but they have the same meaning with this old idiom. In informal letters and emails, this old idiom can be replaced with 'yours ever' or 'ever yours' (*thân mến, thân ái*) at the end of the letter or email.

**Table 13**

*Old English Idioms*

| **Old English idioms** | **Vietnamese meaning** |
|---|---|
| a devil of a job/time | công việc/thời gian rất khó khăn/khó chịu |
| be up to your (old) tricks | ngựa quen đường cũ, vẫn chứng nào tật ấy |
| fall sick<br>take sick | ngã bệnh |
| look here | dùng để phản đối điều gì |
| make merry | vui đùa, ăn chơi |
| not quite the thing | không khỏe mạnh, bất thường |
| on the shelf | quá thì, quá lứa |
| play fast and loose (with sb/sth) | lập lờ hai mặt |

Eight, 200 out of 6,500 English idioms are used formally. In some formal communicative situations, using formal idioms is preferred. Recognizing and distinguishing formal idioms and informal ones is a challenge for EFL students; therefore, they should scrutinize formal and informal idioms in English and practice using these idioms in academic and formal situations.

**Table 14**

*English Idioms Used Formally*

| English idioms used formally | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| a man of the match | thầy tu, tăng lữ |
| a point of departure | điểm xuất phát, khởi điểm |
| be no/a stranger to sth | quen thuộc; không quen thuộc |
| be of service (to sb) | có ích |
| by dint of sth/of doing sth | bởi, nhờ, bằng |
| by water | bằng tàu/thuyền |
| by/in virtue of sth | nhờ, vì |
| call sth into play | sử dụng, tận dụng |
| come to sb's knowledge | được ai biết |

Ninth, there are 1803 out of 6,500 English idioms used informally. Most English idioms are used in informal situations, and EFL learners can find these informal idioms in daily conversations. That is the reason why numerous researchers argue that EFL learners have to master a great number of English idioms to be proficient and fluent like native speakers of English.

**Table 15**

*English Idioms Used Informally*

| English idioms used informally | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| (a) fat chance (of sth/doing sth) | mơ đi |
| (all) by/on your lonesome | một mình |
| (all) in good time | đúng lúc |
| (as) clear as mud | không rõ; khó hiểu |
| (as) sure as eggs is eggs | hoàn toàn đúng |
| (get/have) itchy feet | muốn đi tới nơi khác; muốn làm khác biệt |
| (have) bough it | bị giết |

Furthermore, 28 out of 6,500 English idioms use simile structure with 'as…as'. It can be seen that there is no translation of simile with 'as…as' into 'như' in Vietnamese in most cases. The translation of 'as…as' into 'như' into Vietnamese is found in the idiom '(as) clear as a day' (*rõ như ban ngày*), whereas other English idioms are translated into Vietnamese without using the word 'như', for example, 'as bald as a coot' (*trọc lốc*), 'as blind as a bat' (*mù, không thấy rõ*), 'as bright as a button' (*thông minh, sáng dạ*), or 'as clear as mud' (*khó hiểu*). The findings of this study are the same as Baker's (2011) study that ill-formed idioms (e.g., simile-as/like structure) bring challenges for translators. Hence, translators cannot base on literal meanings of the words in an idiom to infer the meaning of the whole idiom, but they have to infer some hidden meanings of the idiom.

**Table 16**

*English Idioms With Simile-as Structure*

| English idioms with the simile-as structure | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| (as) a matter of course | việc/chuyện đương nhiên |
| (as) bald as a coot | trọc lốc |
| (as) blind as a bat | không thấy rõ; mù |
| (as) bright as a button | thông minh, sáng dạ |
| (as) clear as day | rõ như ban ngày |
| (as) clear as mud | không rõ; khó hiểu |

Eleventh, 21 out of 6,500 idioms are used with ironic meanings. Using English idioms that express irony should be taken into consideration for reasons of politeness strategies.

**Table 17**

*English Idioms With Ironic Meanings*

| English idioms with ironic meanings | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| a bright spark | người sáng dạ |
| a likely story | chuyện cứ như thật |
| a pearl of wisdom | lời nhận xét thông thái |
| ten out ten (for sth) | đúng, rất giỏi |
| there's/ that's … for you | đó là điển hình của bạn |
| tough luck | tội nghiệp chưa/đáng thương nhỉ |

Also, the analysis of 484 English idioms with body parts reveal that some synonymous English idioms with body parts are found. To express the meaning of '*gậy ông đập lưng ông*', EFL learners can choose one of these English idiomatic variants with body parts such as 'make a rod for your back', 'cut off your nose to spite your face', or 'shoot yourself in the foot'. Similarly, some idiomatic variants including 'with a flea in your ear', 'tear your hair (out)', 'foam at the mouth', and 'wring sb's back' carry the same meaning of '*tức giận'*.

**Table 18**

*Synonymous English Idioms With Body Parts*

| Number | Synonymous English idioms with body parts | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Make a rod for your own back | Gậy ông đập lưng ông |
| 2 | Cut off your nose to spite your face | |
| 3 | Shoot yourself in the foot | |
| 4 | Cut off your nose to spite your face | |
| 5 | With a flea in your ear | Tức giận |
| 6 | Tear your hair (out) | |

| | |
|---|---|
| 7 | Foam at the mouth |
| 8 | Wring sb's neck |

Thirteenth, 175 out of 6,500 English idioms are proverbs and sayings. It is observed that most proverbs and sayings are in the form of clause. These idioms often express figurative or metaphorical meanings, so EFL learners need to take them into consideration.

**Table 19**

*English Idioms Used as Proverbs and Sayings*

| English idioms used as proverbs and sayings | Vietnamese meaning |
|---|---|
| Absence makes the heart grow fonder | càng xa càng nhớ |
| Beauty is in the eye of the beholder | đẹp xấu là tùy mắt mỗi người |
| Seeing is believing | thấy mới tin |
| Too many cooks spoil the broth | lắm thầy thối ma |
| Give a dog a bad name | tiếng xấu đồn xa |
| An eye for an eye | ăn miếng trả miếng |
| Familiarity breeds contempt | thân quá hóa nhờn |

Generally, to some extent this section synthesizes a variety of semantic features of 6,500 English idioms. English idioms are used functionally to express different meanings in communication. This section presents the typical statistics and translation of English idioms used as idiomatic variants, slangs, taboos, and old English idioms; with humorous and ironic meanings, and simile-as structure; in different fields/registers and formal/informal situations; and as synonymous idioms and proverbs/sayings.

### *4.3. Discussion*

The findings of this study disclose some certain syntactic and semantic features of English idioms. Syntactically, based on Arnold's (1986) classification of idioms, this study found some analyzed idioms that belonged to this author's categorization including nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional, and interjectional idioms. Grammatically, some English idioms were not used in passive voice. It was also noticeable that there were some variations of idioms. This means that some British English idioms had their American English variants or others (i.e., Australian, South-African, and Welsh ones).

Furthermore, the analysis of 484 English idioms demonstrated that the idioms in the form of verbal phrase had the highest percentage with 60.33%, followed by prepositional phrase (14.88%), nominal phrase (10.33%), adjectival phrase (5.58%), clause (5.17%), and adverbial phrase (3.72%). The results of this study on linguistic features had an impact on EFL learners' idioms translation during Translation 2 course.

Semantically, the above findings of this study pointed out that English idioms were used differently functionally, and they hence conveyed various meanings thanks to a diversity of communicative situations. The findings demonstrated that English idioms could be used as slangs, taboos, proverbs and sayings. There were also some English idioms with proper nouns related to people, things, places and countries. English idioms were also used humorously and ironically. Interestingly, English idioms were employed in various fields or registers which included literature, law, sports, business, computer, army, ship, clothes, automobile, drinks, machine, meat, food, meals, and music. Some old English idioms and idioms with simile-as structure were found in the findings, while a great number of idioms were utilized in formal and informal situations. Additionally, English idioms with exclamatory and question marks were observed in the findings.

Compared to previous studies, the findings shared some similarities in syntactic and semantic features with other researchers' findings. Nevertheless, the findings of this study were different from other studies to various extents.

First, Thyab (2016) found idioms which were used in some domains such as entertainment, sports and cooking, but the findings of this study indicated that English idioms were used in numerous fields or register including (1) literature, (2) law, (3) sports, (4) business, (5) computer, (6) army, (7) ship, (8) clothes, (9) automobile, (10) drinks, (11) machine, (12) meat, (13) food, (14) meal and (15) music. It could be seen that the findings of this study were in line with Thyab's study in some domains such as sports and cooking (meat, food and meal) as presented in Table 12.

Second, the findings of this study on idioms with proper nouns were a little different from Nguyen's (2021) findings. This meant that Nguyen (2001) mainly focused on translation of investigating one aspect of proper nouns, i.e. proper names, but this study investigated all aspects of proper nouns denoting things, people, places, countries and proper names that could be seen in Table 10.

Third, the findings of this study were not totally similar to Nguyen and Nguyen's (2019) study on English idioms with human-body parts. Particularly, they examined 106 idioms with human-body parts and explored that 31 human-body parts were used in these 106 English idioms; however, the findings of this study investigated 484 English idioms with body parts and found 21 body parts in the analyzed data. Also, there were some differences in frequency and percentages of these idioms in two researches. The six body parts were most used in Nguyen and Nguyen's (2019) study including eye (14 idioms), hand (12), head (10), heart (8), foot (8) and face (7), whereas the findings of this study indicated the most used six body parts in English idioms were hand (89), head (63), eye (61), face (43), back (38), and foot (32). The above differences suggest further studies on English idioms in English and Vietnamese.

Finally, the findings of this study were not totally similar to Nguyen and Phan's (2020) one on syntactic and semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms. They investigated syntactic features of English idioms in the forms of nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial and prepositional phrases, whereas this study added two more ones including conjunctional and interjectional phrases. The two authors' findings on semantic features of English and Vietnamese idioms mainly focused on metaphorical meanings without analyzing other types of idiomatic meanings found in slangs, terms or variants similar to this study's findings.

## 5. Conclusion

The main findings of this study indicate that syntactically English idioms are grouped into seven types including nominal, verbal, adjectival, adverbial, prepositional, conjunctional and interjectional idioms. The analysis of 484 English idioms with body parts present numerous examples for these seven types of English idioms based on parts of speech or syntactic structure. Interestingly, 24 idioms in the form of clauses were found in the analysis of 484 English idioms containing body parts. Semantically, English idioms mainly convey figurative meanings that cannot be deduced from literal meanings or a combination of meanings from all constituents of an idiom. To interpret the hidden figurative meanings of most English idioms in a variety of communicative contexts, EFL learners need to use their background knowledge about literal meanings of lexicon, culture, geography, history, customs and practices and so on. The analysis of 6,500 English idioms in the OALD8 demonstrates that idioms can be used to express meanings differently according to formal and informal situations. There are some variations of English idioms in British English, American English, Australian English, South African English, Welsh English, and Canadian English. The analysis of 6,500 idioms illustrates that English idioms are used as slangs, taboos, proverbs and sayings. Furthermore, numerous idioms contain exclamatory/question marks, simile-as expression, and proper nouns denoting people, things, places and countries that are culture-specific. English idioms are also employed in a variety of fields or registers to serve different communicative purposes. Lastly, some English idioms are synonymous to convey the exactly/nearly same ideas.

From the main findings of syntactic and semantic features of English idioms with the scope of 6,500 English idioms, particularly 484 idioms with body parts, the study suggests some implications for teaching English idioms to EFL learners at Van Lang University. This study bears some limitations. This study mainly focused on the categorization of 484 English idioms containing body parts syntactically without classifying all 6,500 English idioms due to time limitation. Further studies should investigate English idioms syntactically and semantically with more data of 6,500 idioms and research tools such as interviews or written tests.

## References

Alrishan, A. & Smadi, O. (2015). Difficulties EFL Jordanian university students encountered in translating English idioms into Arabic. *Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(10), 124-133.

Ambrose, J. (2008). *Why idioms are important for English language learners.* Mikolaiv State Pedagogical University.

Amos, N. T. & Abas, I. H. (2021). An investigation on the comprehension of English idioms among Moi primary school children in Nairobi. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, *12*(4), 1-8.

Arnold, I. (1986). *The English word*. Vuisshaya Shkola.

Arono & Nadrah. (2019). Students' difficulties in translating English text. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Literature, 4*(1), 2019.

Baker, M. (2011). *In other words* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Boers, F. (2008). *Language awareness: Understanding idioms.* Macmillan.

Chen, Y. & Lai, H. (2013). Teaching English idioms as metaphors through cognitive-oriented methods: A case in an EFL writing class. *English Language Teaching, 6*(6), 13-20. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n6p13

Duff, A. (1989). *Translation.* Oxford University Press.

Flavell, L., & Flavell, R. H. (2000). *Dictionary of idioms and their origins*. Kyle Cathie Ltd.

Gass, S. M. & Selinker, L. (2001). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course* (2nd ed.). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gibbs, R. W., Bogdanovich, J. M., Skyes, J. R., & Barr, D. J. (1997). Metaphor in idiom comprehension. *Journal of Memory and Language*, *37*(2), 141-154. http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jmla.1996.2506

Hornby, A. S. (2014). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary with Vietnamese Translation* (8th ed.) Nhà xuất bản trẻ.

Kövecses, Z., & Szabó, P. (1996). Idioms: A view from cognitive semantics. *Applied Linguistics, 17*(3), 326-355. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/17.3.326

Laflin, S. (1996). *Something to crow about: A concise collection of American English Idioms for everyday use*. United States Information Agency.

Larson, M. (1984). *Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross language equivalence*. University Press of America.

Makkai, A. (1972). *Idioms structure in English*. Mouton.

Nguyen, T. H., & Nguyen, T. L. (2019). English idioms containing human-body parts and their Vietnamese equivalents: A case study of two English novels and their Vietnamese translation versions. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 35*(3), 83-103. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4370

Nguyen, T. T. L & Phan, M. H. (2020). An investigation into syntactic and semantic features of English "Go" idioms with reference to the Vietnamese equivalents. *European Journal of English Language, Linguistics and Literature, 7*(1), 10-21.

Nguyen, T. V. L. (2009). Grammatical and semantic features of some English words and idioms denoting happiness – the felling of great pleasure. *VNU Journal of Science, Foreign Languages, 25*(3), 165-173. https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/index.php/fs/article/view/2424

Nguyen, V. K. (2021). Challenges in translation of English phraseological units with onomastic constituents into Vietnamese equivalents. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 37*(3), 60-78. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4624

Rizq, W. (2015). *Teaching English idioms to L2 learners: ESL teachers' perspectives*. St. Could State University.

Thyab, R. A. (2016). The necessity of idiomatic expressions to English language learners. *International Journal of English and Literature, 7*(7), 106-111. https://doi.org/10.5897/IJEL2016.0895

# TÌM HIỂU ĐẶC ĐIỂM CÚ PHÁP VÀ NGỮ NGHĨA CỦA THÀNH NGỮ TIẾNG ANH

Bùi Thị Kim Loan

*Trường Đại học Bình Dương,*
*Số 504 Đại lộ Bình Dương, Thành phố Thủ Dầu Một, Bình Dương, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu các đặc điểm cú pháp và ngữ nghĩa của thành ngữ tiếng Anh (TNTA). Ngữ liệu khảo sát gồm 6.500 TNTA được sưu tầm từ từ điển Oxford, tái bản lần thứ 8 (sau đây viết tắt là OALD8), được miêu tả định lượng và định tính. Ngữ liệu khảo sát được phân tích và trình bày dưới dạng các thống kê, tỉ lệ phần trăm và phân tích nội dung. Kết quả khảo sát cho thấyvề đặc điểm cú pháp, TNTA có dạng danh ngữ, động ngữ, tính ngữ, trạng ngữ, giới ngữ, liên ngữ và thán ngữ. Về đặc điểm ngữ nghĩa, kết quả cũng làm sáng tỏ ngữ nghĩa của các biến thể thành ngữ, thành ngữ được dùng như tiếng lóng, thành ngữ chứa tên riêng, thành ngữ được sử dụng trong các ngữ vực khác nhau, thành ngữ được sử dụng trong tình huống trang trọng và thân mật, v.v. Điều này sẽ giúp ích cho các giáo viên, sinh viên, biên phiên dịch viên trong việc nhận diện TNTA cũng như dịch chúng sang tiếng Việt. Bên cạnh đó, nghiên cứu đưa ra một số đề xuất cho việc dạy và học TNTA.

*Từ khóa:* cú pháp, ngữ nghĩa, đặc điểm, thành ngữ tiếng Anh, dịch thuật

# ASSESSMENT LITERACY IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: THE STORY SO FAR

Nguyen Thi To Loan[1,*], Duong Thu Mai[2]

[1]*Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hung Vuong University, Phu Tho, Vietnam*

[2]*Faculty of English Language Teacher Education, VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 22 May 2023
Revised 10 August 2023; Accepted 26 August 2023

**Abstract:** Over the past three decades, there has been a considerable increase in research of assessment literacy in language education or language assessment literacy (henceforth LAL), as evidenced by academic researchers' growing interest and publications. Given the importance of LAL in the language teachers' professional development, this paper adopts a systematic review protocol to present a comprehensive literature review on LAL. Based on the analysis of 211 relevant publications identified through the Scopus search engine and using VOSviewer software for bibliometric analysis, this review sheds light on perspectives that have not been thoroughly explored or evaluated by previous studies on the subject. The findings have several implications for the current state of LAL literature, indicating potential future research directions and highlighting existing research gaps. These results provide a robust framework for a deeper understanding of the evolution of research topics, scientific methodologies, and trends in this cutting-edge and captivating field of study.

*Keywords:* language education, assessment literacy, bibliometric analysis, systematic review

## 1. Introduction

In the classroom, teachers often spend between one-third and fifty percent of their time on assessment (Cheng et al., 2004) such as planning, creating, carrying out, evaluating assessment and "use assessment evidence to inform their teaching" (Black & Wiliam, 2018, p. 553). They are doing a most significant yet most challenging job, and to be qualified for this job, they need to have sufficient assessment literacy, or language assessment literacy, specifically for language education (Inbar-Lourie, 2013). Assessment literacy in language education or Language Assessment Literacy (LAL) is the term used to describe the knowledge, abilities, and values that stakeholders need to have in order to manage a variety of language assessment tasks (Taylor, 2013). It can be a knowledge base (Malone, 2013), an ability (Deygers & Malone, 2019), or a competence (Baker & Riches, 2018). Teachers who possess such skills, prowess, or knowledge are typically seen as being literate in language assessment. They are able to conduct valid and reliable assessments, maximize the use of evaluations to guide teaching and learning, and make wise decisions on the language proficiency of their students. In other words, LAL among teachers can act as a driving force for effective language instruction. Although they are most in need of it, language teachers are not the only ones who experience LAL (Harding & Kremmel, 2016). In recent years, language testing and evaluation have gained a more prominent position in educational, political, business, and social agendas

* Corresponding author.
Email address: nguyenthitoloan@hvu.edu.vn

(Inbar-Lourie, 2017). The significance of teachers' LAL has captured the interest of scholars in recent years, as evidenced by works such as Taylor (2013) and Vogt & Tsagari (2014). Also, research on teachers' LAL has produced valuable insights with substantial implications for language teacher education and professional development.

Despite the conceptual importance of LAL in language testing and assessment, there is a lack of a comprehensive picture in the literature that outlines the extent of LAL research, the aspects of LAL that have been or have not yet been covered, the methods used to investigate these aspects, and the contributions LAL research has made to language teacher education and professional development. Moreover, within the existing conceptual discussions surrounding LAL, such as those put forth by scholars like Harding and Kremmel (2016) and Tsagari (2020), some arguments related to LAL research, such as its geographical sources and methodological designs, appear to lack empirical evidence.

## 2. Literature Review

First, the scholarly interest in "assessment literacy" can be traced back to the implementation of test-driven accountability systems in various educational contexts during the 1980s. Within these educational settings, educators were obligated to monitor and report the achievement of all students in accordance with established criteria. Following a comprehensive examination of informal language assessment methods, Brindley (2001) introduced the concept of LAL to specifically address the distinct attributes and needs associated with language-related disciplines.

Subsequent LAL research has focused on conceptual frameworks and relationships among examined elements. Davies (2008) and Inbar-Lourie (2008) established an early framework with principles, knowledge, and skills. Taylor (2013) devised an LAL framework for diverse stakeholders, including eight elements. Baker and Riches (2018) refined it to seven elements with Haitian teachers. As empirical data continues to accumulate and undergo validation in various assessment settings, new conceptual frameworks are constantly being constructed (Yan & Fan, 2021).

Stakeholder groups in language testing and assessment have varying interests, needs, and expectations, resulting in differences in their grasp of LAL frameworks and their proficiency in specific components (Benjamin Kremmel & Luke Harding, 2020). These differences have led to a tendency not to study LAL as a comprehensive concept but rather as separate investigations within distinct stakeholder groups. Among these groups, classroom teachers have been the most extensively examined in the academic literature. Stakeholders' LAL is shaped by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors, such as teachers' self-confidence, willingness to participate in assessment training, and teaching experience, directly influence LAL. External factors, encompassing educational environments, administrative orders for teaching and assessment, educational policies, and socio-cultural values in language teaching, also significantly impact LAL.

On Web of Science (WoS) and Scopus, three LAL review papers were discovered. Through an analysis of 100 research from 1985 to 2015, Xu & Brown (2016) revised how teachers measure literacy in general education. They put up a framework for how teachers might effectively use assessment literacy, which they connected to teacher professional development. To examine a broad trend in LAL research, Lee & Butler (2020) synthesized 52 empirical works on the topic. They discovered that questionnaires and interviews were the most common techniques of data gathering, and that the majority of LAL studies targeted in-service teachers. As a result, they recommended taking into account the viewpoints of learners and incorporating various study techniques to better comprehend the nature of LAL. Similar to this, Coombe et al. (2020) concentrated on assessment training and assessment literacy for teachers. They learned from the review that LAL had many facets and that assessment training ought to be a crucial component of teachers' professional preparation. The three review studies do, however, have some flaws. For instance, Coombe et al. (2020) did not specify the method used to choose the study subjects. Additionally, the study's concepts were applied somewhat inconsistently, with a concentration on evaluating literacy in general education as opposed to LAL. On the other hand, Lee & Butler (2020) described their review methods in depth. Other crucial components, such research designs or contexts, were left out as they reviewed the LAL studies' participants and research methodologies. The review study by Xu & Brown (2016) is thorough for teacher assessment literacy in general education, but not for teachers' LAL. In conclusion, additional study is required because the previous review studies have not offered a comprehensive picture of LAL.

The aim of this paper is to examine the research literature on assessment literacy in language education through review and analysis. For this purpose, this bibliometric review addressed the following research questions.

1. What are the volume, growth trajectory, and geographic distribution of scholarship on LAL researches?

2. Which scholars have emerged as thought leaders in the LAL literature?

3. What topics in LAL research have received the greatest attention in the literature?

4. What are the research gaps and potential future research directions for LAL?

The existing LAL literature primarily focuses on empirical and theoretical aspects, with limited systematic reviews. Such reviews are necessary due to the evolving and complex nature of LAL research. LAL differs from general assessment literacy (AL) and requires separate study. Using bibliometric can provide a more precise and efficient review of the expanding LAL literature, which lacks a consensus on an optimal theoretical framework due to its contextual and stakeholder-driven complexity. This study is new because, in our examination of the available literature data, we were unable to locate any literature review papers that specifically addressed AL in language instruction. As a result, this study offers perspectives that prior studies on this subject have not yet completely analyzed or documented. We searched the Scopus database for publications, which is one of the largest academic databases worldwide, that matched the research goals in order to answer these questions. To further enhance the understanding of the current research landscape, we conducted a systematic literature review and conducted a comprehensive analysis of the most recent state-of-the-art literature AL within the field of language education. This review encompassed publications from January 1994 to December 2021.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Bibliometric Analysis*

The proliferation of literature has made it challenging to organize and present studies in a clear and orderly manner. As a result, quickly and accurately identifying the essential literature related to a research topic has always been a perplexing task (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017). Bibliometric analysis, which involves quantitatively analyzing articles published within a specific field (Baker et al., 2019), is one of the methods used for reviewing literature. It is a widely used approach for accumulating knowledge and structuring previous research findings, especially when examining various aspects of science and global rankings of institutions and universities (Ellegaard & Wallin, 2015). In response to this issue, co-word analysis, a type of bibliometric technique, was developed to calculate the co-occurrence frequencies of chosen words in literature (Callon et al., 1991). In this study, we adopted a series of co-word network analyses to visually represent the network structure of pivotal keywords based on their co-occurrence relationships.

### *3.2. Data*

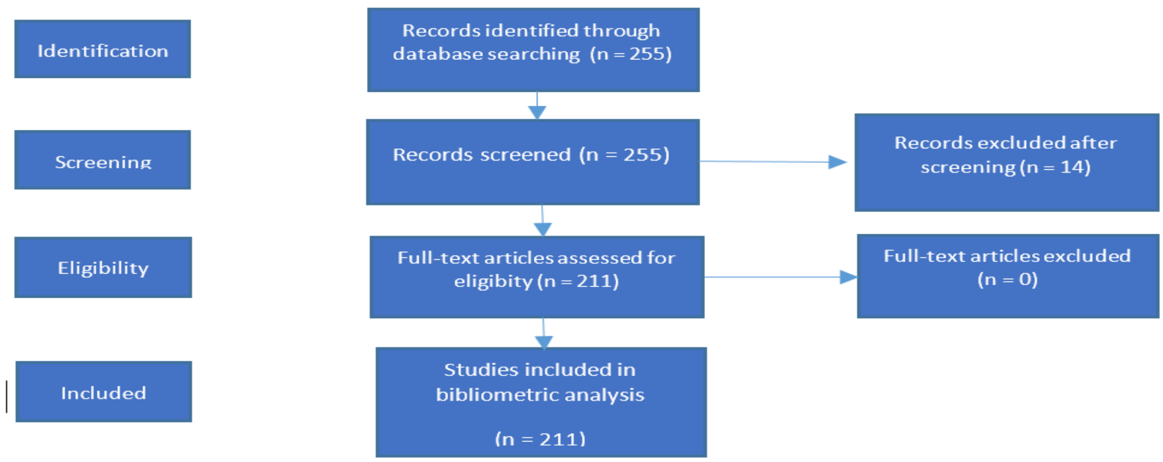
This research was based on Scopus database, which is one of the most significant scientific databases. To identify the articles that related to our topic, we focused on two keywords: "*assessment literacy*" and "*language education*" based on the aforementioned database and screening criteria. However, the specific keywords used in the search query can impact the resulting sample and subsequent analysis, and to yield new insights, alternative keywords were chosen for search queries. Specifically, apart from "*assessment literacy*", the following relevant keywords were selected: "*assessment knowledge*", "*assessment practice*", "*assessment competence*". Regarding language education, the alternatives "*language teaching*", "*language learning*", "*language assessment*" were included in the search queries. With regard to timeline, we terminated our search period at the end of 2021. We only selected publications written in English. Thus, the following search query was used to derive a primary database from Scopus:

| |
|---|
| TITLE-ABS-KEY ((("assessment literacy") OR ("assessment knowledge" ) OR ( "assessment practice*") OR ("assessment competence*")) AND (("language teaching") OR ("language learning") OR ("language education") OR ("language assessment"))) AND (EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR, 2023) OR EXCLUDE (PUBYEAR , 2022 )) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English")) AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOCI")) |

The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Figure 1) was applied to ensure the quality of the document search processing (Moher et al., 2009). Our search yielded an initial 225 documents. We subsequently excluded 14 documents due to the full-text unavailability after screening based on the documents' content. All duplicated records and conference papers were also removed. After this round of manual screen, 211 documents, including journal articles and books/book chapters, were obtained for final analysis. The following fields relating to each document were recorded in the final data: article identity number, article title, source journal, cited relationship, authors, institution, country, link of the document, and publication year.

**Figure 1**

*PRISMA Diagram Identifying Procedure to Refine Documents for Bibliometric Analysis*



### *3.3. Data Analysis*

The "data" analyzed for this review consisted of bibliographic information describing features of the 211 Scopus-indexed documents. These "meta-data" included the author names, titles, publication dates, and author affiliations of the documents, as well as copious citation information. Descriptive statistics were used to conduct trend analyses related to the growth and geography of the LAL literature. A co-occurrence analysis of scientific domains cited in the literature was conducted to uncover the underlying structure of the research field's scientific domains in the context of LAL. This analysis was facilitated using VOS viewer software, with a focus on making the scientific domain co-occurrence analysis more understandable.

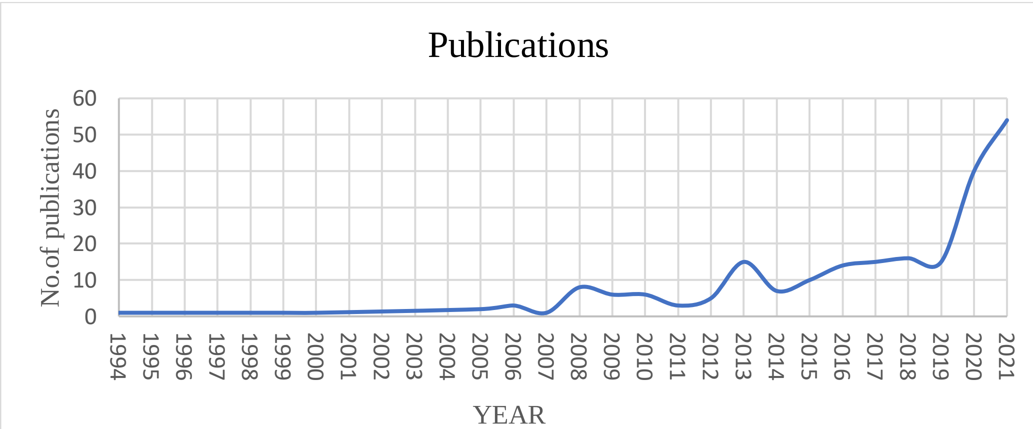
## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1. Publications and Citations*

Figure 2 indicates the number of publications and citations developing between 1994 and 2021 from 211 papers.

**Figure 2**

*Annual Growth of Publications on AL in Language Education Between 1994 and 2021*




Based on the growth trends in publications on AL in language education between 1994 and 2021, we divided the publications into three periods:

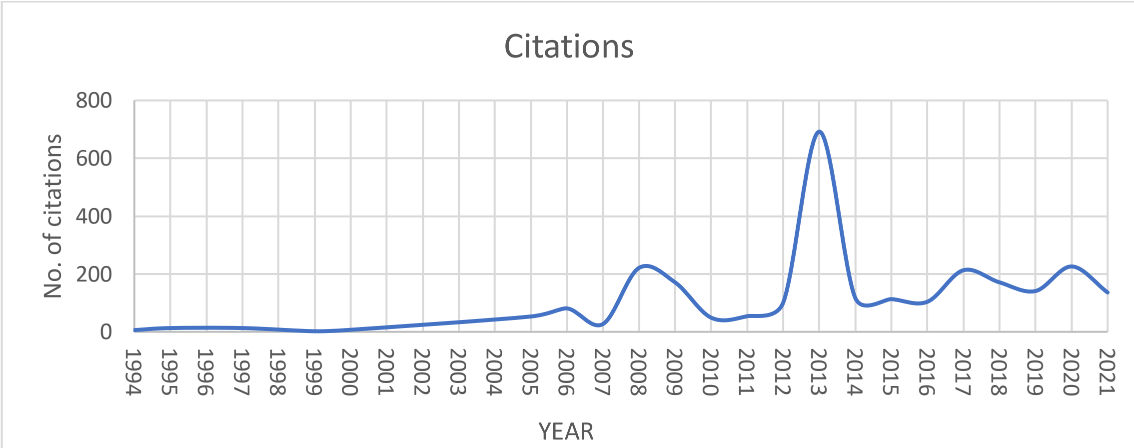
+ 1994 – 2007: ignorant period, during which AL in language education seemed to be overlooked by scholars and only 11 documents were published (0.4% of the total publications);

+ 2008 – 2014: emergent period, during which AL in language education started to attract some attention from scholars and 50 documents were published (22.2% of the total publications);

+ 2015–2021: growing period, during which AL in language education received significant attention from scholars: 164 documents were published (72.9% of the total publications).

**Figure 3**

*Annual Growth of Publications and Citations on AL in Language Education Between 1994 and 2021*

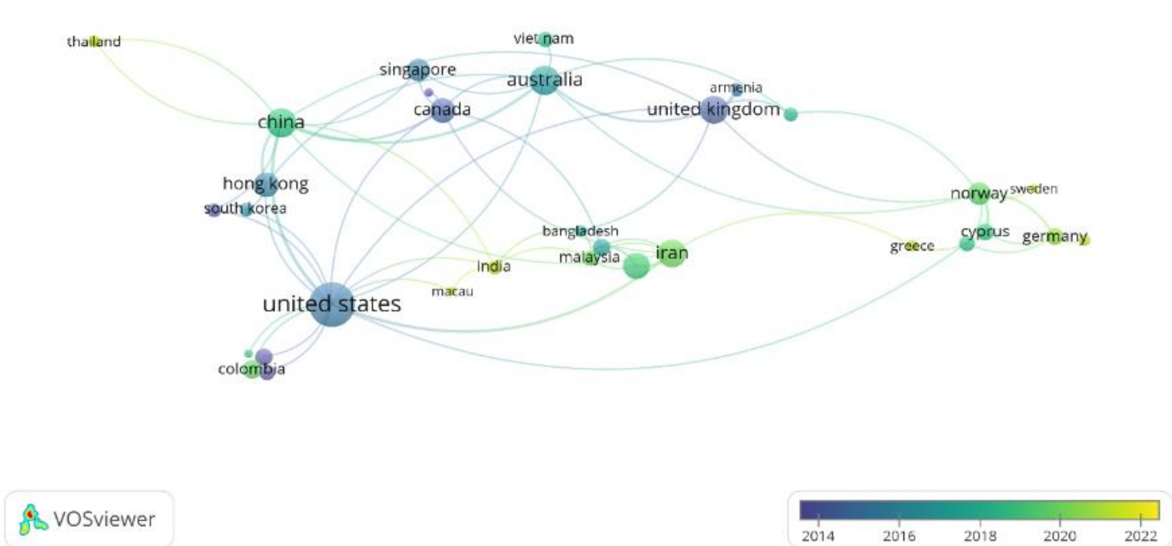



The first article in this field was published in 1994, increased horizontally to 2007 and fluctuated between 2007 and 2012. By 2013, the maximum number of publications reached a high of 692 citations. The number of citations decreased significantly after 2013 to 2016 with the number of citations being 104. However, from 2016 to 2021, the number of publications tended to fluctuate between 136 and 226.

Figure 4 shows the geographical contribution to AL in language education. Authors from 49 countries have (co)authored at least one publication on this topic. Surprisingly, three out-of-region countries, including the US (46 publications), Australia and China (17 publications each) were found to be the most productive countries beside three countries the UK and Iran (15 publications each) and Turkey (13 publications). These countries contributed nearly half of the total published documents. In addition, Canada, Norway and Singapore are countries that have also made a significant contribution to this topic.

**Figure 4**

*The Geographical Contribution to AL in Language Education*



### *4.2. The Most Prominent Authors, Publications and Outlets*

Many AL-related documents in language education were co-authored by authors from the US countries, the UK, and Australia in collaboration with colleagues in other countries. Overall, there were 204 authors who participated in the production of papers on AL in language education.

**Table 1**

*Top 15 Most Cited Authors by Total Articles and Citations*

| Rank | Authors | Affiliations | Cited by |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Inbar-Lourie, O. | School of Education, Tel-Aviv University, Tel-Aviv 69978, Israel | 132 |
| 2 | Lee, I. | Faculty of Education, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong | 118 |
| 3 | Scarino, A. | Research Centre for Languages and Cultures, School of Communication, International Studies and Languages, University of South Australia, Magill Campus, Adelaide, Australia | 105 |
| 4 | Antón, M. | Indiana University, Purdue University, Indianapolis, IN, United States | 84 |
| 5 | Taylor, L. | Centre for Research in English Language Learning and Assessment (CRELLA), University of Bedfordshire, 47 Montague Road, Cambridge, CB4 1BU, United Kingdom | 82 |
| 6 | Malone, M.E. | Center for Applied Linguistics, Associate Vice President World Languages and International Programs, 4646 40th Street NW, Washington, DC 20016-1859, United States | 72 |
| 7 | Lam, R. | Hong Kong Baptist University, China | 71 |
| 8 | Leung, C. & Lewkowicz, J.O. | King's College, London, United Kingdom; American University of Armenia, Yerevan, Armenia | 59 |
| 9 | Pill, J. & Harding, L. | Language Testing Research Centre, The University of Melbourne, Babel Building, Parkville, VIC 3010, Australia; Lancaster University, United Kingdom | 57 |
| 10 | Hill, K. & McNamara T. | Medical Education Unit, School of Medicine, University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia | 54 |
| 11 | Bailey, A.L.& Heritage, M. | University of California, Los Angeles, CA, United States; National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST), Los Angeles, CA, United States | 48 |
| 12 | McNamara, T. | School of Languages and Linguistics, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010, Australia | 46 |
| 13 | Gould, J. | University of South Australia, Adelaide, SA, Australia | 43 |
| 14 | Giraldo, F. | Universidad de Caldas, Manizales, Colombia | 42 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 15 | Barrot, J.S. | Department of English, National University, Manila, Philippines | 41 |

Table 1 lists the top 15 most cited authors by total articles and citations according to the Scopus database. Most of the authors were from developed countries. Of the top 15 authors, only one (Inbar-Lourie, O. from Tel-Aviv University, Israel) received the largest number of citations, at 132, and 5 authors received more than 40 citations. The second most cited author was Lee, I. from Chinese University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, with 118 citations.

Next, we tried to identify the most impactful articles published in this field. Table 2 presents 10 documents with the highest numbers of citations from 1994 to 2021. Notably, most of these articles were published after 2013, coinciding with the period of heightened citation activity. This suggests that these articles likely made significant contributions to the evolving landscape of this field, as they garnered substantial attention and recognition during a time of notable transformation and expansion. These ten articles discuss various topics such as Constructing a language assessment knowledge base (Inbar-Lourie O., 2008), Classroom writing assessment and feedback (Lee, I., 2017) and Language assessment literacy as self-awareness (Scarino, A., 2013). Most articles present qualitative studies and some use quantitative methodologies. The 10 most common articles which are commonly referred to by other researchers are listed in Table 2 following.

**Table 2**

*Top Ten Most Cited Articles*

| **Authors** | **Title** | **Year** | **Source title** | **Cited by** | **Design** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Inbar-Lourie, O. | Constructing a language assessment knowledge base: A focus on language assessment courses | 2008 | Language Testing | 132 | Qualitative |
| Lee, I. | Classroom writing assessment and feedback in L2 school contexts | 2017 | Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts | 118 | Qualitative (Book) |
| Scarino, A. | Language assessment literacy as self-awareness: Understanding the role of interpretation in assessment and in teacher learning | 2013 | Language Testing | 105 | Qualitative |
| Antón, M. | Dynamic assessment of advanced second language learners | 2009 | Foreign Language Annals | 84 | Qualitative |
| Taylor, L. | Communicating the theory, practice and principles of language testing to test stakeholders: Some reflections | 2013 | Language Testing | 82 | Qualitative |
| Malone, M.E. | The essentials of assessment literacy: Contrasts between testers and users | 2013 | Language Testing | 72 | Qualitative |
| Lam, R. | Language assessment training in Hong Kong: Implications for | 2015 | Language Testing | 71 | Qualitative |

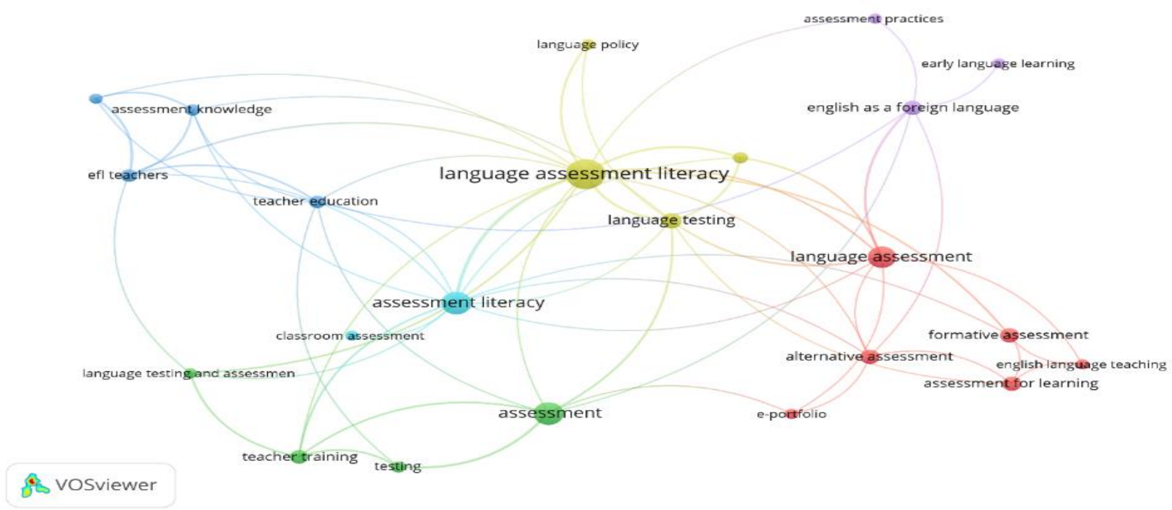
| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | language assessment literacy | | | | |
| Leung, C., Lewkow,icz, J.O. | Expanding horizons and unresolved conundrums: Language testing and assessment | 2006 | TESOL Quarterly | 59 | Qualitative |
| Pill, J., Harding, L. | Defining the language assessment literacy gap: Evidence from a parliamentary inquiry | 2013 | Language Testing | 57 | Qualitative |
| Hill K., McNamara, T. | Developing a comprehensive, empirically based research framework for classroom-based assessment | 2012 | Language Testing | 54 | Qualitative |

### *4.2. Documents Analysis Co-occurrence by Keywords*

The objective of the first stage of the analysis was to explore topics related to AL in language education in research. A co-occurrence analysis of keywords was conducted using VOSviewer on a dataset of 211 documents, aiming to identify common themes and track the evolution of research topics in the field of LAL. Keeping 3 as the minimum number of author keywords occurrences within the identified articles, 24 out of 452 keywords met the threshold. For each of the remaining 24 keywords, the total strength of the co-occurrence links with other keywords was calculated by the VOSviewer software using normalization of associations and full counting algorithm. VOSviewer output is a network (Fig. 5) composed of 24 nodes corresponding to 6 clusters.

**Figure 5**

*Co-occurrence by Keywords of AL in Language Education*




The analysis revealed that LAL studies primarily revolve around key themes such as "assessment literacy," "language assessment literacy," "language assessment," "teacher education," "teacher training," and "EFL." These themes indicate that LAL research is concentrated around topics related to language assessment, particularly concerning teachers in school and classroom settings. Furthermore, certain themes, such as "assessment literacy," "language assessment literacy," "language assessment," held central positions in the network, indicating their importance and prevalence in LAL research. “Teacher education,” “teacher training,” and “assessment practices” also experienced similar growth during this period. This suggests that LAL research has diversified its focus while maintaining core themes, with a significant emphasis on the role of teachers as key stakeholders implementing LAL practices.

Based on the VOS viewer output, clusters were named based on the topics researched, such as “language assessment literacy,” “language assessment,” “teacher education,” “teacher training,” “EFL, ” and “classroom assessment.” In the following sub-sections, the obtained clusters are described through some relevant works on the subject to outline the research interests related to AL in language education.

+ Cluster 1: Language assessment literacy

According to Figure 5, the highest number of occurrences based on keywords are: “language assessment literacy”, “language testing” and “language policy” which show a very strong relationship between these three keywords in the topic of research. This is further proven by the total link strength of 8, and 13 link strength for “language assessment literacy” and “language policy”. Also, this largest cluster appears bright yellow, indicating that the studies in the cluster are newer. It indicates that LAL has been recently researched in accordance with educational policies of language teaching.

+ Cluster 2: Language assessment

In the second cluster, “alternative assessment” and “formative assessment” had a higher frequency. The timeline of keyword co-occurrence nodes reveals the evolution and refinement of LAL topics over time. In terms of the number of occurrences, size of alternative assessment is quite big (7) compared to other terms in this clusters (Figure 5). To be more detailed, specific assessment methods like “formative assessment”, “e-portfolio” occurred around 3 in this cluster, showcasing the development of detailed assessment approaches to enhance language assessment knowledge and practices.

+ Cluster 3: Teacher education

In the third cluster, the term “EFL teachers” was the most frequently mentioned, appearing 11 times. It occupies a central position and exhibits the highest strength with 11 links. Within this cluster, the term "teacher education" was found to have a close association with “assessment knowledge,” with respective link strengths of 9 and 7. This suggests that there is increased emphasis on the assessment literacy of EFL teachers in comparison to general assessment practices, and there is a growing focus on whether teacher education programs are effective in cultivating assessment knowledge.

+ Cluster 4: Teacher training

In the fourth cluster, two terms namely “teacher training” and “language assessment and testing” were found to be closely related compared with other terms. These two terms also have a big circle indicating that they are dominant terms in this cluster, with each represented by 6 and 4 total number of occurrences respectively. Some of the terms such as testing and assessment are scattered and not closely linked. This observation implies that numerous researchers have undertaken investigations concerning the state of LAL among educators and have delved into their training needs. Consequently, it underscores the considerable scholarly focus on LAL training for teachers within the academic community.

+ Cluster 5: EFL

In the fifth cluster, the terms “English as a foreign language” had the biggest circle with a total of 8 occurrences and 7 total links of strength. The term “early language learning” is the second highest in this cluster, demonstrating researchers' significant interest in foreign language teachers when exploring LAL. Also, there are some terms that "assessment practices" have been done since the early stage in the language education.

+ Cluster 6: Classroom assessment

In the sixth cluster, 2 occurrences were seen in classroom assessment with assessment literacy. The circle of the term classroom assessment is smaller than assessment literacy represented by 19 and 17 total number of occurrences and total link of strength respectively. These findings reflect that the issue of classroom assessment is of much concern by researchers around the world.

## 5. Discussion on Research Gaps and Future Research Directions

The study's conclusions showed that from 1994 till 2021, improvements in research and publishing have been made in the area of assessment literacy in language education. This is in line with the claim that LAL research has developed into a thriving research subfield in language testing and assessment and is no longer "*in its infancy*" as Fulcher (2012, p. 117) claimed more than a decade ago (Harding & Brunfaut, 2020). Numerous LAL studies have been published in high-impact language testing and assessment publications, which serves as one example of the emphasis on the field. Significant articles have also resulted from conferences or symposiums hosted by organizations with LAL as the focus as well as LAL special issues of these journals (such as Language Testing 2013). The results also demonstrated how several research in the social sciences, notably in the teaching and learning of languages, have examined literacy assessments. This can be as a result of the fact that this area of expertise focuses on understanding educators, teachers, and students.

We also discovered that LAL studies were under-explored in the contexts of Africa and Latin America. This data lends some credence to the claims made about the geographic origins of LAL study participants by Harding and Kremmel (2016) and Tsagari (2020). This may suggest that LAL hasn't received as much attention as it should in these regions. Instead, LAL research was most common in the Asia-Pacific region, Europe, and the Middle East. This outcome is not unexpected given that evaluation activities are typically performed as a result of the high value placed on EFL training in these situations.

The findings also demonstrated that in the domain of language teaching, qualitative research designs dominated AL research. Instead of using quantitative designs, the majority of studies used mixed-methods and qualitative ones. It can conclude that there is not enough psychometric evidence to warrant the assessment of literacy. While the majority of studies focused on language teachers, particularly EFL teachers, very few studies were conducted from the perspectives of students, policymakers, language testers, teacher educators, and other stakeholders.

This study revealed a proliferation of research that focuses on language instructors' LAL, particularly EFL teachers, and a lack of concern for other stakeholders. These results support the assertions made in various studies (e.g., Lee & Butler, 2020; Pill & Harding, 2013). Language teachers acquire LAL most and need to advance their own LAL before imparting it to learners because they are the main stakeholder who performs a variety of assessment activities inside and outside of the classrooms (Vogt, Tsagari, & Csépes, 2020). Language teachers have so continually received attention in LAL scholarship, which is not surprising.

Other stakeholders, such as policymakers, language testers, admissions officers, test developers, teacher educators, administrators, etc., are underrepresented in LAL studies in addition to learners. Other stakeholders among them are deemed to be removed from the primary assessment operations, with the exception of language testers and test developers (Taylor, 2013). Their LAL is supposedly less noticeable than that of teachers, students, language testers, or test creators who are directly subjected to testing and assessment. Actually, these stakeholder groups must also obtain the proper LAL in accordance with the extent of their participation in assessment activities occurring outside of classrooms (Yan & Fan, 2021). As a result, greater scholarly focus should be given to what LAL is required and how LAL is generated among stakeholders at the assessment core and peripheral.

## 6. Conclusion

The current study has identified four key findings from a review of LAL studies from peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, and book chapters:

(1) LAL studies have been on the rise and become a thriving subfield in language testing and assessment;

(2) most LAL studies were contextualised in the Asia-Pacific region, European countries and the Middle East;

(3) existing studies preferred qualitative designs over quantitative and mixed-methods research;

(4) an overwhelming majority of studies focused on language teachers, especially EFL teachers, while few studies were conducted from perspectives of learners, policy makers, language testers and other stakeholders;

The analysis revealed that LAL's theoretical framework is currently under construction, with a notable emphasis on the perspectives of key stakeholders, particularly “teachers” Research on other stakeholder groups, especially students, has also gained prominence. Future research should explore diverse stakeholders in LAL.

Our review has offered suggestions for future LAL research based on the findings. To acquire a more comprehensive understanding of LAL, it is first important to incorporate the opinions of more professional stakeholders. Expanded research is warranted on LAL of language teachers other than EFL teachers at various career stages. Second, the scope of LAL research should be widened to include subtler methods. More longitudinal research is desired to investigate the LAL developmental trajectories of stakeholders using information gathered through think aloud, journal writing, and narrative framing. Third, LAL regionalization is a developing area of study that requires adequate consideration. It is advised to list and examine common characteristics of LAL development in various circumstances.

The aforementioned findings are anticipated to alert researchers to fresh directions in LAL study and refocus their focus on unexplored areas in LAL literature. The difficulties that academics in this field of knowledge frequently raise need to be given more attention by stakeholders and employers. To meet the needs of more targeted training, a proposed systematic assessment can be carried out to determine the level of language assessment literacy and the elements that influence it. Finally, LAL has emerged as a promising study direction in language testing and evaluation. When contemplating the aforementioned potential research directions, academics are urged to look outside the box.

The research method employed in this study has certain limitations. Firstly, the data collection was limited to Scopus while the other databases include influential journals, valuable publications from other databases may have been omitted. Furthermore, the study focused exclusively on English language journal articles, excluding non-English articles, dissertations, and conference papers. Additionally, to ensure the precision of search results, particularly in collecting and analyzing articles highly centered on LAL, a more stringent search approach was adopted, potentially resulting in a lower number of search results. Future research should consider expanding the scope of the database search and incorporating multiple languages to provide a more comprehensive understanding of developments in the field of LAL, thereby enhancing the richness of the visualized data.

## References

Aria M., Cuccurullo C. (2017). Bibliometrix : An R-tool for comprehensive science mapping analysis. *Journal of informetrics*, *11*(4), 959-975. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.joi.2017.08.007

Baker, B. A., & Riches, C. (2018). The development of EFL examinations in Haiti: Collaboration and language assessment literacy development. *Language Testing*, *35*(4), 557–581. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532217716732

Baker HK., Kumar S, Pandey N. (2020). A bibliometric analysis of managerial finance: a retrospective. *Managerial Finance*. https://doi.org/10.1108/MF-06-2019-0277

Kremmel, B., & Harding, L. (2020). Towards a Comprehensive, Empirical Model of Language Assessment Literacy across Stakeholder Groups: Developing the Language Assessment Literacy Survey. *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *17*(1), 100-120. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2019.1674855

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (2018). Classroom assessment and pedagogy. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 25*(6), 551–575. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2018.1441807

Brindley, G. (2001). Language assessment and professional development. In Elder, C., Brown, A.,

Grove, E., Hall, K., Iwashita, N., Lumley, T., McNamara, T., and O'Loughlin, K. (Eds.) *Experimenting with Uncertainty. Essays in Honour of Alan Davies.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 126–136.

Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2010). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. New York: Pearson Longman.

Callon, M., Law, J., & Rip, A. (1986). *Mapping the dynamics of science and technology: Sociology of science in the real world* (M. Callon, J. Law, & A. Rip, Eds.) Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-07408-2

Cheng, L., Rogers, T., & Hu, H. (2004). ESL/EFL instructors' classroom assessment practices: Purposes, methods and procedures. *Language Testing, 21*(3), 360–389. https://doi.org/10.1191/0265532204lt288oa

Coombe, C., Vafadar, H., & Mohebbi, H. (2020). Language assessment literacy: What do we need to learn, unlearn, and relearn? *Language Testing in Asia, 10*. Article 3. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-020-00101-6

Davies, A. (2008). Textbook trends in teaching language testing. *Language Testing, 25*(3), 327–347. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532208090156

Deygers, B., & Malone, M. E. (2019). Language assessment literacy in university admission policies, or the dialogue that isn't. *Language Testing, 36*(3), 347–368. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532219826390

Ellegaard O, Wallin, JA (2015). The bibliometric analysis of scholarly production: How great is the impact? *Scientometrics, 105*(3), 1809-1831. 10.1007/s11192-015-1645-z

Fulcher, G. (2012). Assessment literacy for the language classroom. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 9*(2), 113–132. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2011.642041

Harding, L., & Brunfaut, T. (2020). Trajectories of language assessment literacy in a teacherresearcher partnership: Locating elements of praxis through narrative inquiry. In M. E. Poehner & O. Inbar-Lourie (Eds.), *Towards a re-conceptualizationof second language classroom assessment* (pp. 61–81). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-35081-9

Harding, L., & Kremmel, B. (2016). Teacher assessment literacy and professional development. In D. Tsagari & J. Banerjee (Eds.), *Handbook of second language assessment* (pp. 413–427). De Gruyter Mouton. https://doi.org/10.1515/9781614513827

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2008). Constructing a language assessment knowledge base: A focus on language assessment courses. *Language Testing, 25*(3), 385–402. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532208090158

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2013). Guest Editorial to the special issue on language assessment literacy. *Language Testing, 30*(3), 301–307. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532213480126

Inbar-Lourie, O. (2017). Language assessment literacy. In E. Shohamy, I. Or, & S. May (Eds.), *Language testing and assessment, encyclopaedia of language and education* (pp. 257–286). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02261-1_19

Lee, J. Y., & Butler, Y. (2020). Reconceptualizing language assessment literacy: Where are language learners? *TESOL Quarterly, 54*(4), 1098–1111. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.576

Malone, M. (2013). The essentials of assessment literacy: Contrasts between testers and users. *Language Testing, 30*(3), 329–344. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02261-1_19

Pill, J., & Harding, L. (2013). Defining the language assessment literacy gap: Evidence from a parliamentary inquiry. *Language Testing, 30*(3), 381–402. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532213480337

Taylor, L. (2013). Communicating the theory, practice and principles of language testing to test stakeholders: Some reflections. *Language Testing, 30*(3), 403–412. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265532213480338

van Eck, N.J., Waltman, L. (2014). Visualizing Bibliometric Networks. In: Ding, Y., Rousseau, R., Wolfram, D. (eds), *Measuring Scholarly Impact*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-10377-8_13

Vogt, K., Tsagari, D., & Csépes, I. (2020). Linking learners' perspectives on language assessment practices to Teachers' Assessment Literacy Enhancement (TALE): Insights from four European countries. *Language Assessment Quarterly, 17*(4), 410–433. https://doi.org/10.1080/15434303.2020.1776714

Xu, Y., & Brown, G. T. L. (2016). Teacher assessment literacy in practice: A reconceptualization. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 58*, 149–162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2016.05.010

Yan, X., Zhang, C., & Fan, J. S. (2018). *"Assessment knowledge is important, but . . . ":* How contextual and experiential factors mediate assessment practice and training needs of language teachers. *System, 74,* 158–168. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2018.03.003

# NĂNG LỰC KHẢO THÍ TRONG GIẢNG DẠY NGÔN NGỮ: CÂU CHUYỆN ĐÃ KỂ CHO ĐẾN NAY

Nguyễn Thị Tố Loan[1], Dương Thu Mai[2]

*[1]Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Trường Đại học Hùng Vương, Nông Trang, Việt Trì, Phú Thọ, Việt Nam*

*[2]Khoa Sư phạm tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, Đường Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Trong ba thập kỷ qua, đã có sự gia tăng đáng kể trong nghiên cứu về năng lực khảo thí trong giảng dạy ngôn ngữ hay còn gọi là năng lực khảo thí ngôn ngữ (viết tắt là LAL), thể hiện bằng sự quan tâm ngày càng lớn của các nhà nghiên cứu hàn lâm và các xuất bản phẩm mới. Do tầm quan trọng của LAL đối với sự phát triển chuyên môn của giáo viên ngôn ngữ, bài viết này áp dụng một quy trình đánh giá có hệ thống để trình bày một đánh giá hiện trạng tổng quan về LAL. Trên dữ liệu của 211 xuất bản phẩm có liên quan được xác định bằng công cụ tìm kiếm Scopus, dữ liệu được phân tích bằng phần mềm VOSviewer để tạo ra phân tích trắc lượng thư mục. Nghiên cứu này đã đưa ra những quan điểm chưa được khám phá hoặc đánh giá đúng đắn bởi các nghiên cứu khác về chủ đề này. Các phát hiện này có một số ý nghĩa liên quan đến tổng quan về LAL hiện nay, chỉ ra các hướng nghiên cứu trong tương lai cũng như các lỗ hổng nghiên cứu. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cung cấp một khuôn khổ vững chắc để hiểu thấu đáo hơn về sự phát triển của các chủ đề nghiên cứu, phương pháp nghiên cứu và xu hướng trong lĩnh vực nghiên cứu khá mới mẻ và hấp dẫn này.

*Từ khóa:* giáo dục ngôn ngữ, năng lực khảo thí, phân tích trắc lượng thư mục, nghiên cứu hệ thống

# CHINA'S EDUCATION EXCHANGE DIPLOMACY IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC IN COMPARISON WITH THAT OF THE U.S. AND SOME IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA

Le Thi Ly *

*VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 6 June 2023
Revised 7 August 2023; Accepted 20 August 2023

**Abstract**: Education exchange has increasingly been identified as an integral overture in China and U.S. foreign policy toward the Asia-Pacific. Legitimate but soft attributes rationalize its prominence though its effects are long-term and seemingly intangible. To win the "hearts and minds" of regional people, China and the U.S. have deployed this public diplomacy tool but differently. This article discusses the criticality of government-initiated education exchange within China and U.S. national strategies and their practice in the Asia-Pacific from a comparative perspective. It asserts that education exchange is well-situated within the two giant powers' foreign affairs management toolkit to rejuvenate and reinforce their images in the region. Chinese initiatives prove adaptable to the region, whereas the U.S. disregards regional variations. However, it does not imply that China would utilise the education exchange tool more effectively than the U.S. Insights into their practice of education exchange diplomacy suggest some implications for China.

*Keywords:* exchange diplomacy, Asia-Pacific, China and the U.S

## 1. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific has been crucial to the diplomatic strategies of its neighbour – China and of another Pacific nation – the U.S. due to its strategic importance. Besides the Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has employed a range of public diplomatic tools across the region through a diverse range of informational, cultural, financial, elite-to-elite, and exchange diplomatic activities to tighten its bilateral ties with regional countries (Custer et al, 2018, pp. 1,3). On the other end of the globe, for its "inextricable link" with the region (U.S. Department of Defense, 2019, p. 2), the U.S. has also implemented a multi-faceted approach to the recently re-defined Indo-Pacific. Its diplomatic relations with the regional countries are regarded as critical as its security partnership with them in the U.S. rebalance (Carter, 2018, pp. 16-17). Meanwhile, the "bedrock" of all relationships is trust, asserted Brown (Mc CLory et al., 2019, p. 105**)**. China and the U.S. have long initiated government-funded exchange programs to build and sustain trust among grantees and their wider networks and ultimately transform it into partnerships. Grantees are immersed in the authentic cultural and social milieu in a host country, so the truthfulness of an intended message is softly reinforced. Moreover, compared to other traditional and non-traditional diplomatic tools, exchange programmes could wield more durable and transformational effects (Brown in Mc CLory et al., 2019, p. 106**)**.

Unlike the U.S., the world's first-ranking soft power in education (Mc CLory et al., 2019),

* Corresponding author.
Email: lylt@vnu.edu.vn/ lelyle.2009@gmail.com

China, as a player in the top 30, has adopted a more "breathable" approach that fits the country's abundant financial resources and adapts to the Asia-Pacific regional conditions. The discussion of existing literature on China's and U.S. translation of education "diplomacy inputs into its desired ends" (Custer et al., 2018, p. 1) hereunder will suggest some implications to improve the effectiveness of Chinese educational exchange diplomacy as a foreign affairs management tool. As defined by Cull, exchange diplomacy is a state "actor's attempt to manage the international environment by sending its citizens overseas and reciprocally accepting citizens from overseas for a period of study and/or acculturalization" (2008, p. 33). However, this paper examines the Chinese and U.S. governments' sponsorship of inbound instead of outbound exchange. It approaches educational exchange as a foreign affairs management tool rather than from the soft power perspective though soft power is the resource and target of the tool.

## 2. Education Exchange as a Foreign Policy Tool

China's recent maritime claims in the Asia-Pacific region have inevitably "casted a long shadow in its backyard" (Custer et al., 2018, p. 1) while international publics' opinions and behaviours have increasingly mattered to its foreign policy (d'Hooghe, 2005, p. 88). This urges Chinese leaders to seek a measure to soften their country's image overseas and envisage it as "a socialist cultural superpower" (Shambaugh, 2015, p. 99). In the 17th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party, President Xi Jinping made the country's soft power enhancement a national goal. China has, in fact, made endeavours to "rejuvenate" its image as a friendly, reliable, and cooperative neighbour of the Asia-Pacific countries (d'Hooghe, 2005, p. 88). Within its "One Belt, One Road" Initiative, promotion of people-to-people ties is one of the five priorities besides trade and investment facilitation measures, infrastructure development, industrial and sub-regional economic cooperation, and financial cooperation (Li, 2015). China has employed multiple public diplomacy outreaches to foreign publics, which embrace people-to-people exchange, cultural symposia and information broadcasting (Custer et al., 2018, p. 1). Student exchange was an instrument to restore China's pre-eminence after a "century of humiliation" since Hu Jintao presidency and is crucial to fulfilling President Xi Jinping's "China Dream" (Dervin et al., 2018; Xinhua, 2014, as cited in Custer et al., 2019, p. 4). Chinese government scholarship programs form a part of China's official development assistance (ODA) rather than a relational foreign public engagement means (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 156). They assist grantees in receiving higher education and training and conducting research opportunities whilst gradually building up a reservoir of goodwill among this cohort.

Educational exchange together with cultural exchange are the positive forces in transnational affairs, articulated Snow (2009, p. 235). It is much more crucial to a nation's security than hydrogen bombs or the Strategic Defense Initiative (Fulbright, 1987, p. 10). As a public diplomacy program, it involves long-term relationship building to facilitate a country's foreign policy roll-out overseas (Nye, 2004, p. 107). Education exchange is government-sponsored, thus serves a country's foreign policy goals (Snow, 2009, p. 233). International exchange enhances a freely reciprocal interchange of information and viewpoints between foreigners who go on an exchange to another country and its local people (Nye 2008, 103; Scott-Smith, 2009, pp. 51-52). Exchange participants' independence from direct political interference during their immersion in local cultural milieu makes them legitimate source of opinion and judgement after their grant completion (Scott-Smith, 2009, p. 53). Hence, this is ideally exercised under minimal sponsors' control (Snow, 2009; Metzgar, 2017). Nonetheless, some scholars, including Frankel, are not convinced by the optimistic outcomes of exchange diplomacy and argue that they are "emotionally-driven myths" (Snow, 2009, p. 235).

Educational exchange goals were first itemized in the U.S. Information and Education Exchange Act of 1948 and later in the Mutual Education and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961. They encompass: 1) deepening mutual understanding between the Americans and the people of other countries; 2) strengthening the ties between the U.S. and other countries; and (3) promoting international cooperation for peaceful relations between the U.S. and the other countries worldwide" (Title 22, Chapter 33, Section 2451). Within U.S. and ASEAN Plans of Action for 2011-2020 period, exchange initiatives, particularly the Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Programme and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI), are regarded as a means to strengthen their partnership and promote understanding and studies of the U.S. and the regional countries (ASEAN, 2011, p. 12; ASEAN, 2015, p. 12).

China Scholarship Council (CSC, n.d.), a non-profit institution affiliated with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and responsible for administration of Chinese government scholarship (CGS) programs since 1997, also pronounces a shared vision with the U.S. The Chinese government envisions the influential sphere of education exchange going beyond education, deepening mutual understanding and strengthening ties of friendship between the Chinese and people worldwide. This forms a foundation for broader Sino-foreign collaborations in multiple facets. International students from ASEAN countries connect their home and China and are the future of that relationship, stated ASEAN-China Center secretary-general Yang Xiuping (The Jakarta Post, 2016). China MoE with an aspiration to enhance the country's "international status, influence, and competitiveness" plans to increase its financial sponsorship to assist more international students from other developing countries and diversify its beneficiaries (2010, p. 35). Exchange milieu in China is said to familiarize exchangers from the Asia-Pacific with its political and professional beliefs and ideals and daily communication with local people creates a cadre of "willing interpreters and receivers" (Nye, 2004, p. 16; Custer et al., 2019, p. 4). These today intercultural exchangers are potentially future leaders or opinion influencers in their home countries (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 162; Scott-Smith, 2009, p. 53; Custer et al., 2019, p. 27).

Zhang et al. (2003) disclosed that at least over 30 CGS exchange alumni have held ministerial-levelled positions, more than 20 have acted as ambassadors, over 30 as counsellors to China and over 200 have become (associate) professors at universities in their home countries worldwide (as cited in Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 162). In addition, many others have worked for other foreign embassies in China and engaged in a myriad of cooperation activities (Dong & Chapman, p. 162). However, these figures are not entirely as strong as the U.S. exchange alumni. There have been over 1,800 alumni ministers, 26 current foreign ambassadors to the U.S., 24 working in their countries' Supreme Court, 85 Nobel laureates, over 110 Pulitzer Prize winners and 42 Forbes "30 Under 30" awardees (ACPD, 2009, p. 42). Funding exchangers from the Asia-Pacific, the Chinese government is motivated by two desires: gathering greater favourability among them in the short-term and forming a closer alignment with these potential "opinion leaders" to create a receptive milieu for its foreign policies (Custer et al., 2019, p. 37). This non-coercive means is expected to assuage the anxiety of a China threat (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 52). Exchange effect might spill over into the alumni's social and professional networks due to their interpretation of knowledge, experience and expertise gained overseas to them (Scott-Smith, 2009, p. 53; Metzgar, 2017). Hence, candidate selection and these intercultural interpreters' satisfaction with their exchange determine the success of exchange overtures.

## 3. Key Players in Educational Exchange

Both the Chinese and U.S. governments entrusted their embassies overseas and a specialized institution with participant selection and administration of exchange activities. As mandated by the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Act of 1961, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs' (ECA, n.d.) mission is to cultivate "mutual understanding between the people of the U.S. and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange that assist in the development of peaceful relations" (ECA, n.d.). The Bureau is identified with a diplomatic role and is a U.S. foreign policy tool rather than a provider of U.S. government educational or development assistance. It aims at improving U.S. foreign relations, strengthening its national security, and advancing U.S. international influence through "flexible, responsive exchange programs" (ECA Bureau Functional Strategy 2018-2020). The Bureau's visions are in line with the values of "fairness, equity and inclusion" which the U.S. promote worldwide. Aware of exchange alumni's "opinion leader" effects on U.S. global competitiveness, the ECA gives priority to the support for their professional development and gaining leverage over alumni networks.

China's similarly functioning body to the ECA is the Chinese Scholarships Council (CSC, n.d.). It is a non-profit institution entrusted by the MoE and responsible for the recruitment of and operational supports for CGS recipients since 1997 (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 160; UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok, 2013, p. 22). Similar to the ECA, the CSC builds partnerships with local educational institutions and foreign counterparts for student and scholarly exchange and publishes exchange program annual assessment reports (Custer et al., 2019, p. 27). However, the CSC is not regarded as a diplomatic organ advancing its national foreign policy, but seemingly a pure academic exchange administrative body. Instead, 480 Confucius Institutes (CIs) in six global continents (UCLA Confucius Institute, n.d.) (known as Hanban) have promoted the understanding of Chinese language and culture worldwide and facilitated trust in China (CRS, 2008, p. 27; Custer et al., 2018, p. 27). Whilst the ECA was founded in U.S. "hegemonic mindset" to engage the global youth with exchange activities and spread its country's values (Roach, 2018), CIs rely on China's cultural richness to influence public opinion toward the country. Though established under joint agreements between educational institutions in host countries and in China, CIs are "dictated" by the MoE. This provokes a "backlash" against their pedagogic, content, and operational dependence and China's selling an ideology (CRS, 2008, p. 27; Nguyen, 2014; Custer et al., 2018, p. 27; Roach, 2018).

The ECA administers Fulbright Programs, English language, citizen exchange, and student leader programs while U.S. embassies manage the U.S. Speakers Program (CRS, 2008, p. 24). It remains independent from U.S. embassies and consulates which are closely linked with the U.S. government (Roach, 2018). Chinese embassies take a similar role of promoting government-sponsored exchange opportunities among students from the Asia-Pacific (Custer et al., 2019, p. 27). However, China MoE takes much more control over national education system than the U.S. Department of Education. It interferes into national curriculum, textbooks at all levels, including tertiary education and manages state budget for inbound international student exchange (Custer et al., 2019, p. 27). This might have had negative impact on the recruitment of CGS program participants as its education suffers from education quality and pedagogic method reputations such as memorization and content censorship (Albert, 2018).

## 4. China's and U.S. Practice of Education Exchange in the Asia-Pacific

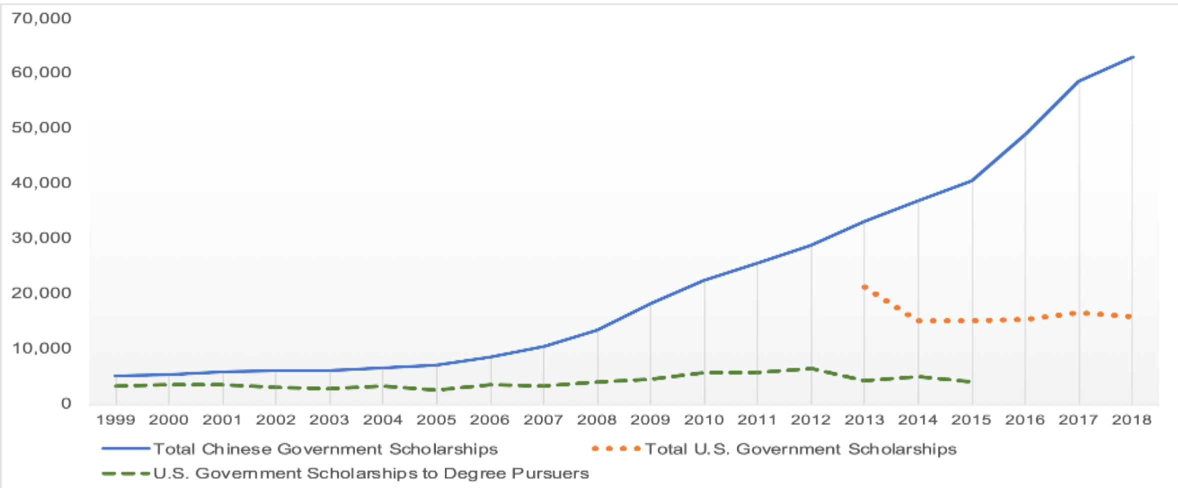
U.S. education exchange was initiated in 1940 with 130 Latin American journalists invited to the U.S. (ECA, n.d.). A decade later, a batch of 33 students from East European countries came to the Tsing-hua University (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 159). There were 88,000 recipients of CGSs during 1950-2000 period (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 160). The number of

CGS grantees has sharply increased and the 2018 figure almost doubled the 2013 while that of U.S. sponsored exchangers remained stable around 16,000 following the peak of over 21,000 in 2013 (Figure 1). With respect to financial budget, Chinese government funded 469 million dollars in 2018, whereas the U.S. sponsored 230 million dollars in 2018 (Kennedy, 2018; ACPD, 2019, p. 44). CGS (2010) figures have reflected China MoE's medium and long-term national strategy goals to promote and upgrade its international exchange and cooperation. Asian CGS awardees normally make up roughly 50% of the total number (3,076 over 6,153 in 2003 and 8,409 over 18,245 in 2009) (China MoE, 2006; UNESCO & UNESCO Bangkok, 2013, pp. 22-23). Some Chinese provinces have recently initiated scholarship funds to attract ASEAN students to their higher education institutions (ICEF Monitor, 2016).

CGSs for degree pursuers substantially outnumber U.S. scholarships (Figure 1). 40% of degree pursuers in China received some level of financial support from the Chinese government in 2015 (159,000 students, ICEF Monitor, 2016). This reflects the Chinese Education Committee's aspiration to raise the effectiveness of CGSs by recruiting more advanced degree students (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 160) and complies with the MoE's plan to attract and collaborate with high-level professionals (2010, pp. 3-4). Meanwhile, the number of U.S. sponsored degree pursuers remains stable around 3,000-4,000 and reached 6,400 once in 2012 (Institute of International Education). Le's research outcomes (2019) highlighted that there existed a positive link between degree pursuit and Vietnamese exchangers' academic and social experiences in the U.S. which were significantly and positively associated with their understanding and favourability of the host country. This partly rationalizes Chinese government's exchange participant recruitment strategy.

**Figure 1**

*Chinese and U.S. Government Scholarships Granted to International Students, 1999-2018*[1]




Of nine full and partial Chinese government scholarships to support degree pursuers launched in 2014 are two schemes which target at those from ASEAN and Pacific countries (China Scholarship Council, 2014). China/AUN Scholarship Program and China/Pacific Islands

[1] Data for U.S. Government Scholarships draw upon the Institute of International Education's publish data on "Primary Source of Funding of International Students" and the ACPD reports in 2014, 2017 and 2019.

Data for Chinese Government Scholarships are from China Scholarship Council Annual Report 2010 (in Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 57) and China MoE's data in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

Forum (PIF) Scholarship Program are initiated to attract the influx of students from the Asia-Pacific and enhance mutual understanding and friendly relationships between the Chinese and the regional publics. One of the achievements of President Barack Obama's Rebalance strategy to the Asia-Pacific was advancing people-to-people ties (The White House, 2015). The Fulbright U.S.-ASEAN Visiting Scholars initiated in 2012 and the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative in 2013, which genuinely aimed to strengthen the U.S. ties with the ASEAN, reaffirmed U.S. strategic priority of and long-term commitment with the region (U.S. Mission to ASEAN, n.d.).

Besides the government scholarships dedicated to ASEAN students, they benefited from a wide array of academic and cultural exchange schemes sponsored by the Chinese and U.S. governments. Other non-degree and short-term exchange programs are Learners for the Chinese Language (one or two school years), HSK Winner scholarships (one year maximum), one 6-week grant for Chinese foreign teachers and up-to-5-month awards for researchers of Chinese culture (CSC, n.d.). The diversity of CGSs is not comparable to that of U.S. government scholarships, but their degree and non-degree program duration is generally much longer than U.S. grants. Nearly 40 degree and non-degree exchange programs sponsored by the U.S. government vary in duration and target at diversified age and professional expertise groups (ACPD, 2014). International Ph.D. students are funded by the Chinese government for up to four years, master's students for three years and undergraduates for five years. Meanwhile, master's degree pursuers are sponsored for maximum two years under the Fulbright Foreign Student Program, the longest U.S. sponsored scheme and non-degree exchange participants are financed 10 months maximum and 1 day minimum (ACPD, 2014). With longer duration and bigger number of grant recipients than the U.S. scholarships, CGSs undoubtedly bring Chinese country, culture, customs, and values to a myriad of intercultural communicators. China MoE's interest in granting long-term scholarships to international students might be worthwhile. Myungsik and Elaine discovered that 25% more of those with 2-3 years of experience in China reported their favorability of the country than those on shorter exchange schemes (2018, p. 63). In Le's study (2019), duration effect was mediated through degree pursuit. Degree pursuers whose stay in the U.S. was longer than non-degree exchangers were more involved in academic and cultural activities, gained more understanding of and developed a more positive attitude toward the host country than their counterparts.

While the U.S. government relies on the ECA and embassies overseas to recruit international students, the Chinese engages all forms of school. Roughly 100 CIs were founded in Asia-Pacific countries during 2014-2018 and centred most in South Korea, Thailand, and Japan (Custer et al., 2019, p. 35), which are in top 10 countries of origin of international students in China (Statista Research Department, 2020). Domestically, exchange and collaboration between Chinese and international primary, middle, and vocational schools through joint schools or projects are encouraged (China MoE, 2010, pp. 34-35). China signed bilateral cooperative agreements with the governments and partnerships with the institutions of 16 Asia-Pacific countries by 2010 (Custer et al., 2019, p. 34). Its top three partners were Australia (63 agreements and partnerships), Japan (46) and Singapore (49). However, strong institutional bonds with those developed countries did not correlate with a massive influx of students to China from these countries (China MoE, 2011). This might compel China MoE's long-term recruitment strategy shift to developing countries (MoE, 2010, p. 35).

In the form of an ODA, CGS is more adaptable to the Asia-Pacific economic and educational conditions than U.S. exchange schemes (CRS, 2008, p. 2). It aims to financially support recipients' getting access to higher education, conducting research or receiving Chinese language training in China (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 156). This explains why CGSs do not regard candidates' academic merit and leadership attributes as important as U.S. scholarships do despite their association with the future "opinion leader" effects of exchange programs. In a larger scale, China's public diplomacy message is also adjusted to global regions (d'Hooghe, 2005). While it brands a China with respect of human rights in Europe and in the U.S., the "China's Peaceful Rise" is communicated to Asia. Chinese foreign assistance is welcome in developing countries as it prioritizes development and does not impose standards policy or government performance for them (CRS, 2008, p. 2). Meanwhile, counter-terrorism and advancing democracy are the objectives of U.S. foreign aid and certain criteria including free market are required (CRS, 2008, p. 4). U.S. exchange schemes serve as a reinforcement of its diplomatic relationship with foreign countries. The Fulbright Program does not reach the countries with which the U.S. has not built official diplomatic relationships (ACPD, 2019, p. 45). By contrast, China considers scholarships as a tool to "jump-start" interest in China as an education destination among those from the Asia-Pacific (Custer et al., 2019, p. 29). Recent survey and research outcomes have supported the Chinese government's seeking to build relationships with developing countries through exchange diplomacy. China is embraced more by citizens of developing countries with lower-performing economies and less sense of democratic values than China than by those in more advanced countries (Chu et al., 2015; BBC World Service, 2017; Myungsik and Elaine, 2018; Pew Research Center, 2019; Tang et al., 2020). Furthermore, China enhances CGS impacts by supporting its alumni with job seeking upon grant completion and building strong alumni networks (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 66). There, in fact, exists a positive connection between being employed and CGS recipients' sympathetic attitude towards the host country (Chu et al., 2015, p. 413).

## 5. Asia-Pacific Public Opinion of China

Chinese exchange diplomacy has two-layered objectives: obtaining favourable public opinion among the Asia-Pacific public and aligning potential leaders with China's foreign policy interests (Custer et al., 2019, p. 4). This paper first examines exchangers' experience in China since their sentiments on the country and their willingness to interpret their exchange experience and knowledge of China to their nationals are largely contingent on their exchange satisfaction (Scott-Smith, 2009, pp. 51-53; Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 62). Then, it discusses the achievements of CGS goals, which encompass gaining recipients' support for China's multiple facets and regional people's "hearts and minds".

### *5.1. International Exchangers' Sentiments on China*

China's exchange overture has made a good progress in improving exchangers' experience (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 157). Up to 77% of international exchangers reported their satisfactory experience (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 165). Nonetheless, more students from developing countries than those from highly developed ones were content with their experience in China (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 64). A majority of international students from the Asia-Pacific uphold a view that CGSs with full tuition fees, stipends for travelling, accommodation and living costs are more generous than other government-funded scholarships (Custer et al., 2018). Chinese government's Ph.D. full scholarship in 2014 was, on average, equivalent to four rural Chinese households' annual income (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 55). However, living allowance seemed insufficient for those in big cities, which caused their negative living experiences (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 166; Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 62). Nearly 50% of respondents to Latief and Lefen's questionnaires agreed that CGSs could cover daily expenses, but not traveling home or to other Chinese provinces or cities (2018). Indeed, CGSs after adjusting for purchasing power parity, were only equivalent to a half or two-thirds of other scholarships offered by developed nations such as Australia Awards, UK Chevening, and U.S. Fulbright Program (Custer et al., 2019, p. 32).

Goldman found that international students' dissatisfaction with their exchange experiences also resulted from daily communication with international student affairs staff at university (1965, as cited in Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 157). Failure in peer interactions and the feelings of being unwelcome by Chinese students and faculty were also predictors of CGS recipients' satisfaction (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 165). Disclosed by Dong and Chapman, worries about logistical issues and safety were linked with international exchangers' experiences (2008, p. 169). The displeasure suggests that China still has rooms for improvement with respect to international student services at university. Furthermore, students were not satisfied with the lack of freedom in exchanging ideas, particularly on democracy and human rights and over-supervision (Chen, 1965, as cited in Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 157). Despite improvement, pedagogy and education curriculum were still sources of concern for CGS grantees (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 167). In Latief and Lefen's study (2018), roughly 70% of survey respondents felt fulfilled with them.

In general, China is generous in sponsoring international students; however, it has apparently not done well in providing inputs for exchange impacts. This can be improved by both the Chinese government and host institutions and exchangers themselves. Personal efforts largely shaped exchangers' engagement in cultural and academic activities, embrace of the host country and acting as a transmitter of knowledge and experience to their networks later (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 170). This suggests academic merit and leadership be selection criteria.

30% more of CGSs (1,000 grants) were given to those from less politically free countries in the Asia-Pacific than their regional counterparts during 2000-2018 (Custer et al., 2019, p. 37). Top origins of Chinese government funded international students were Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, which are either partly free or not free (Freedom House, n.d.). Moreover, the countries with lower GDP per capita than China received roughly 5,600 scholarships more than their opposite group (Custer et al., 2019, p. 37). These reflect the Chinese government's nation branding strategy targeting at developing economies with low freedom level and economic performance. These countries normally find it difficult to satisfy the requirements of U.S. foreign assistance apparently. China obviously fills in the gap left by the U.S. in the Asia-Pacific.

Myungsik and Elaine's survey outcomes disclosed that 22% more of respondents positively shifted their attitude about China after their exchange experiences (2018, pp. 64-65). It is noted that 90% of their respondents were from Africa and Asia and 62% were from poorer countries than China (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, p. 55). Dong and Chapman found that almost all CGS recipients believed that the Chinese government's exchange scholarship would play a role in promoting a long-term relationship between China and their home countries (2008, p. 167). These suggest that Chinese government's provision of educational opportunities for the elites from developing countries had diplomatic leverage. Myungsik and Elaine also emphasized the division in post-grant sentiments on China among those with different political and economic national backgrounds. The ratio of positive and negative view holders among those from politically free countries was 2:1, whereas that among those from partly free and non-free countries was 3.4:1 and 2.6:1, respectively (Myungsik & Elaine, 2018, pp. 61-62). The divide was sharper among those from the more advanced economies than China and those from less developed countries. The former group's ratio of favourable over unfavourable attitude was 1.7:1 whilst the latter group's ratio was 4.1:1 (Myungsik & Elaine, pp. 61-62). These findings justify the Chinese government's oversize attention to those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Majorities of Asia-Pacific countries are identified with low income and freedom levels, which lends creditability to the assumption that the regional publics' generalized orientation towards China is much similar to that of CGS grantees.

### *5.2. Asia-Pacific Public Opinion of China*

It is uncertain that China's educational exchange diplomacy exerts some impacts on the Asia-Pacific general public as there are no clues whether CGSs precede regional public opinion, or they are built upon existing goodwill for China. Added to that are the interfering factors that come from China itself (such as its economy and culture), exchangers' personal efforts or U.S. economic relations with and military presence in the region. Reliant on existing survey data, this paper examines Asia-Pacific public's favourability of China as a country, its general regional influence, economic influence, and its leadership. There remains a gap between how China and the regional people perceive it (McGiffert et al., 2009, p. 8). To some extent the U.S.'s attraction still surpasses China's.

Compared with the 1990s, China's image among global publics has sharply declined across regions (BBC World Service, 2017; Gallup, 2019). Although the Asia-Pacific public hold more negative attitude toward China than elsewhere in the world, a decline has persisted since 2002 (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 12). To illustrate, Japanese people's positive views of China dropped 41%, Indonesian people by 37% and South Korean public by 32% (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 12). Meanwhile, the Pakistani continued to rate China positively during 2014-2017 period (BBC World Service, 2017, p. 36). That is the only shining point where the number of CGSs and China's favourable ratings both increased. The Chinese government granted more scholarships to Pakistani students than any other Asians with 7,000 grants in 2017 (The Express Tribune, 2018). With the view that student exchange is an ideal means to strengthen Pakistan-China strategic partnership, the Chinese government decided to increase the number of scholarships for Pakistani students annually to 20,000 (Daur, 2019). Generally, China's degrading image in the Asia-Pacific shows that the spill-over effects of exchange overture are not up to the Chinese policymakers' expectation or if exist, the impacts have not been profound enough to counter the by-product of China's aggressiveness in the region.

Chu et al. indicate that those that viewed their own country's democracy level was more advanced than China inclined to rate China negatively (2015, p. 413), which was supported by Pew Global Survey (2019, p. 31). Japan and South Korea with 2018 Aggregate Freedom House scores of 94 and 86, respectively tended to hold more unfavourable views of China (Freedom House, n.d.; Pew Research Center 2018, p. 57). The scores of Indonesia and the Philippines (64 and 62, respectively) were lower than the above countries, but were much higher than China (14) (Freedom House, n.d.). Their general publics' ratings of China were less critical than the Japanese and Filipinos. Pew survey also reveals that the stronger a country's citizens viewed their economy in comparison with China, the less passionate their embrace of China was (2019, p. 30). Japan and South Korea whose GDP per capita was higher than that of China upheld a somewhat less positive attitude towards China than the Philippines, India, and Indonesia (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 30). Japanese public's unfavourable ratings of China were exceptionally high (78%) due to their long-standing sovereign dispute over Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. So far, the patterns of CGS grantees' perception of their host country are similar to their national publics. China apparently still struggles for the Asia-Pacific public's "hearts and minds" and lags behind the U.S. Roughly two-thirds or more survey respondents from Japan, the Philippines and South Korea named the U.S. as their most dependable ally (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 12). While mistrust in China's rose, willingness to align with the U.S. were reported by 86% of Vietnamese, 83% of Filipinos and 61% of Singaporean (Tang et al., 2020, p. 29). Given China's aggression in claiming its marine territory in the South China Sea, their suspicion of it was understandable (Tang et al., 2020, p. 37).

Regarding Chinese vs U.S. general influence, 47% of Asia-Pacific citizens considered China as the most influential power while 35% named the U.S. (ABS Wave III survey 2010-2012, as cited in Chu et al., 2015, p. 402). Compared with 2019, 8% more of regional people regarding China as the biggest political and strategic influencer (Tang et al., 2020, p. 17); however, its influence was often expressed as a concern (Chu et al., 2015, pp. 403-404; Tang et al., 2020, p. 17). By contrast, the U.S. lost prominence among 4% of the regional public (31% in 2019 and 27% in 2020) (Tang et al., 2020, p. 17). The decline was most visible among Thai and Malaysian people (Tang et al., 2020, p. 37). U.S. military presence in the region is welcome by the ASEAN countries but the superpower is said unwilling to understand their concerns and engage with them via diplomatic channels (CRS, 2008, p. 77). China has filled in this void by offering regional countries generous aids and investment and strengthening people-to-people ties with the region (CRS, 2008, p. 77). Laos, Cambodia, and Brunei, three countries with the regional top ratios of CGSs per 100,000 persons in 2018 (Custer et al., 2019, p. 31), are most optimistic about their future bilateral relations with China (Tang et al., 2020, p. 37). However, fewer people in the Asia-Pacific preferred strong economic ties with China than with the U.S. (26% vs. 64%) (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 12). While the Japanese and South Korean supported their current economic relations with the U.S. much more than with China (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 9), the Australian and Indonesian shared an opposite viewpoint (Pew Research Center, 2019, pp. 21-22). Pluralities of Asia-Pacific tended to view Chinese investment in a sceptical light as they feared that their economies would be overdepdent on the investor (Pew Research Center, 2019, pp. 5, 34).

Chinese leadership's global approval slightly declined during 2012-2015 period, but jumped back to 34% in 2018 (Gallup Poll 2006-2018, as cited in Custer et al., 2019, p. 43). When global confidence in most global leaders' performance has dropped, President Xi Jinping, in fact, seems to gain more approval than President Donald Trump and President Vladimir Putin (Ray, 2019). Most Filipinos (58%) believed that President Xi would do the right thing in world affairs, whereas majorities of South Korean and Japanese people expressed an opposite opinion (Pew Research Center, 2019, p. 37). The Chinese leadership is said to have "matched their rhetoric with action" and mobilized diversified supports from government bureaus, media networks, its people and international students to rejuvenate their international image (Custer et al., 2019, p. 47). Although gaining back some confidence in leadership, the overall favorability picture of China is still grey.

In general, a charming China is more welcome in the less developed countries associated with lower records of governments' respect for freedom than in their counterparts. Targeting at these countries, China is realistic when building up a friendship on some existing goodwill other than on hatred. The negative correlation between Asia-Pacific countries' economic status and civil liberties and their nationals' ratings of China does exist among CGS exchangers. Yet to what degree exchangers' post-grant actions have influenced their national publics' opinion of China is not easy to quantify. Research results evidenced that most exchangers became more favorable of China after their experience in China. Hence, China has achieved its aim of aligning the future regional leaders with its foreign policy interests through education exchange overture. CGS alumni's greater reservoir of goodwill and high record of prominent individuals have enabled their sponsor to believe that to some extent they have adopted favorable views of China in their decision making process. Notwithstanding, the degree to which these leaders have brought their experience, understanding, and approval of China into their work requires further research evidence.

**6. Discussion**

The employment of educational exchange is vital for China to "rejuvenate" its image in the Asia-Pacific. In response to the question "What can China do to improve relations with your country?", 21% believed that China can enhance mutual understanding through people-to-people exchange (ASEAN Studies Centre and ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2021, p. 38). However, there needs primary data that directly examines the correlation between exchange programmes and positive attitudes towards China (if any) and the mechanism of influence to firmly conclude the attitudinal effects of China's exchange diplomacy. China's image among the Asia-Pacific public is affected by a series of factors and in various ways (Custer et al., 2019, p. 42). They range from its emergence as a global economic superpower, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), its aggressiveness in territory claims, democratic ideas, culture, history, and education to the presence of other global powers in the region. Hence, the following suggestions do not attempt to directly target each of them, but generally to improve the effectiveness of its exchange diplomacy.

As CGSs form a part of China's development aid to the developing countries and are aimed at assisting foreign students pursuing their higher education in China, it has given less emphasis on the scholarship recipients' academic quality and leadership. Meanwhile, Scott-Smith concedes, exchanges "cannot be easily fine-tuned into a political instrument" and then selecting participants becomes critical as it helps reduce risks. In fact, these intercultural communicators' efforts proved the most significant predictor of their satisfaction with their studying and living experience in China and their post-exchange positive perception towards their host (Dong & Chapman, 2008, p. 170). The more energies they devoted to their studies, the more engaged they were in cultural and academic pursuits, the more pleasant they found their experience in China , not to mention the more potential they have to become future elites and "opinion leaders". Thus, at the core of China's exchange diplomacy, there should be a clear distinction between an assistance and a diplomatic tool. If education exchange is a channel for China to support other less developing countries, quantity may be prioritized. However, if it is a public diplomacy tool, participants' qualities are important as they decide its spill-over and long-term effects and China's ability to set up alignment with future leaders.

The success of exchange diplomacy requires a comprehension among direct practitioners about their roles. Apart from the Chinese government's generous scholarships and endeavours to internationalize its education system, universities, a broad context in which exchange participants have daily communication and expose to Chinese diversified aspects, play a role. International service staff seem to be at the forefront in gaining China's attraction, hence they need to be professionally well-trained to understand their role in the whole process of wielding their country's effects. In addition, it is not easy to search for a well-designed and published agenda to attract international students from Chinese universities, whereas they need to promote themselves in the international pool rather than giving a description. More than that, separating domestic and international students' living accommodations has limited their opportunities to interact with each other, exchange ideas and mutual understanding deepening. Festivities during international students' experience in China enhance cultural exchange, but strong alumni networks also reinforce exchangers' spirit, support each other, and spread their knowledge and experience to others after their grant completion. Either the China Scholarship Council or the universities themselves should conduct students' experience evaluation and exchange impacts' assessment on a regular basis to understand their success and necessary adjustments.

## 7. Conclusion

China has proven its well-thought education exchange strategies and highly adaptable implementation approach than the U.S. It targets the participants from the less developing countries with lower record of freedom in the Asia-Pacific where there already exists a certain reservoir of goodwill for it, which enables exchange activities to win the general publics' hearts. At the same time, instead of applying a set of criteria regarding human rights, individual freedom, and free markets to all targeting countries like the U.S., China has given priority to assisting the beneficiaries. Chinese education exchange has been effective in gaining more positive perceptions among the CGS recipients. Nevertheless, their "spill-over" effects on their home countries' general publics have not been strong enough to balance against the negative influence of China's actions and authoritarian regime. More assessment efforts to justify the spill-over effects resulting from CGSs are required. China's strong economy and abundant financial resources can bring global exchange participants to the country, but China has had less control over their satisfaction with their experience and favourability of the country, let alone their interpretation of their experience and knowledge about China to their networks of contacts. Hence, China needs to envision exchange programmes as a diplomatic tool and prioritize merit and leadership in grant recipient selection. Moreover, the country should upgrade its education system and facilitate scholarship recipients' exposure to their culture and values. That necessitates the active engagement of the Chinese government's bureaus and universities.

## References

Albert, E. (2018). *China's big bet on soft power*. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/chinas-big-bet-soft-power

ASEAN. (2011). *Plan of action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. Enhanced partnership for enduring peace and prosperity (2011-2015).* https://asean.org/asean/external-relations/united-states/

ASEAN. (2015). *Plan of action to implement the ASEAN-U.S. strategic partnership (2016-2020).* https://asean.org/asean/external-relations/united-states/

ASEAN Studies Centre, & ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute. (2021). *The State of Southeast Asia 2021 report. https://www.iseas.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-State-of-SEA-2021-v2.pdf*

BBC World Service. (2017). *Sharp drop in world views of US, UK: Global Poll*.

https://globescan.com/images/images/pressreleases/bbc2017_country_ratings/BBC2017_Country_Ratings_Poll.pdf

Carter, A. (2018). *Reflections on American grand strategy in Asia*. https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/reflections-american-grand-strategy-asia

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2006). *International students in China*.

http://www.china.org.cn/living_in_china/abc/2008-12/08/content_17989903.htm

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2010). *China's national plan for medium and long-term education reform and development (2010-2020),* China MoE.

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2011). *Over 260,000 international students studying in China in 2010*.

http://old.moe.gov.cn//publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/moe_2809/201103/115886.html

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2017). *Statistics of Chinese students studying in China in 2016*.

http://www.moe.gov.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwfbh_2017n/xwfb_170301/170301_sjtj/201703/t20170301_297677.html

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2018). *Growing number of foreign students choosing to study in China for a degree across multiple disciplines*.

http://en.moe.gov.cn/News/Top_News/201804/t20180403_332258.html

China Ministry of Education (MoE). (2019). *Statistical report on international students in China for 2018.* *http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201904/t20190418_378692.html*

Chinese Scholarship Council (CSC). (2014). *Chinese Government Scholarship Programs*. http://english.www.gov.cn/services/study_in_china/2014/08/23/content_281474982976468.htm

China Scholarship Council (CSC). (n.d.). *The Scholarship System*. http://www.cscse.edu.cn/publish/portal0/tab132/info8900.htm

Chu, Y., Kang, L., & Huang, M. (2015). How East Asians view the Rise of China. *Journal of contemporary China, 24*(93), 398-420.

Congressional Report Service (CRS). (2008). *Comparing global Influence: China's and U.S. Diplomacy, Foreign Aid, Trade, and Investment in the Developing World*. Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division and Thomas Coipuram, Jr. Knowledge Services Group.

Cull, N. J. (2008). Public diplomacy: Taxonomies and histories. *The Annals of the American academy of political and social science, 616*, 31-54.

Custer, S., Russell, B., DiLorenzo, M., Cheng, M., Ghose, S., Desai, H., Sims, J., & Turner, J. (2018). *Ties That Bind: Quantifying China's public diplomacy and its "good neighbor" effect*. https:www.aiddata.org/publications/ties-that-bind

Custer, S., Prakash, M., Solis, J., Knight, R., &Lin, J. (2019). *Influencing the narrative: How the Chinese government mobilizes students and media to burnish its image*. https://www.aiddata.org/publications/influencing-the-narrative

d'Hooghe, I. (2005). Public diplomacy in the People's Republic of China. In J. Melissen (Ed.) *The New public diplomacy: Soft Power in international relations.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Dong, L., & Chapman, D. W. (2008). The Chinese Government Scholarship Program: An effective form of foreign assistance? *International Review of Education, 54*(2), 155-173.

Freedom House. (n.d.). https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores

Fulbright, W. J. (1987). Preface. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science, 491*, 10.

Gallup. (2019). *China.* https://news.gallup.com/poll/1627/china.aspx

ICEF Monitor. (2016). *China moving to expand student recruitment in Southeast Asia.* https://monitor.icef.com/2016/12/china-moving-expand-student-recruitment-southeast-asia/

Kennedy, K. (2018). *China boosts international student budget by 16% as student target nears.* The PIE News. https://thepienews.com/news/china-boosts-international-student-budget-by-16-as-student-target-nears/

Latief, R., & Lefen, L. (2018). Analysis of Chinese government scholarship for international students using analytical hierarchy process (AHP), *Sustainability, 10*(7). https://doi.org/10.3390/su10072112

Le, T. L. (2019). *Vietnamese exchangers' perceptions of the U.S. as a measure of the effectiveness of its exchange Diplomacy*, 14th BISA US Foreign Policy Working Group Annual Conference, Dublin, Ireland.

Li, M. (2015). China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: New Round of Opening Up? *S.Rajaratnam School of International Studies Bulletin*. https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/CMS_Bulletin0015.pdf

McCLory, J., Brown, A., Brown, K., Chehadé, F., Crabtree, J., Duncombe, C., Kausikan, B., Koh, L., Matthews, K., Nye, J., Pamment, J., Sugumaran, S., & Wang, J. (2019). *The Soft Power 30: A Global ranking of soft power 2019.* Portland and USC Center on Public Diplomacy.

McGiffert, C., Alterman, J., Bliss, K., Chow, E., Cooke, J., Flanagan, S., Glaser, B., Harding, B., Kaplan, J., Kuchins, A., Levy, R., Forman, J., Mitchell, D., Moreira, S., Murphy, M., Smith, J., & Zheng, D. (2009). *Chinese soft power and its implications for the United States: competition and cooperation in the developing world*. Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Metzgar, E. (2017). Willing interpreters and receivers: American alumni of the Japan exchange and teaching (JET) program. *Palgrave communications,3*. https://doi.org/10.1057/palcomms.2017.13

Myungsik, H., & Elaine, T. (2018). Socialisation of China's soft power: Building friendship through potential leaders. *China: An International Journal, 16*(1), 45-68.

Daur, N . (2019). *China will now give 20,000 scholarships to Pakistani students each year*. https://nayadaur.tv/2019/02/china-will-now-give-20000-scholarships-to-pakistani-students-each-year/

Nguyen, V. C. (2014). Confucius Institutes in the Mekong Region: China's soft power or Soft border? *Issues & Studies, 50*(4), 85-117.

Nye, J. (2004). *Soft Power: The means to success in world politics.* Perseus Books Group.

Nye, J. (2008). Public diplomacy and soft power. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science, 616*, 94-109.

Pew Research Center. (2019). *China's economic growth mostly welcomed in emerging markets, but neighbors wary of its influence*. https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/12/05/chinas-economic-growth-mostly-welcomed-in-emerging-markets-but-neighbors-wary-of-its-influence/

Ray, J. (2019). *Image of U.S. Leadership Now Poorer Than China's*. https://news.gallup.com/poll/247037/image-leadership-poorer-china.aspx

Roach, E. (2018). *Confucius Institutes and U.S. Exchange Programs: Public Diplomacy Through Education*. https://wenr.wes.org/2018/04/confucius-institutes-and-u-s-exchange-programs-public-diplomacy-through-education

Scott-Smith, G. (2009). Exchange programs and public diplomacy. In N.Snow and P. M. Taylor (Eds), *Routledge handbook of public diplomacy.* Routledge.

Shambaugh, D. (2015). China's soft-power push: The Search for respect. *Foreign affairs, 94*(4), 99-107.

Snow, N. (2009). Valuing Exchange of Persons in Public Diplomacy. In N.Snow and P. M. Taylor (Eds), *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomac*y. Routledge.

Statista Research Department. (2020). *Number of foreign students sutdy in China 2018*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/430717/china-foreign-students-by-country-of-origin/

Tang, S. M., Hoang, T.H., Qian, A.S., Ong, G., & Pham, T.P.T. (2020). *The State of Southeast Asia: 2020 Survey report.* The ASEAN Studies Centre, ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute.

The Express Tribune. (2018). *Over 1,000 Pakistani students enrolled in Chinese universities on scholarship this year.* https://tribune.com.pk/story/1818424/1-1000-pakistani-students-enrolled-chinese-universities-scholarship-year/

The Jakarta Post. (2016). *China seeks more students from Southeast Asian countries*. https://www.thejakartapost.com/youth/2016/10/25/china-seeks-more-students-from-southeast-asian-countries.html

The White House. (2015). *Fact Sheet: Advancing the Rebalance to Asia and the Pacific*. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/11/16/fact-sheet-advancing-rebalance-asia-and-pacific

UCLA Confucius Institute. (n.d.). *Confucius insitute worldwide*. https://www.confucius.ucla.edu/about-us/confucius-institutes-worldwide

UNESCO and UNESCO Bangkok. (2013). *The International mobility of students in Asia and the Pacific.*

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD). (2014). *2014 Comprehensive annual report on public diplomacy and international broadcasting.*

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD). (2017). *2017 Comprehensive annual report on public diplomacy and international broadcasting.*

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD). (2019). *2019 Comprehensive annual report on public diplomacy and international broadcasting.*

U.S. Congress. (1948). *The U.S. information and education exchange act of 1948.*

U.S. Congress. (1961). *The mutual education and cultural exchange act of 1961*.

U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy (ACPD). (2019). *Comprehensive annual report on public diplomacy and international broadcasting.*

U.S. Department of Defense. (2019). *Indo-Pacific strategy report: Preparedness, partnerships, and promoting a networked region.*

U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) (n.d.). *History and mission of ECA.* https://eca.state.gov/about-bureau/history-and-mission-eca

U.S. Mission to ASEAN (n.d.). *Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative*. https://asean.usmission.gov/yseali/yseali-about/

World Bank. (2019). *GDP per capita (US$).* https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD

# NGOẠI GIAO TRAO ĐỔI GIÁO DỤC CỦA TRUNG QUỐC VỚI KHU VỰC CHÂU Á - THÁI BÌNH DƯƠNG TRONG SO SÁNH VỚI HOA KỲ VÀ MỘT SỐ HÀM Ý ĐỐI VỚI TRUNG QUỐC

Lê Thị Lý

*Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,*
*Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Trao đổi giáo dục ngày càng được xem là một công cụ không thể thiếu trong chính sách ngoại giao của Trung Quốc và Hoa Kỳ đối với khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương. Tính hợp pháp và mềm dẻo đã lý giải vị thế của công cụ ngoại giao này, mặc dù công cụ có tác động trong dài hạn và khó để định rõ. Để giành được cả "trái tim và khối óc" của người dân trong khu vực, Trung Quốc và Hoa Kỳ đã triển khai công cụ ngoại giao nhân dân này nhưng theo những cách thức khác nhau. Từ góc độ so sánh, bài báo sẽ thảo luận vai trò của trao đổi giáo dục trong chiến lược quốc gia và thực tiễn áp dụng ngoại giao trao đổi của Trung Quốc và Hoa Kỳ tại khu vực châu Á - Thái Bình Dương. Bài báo khẳng định rằng trao đổi giáo dục có vị trí quan trọng trong chính sách đối ngoại của hai cường quốc nhằm mục đích cải thiện và củng cố hình ảnh trong khu vực. Trong khi Hoa Kỳ bỏ qua những khác biệt giữa các khu vực, Trung Quốc đã có những sáng kiến, thay đổi phù hợp giúp ngoại giao trao đổi của quốc gia này có khả năng thích ứng với khu vực. Tuy nhiên, điều đó không có nghĩa là Trung Quốc đạt được hiệu quả trong ngoại giao trao đổi hơn Hoa Kỳ. Từ việc thảo luận về chính sách và thực tiễn của ngoại giao trao đổi của hai quốc gia, tác giả sẽ đưa ra một số gợi ý nhằm cải thiện hiệu quả của ngoại giao trao đổi Trung Quốc.

*Từ khoá:* ngoại giao trao đổi, Châu Á - Thái Bình Dương, Trung Quốc và Hoa Kỳ

# CONSTRAINTS ON THE VARIABILITY IN ENGLISH VOICE ONSET TIME PRODUCTION: EVIDENCE FROM SPONTANEOUS SPEECH

Nguyen Thi Quyen*

*School of Languages, International University, Vietnam National University Ho Chi Minh City, Quarter 6, Linh Trung Ward, Thu Duc City, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

Received 15 May 2023
Revised 7 August 2023; Accepted 20 August 2023

**Abstract:** Voice onset time (VOT) - an aspect of stop production, is known to be constrained by a number of word-level and speaker-level factors. While there has been extensive experimental research on VOT production, few studies have situated this aspect in naturally-occurring spontaneous speech. The goal of this study is twofold. First, we determine if the factors that affect VOT production in experimental studies conducted in speech laboratories are also relevant for VOT production in spontaneous speech. Second, we explore the possible interactions among those factors. In this study, a spoken corpus consisting of clips from a reality TV show was analyzed using a semi-automatic VOT measurement method that allows for the quick and reliable processing of large numbers of VOT measures. The findings confirm the effects of word-level constraints in the expected directions; however, we find negligible effects of speakers' individual differences, namely speech rate and speaker's gender, on VOTs. The current study sheds new light on a range of factors that were previously identified as significantly affecting the patterning of VOTs found in experimentally-elicited data.

*Keywords*: VOT, stop production, spontaneous speech

## 1. Introduction

The variability of sound production is conditioned by various phonetic and phonological factors (e.g., phonological context, the language-specific realization of the contrasts, and coarticulatory constraints) and speakers' individual differences. One way to examine this variability is by analyzing phonetic cues, such as voice onset time (VOT). VOT measures the timing between the release of the stop closure and the onset of voicing in the following sonorous segments (e.g., vowels, glides and liquids), and is commonly used to distinguish between voiced stops on the one hand and aspirated and unaspirated stops on the other in many languages, including English. In English, the phonetic realization of the /p/ sound is typically more aspirated than that of the /b/ sound, which is usually phonetically devoiced, resulting in a longer positive VOT value for [p] compared to [b]. These English voiceless stops generally exhibit VOT durations ranging from 40 ms to 100 ms. Meanwhile, voiced stops in English are often devoiced with the exception of those occurring in intervocalic positions, resulting in negative VOTs since the vocal cords start vibrating before the release of the stops (Forrest et al., 1989; Klatt, 1975; Lisker & Abramson, 1964).

A host of factors are known to influence VOT measures, including linguistic factors

* Corresponding author.
Email address: ntquyen@hcmiu.edu.vn

such as place of articulation of the stop sounds, the position of the stop sounds in a syllable, stress placement (Cho & Ladefoged, 1999; Klatt, 1975; Whiteside et al., 2004), lexical frequency and non-linguistic factors such as speaker gender, individual speaking rate, age and emotional state (Koenig, 2000; Ryalls et al., 2004). The location in the vocal tract where the stop consonant is produced has been shown to affect VOT, with longer VOTs measured for velars than for coronals and labials (Lisker & Abramson, 1967; Volaitis & Miller, 1992). The context in which the stop consonant appears also affects VOT, with voiceless stops in initial position having longer VOT values than those in medial or final position. Speaker characteristics such as age, gender, and dialect can also influence VOT, with males having longer VOTs than females and older speakers having shorter VOTs than younger ones. The rate of speech, voice quality, and emotional state of the speaker also affect VOT, with faster speech and creaky voice resulting in shorter VOT values, while anxious or excited speakers tend to have shorter VOTs than calm or relaxed ones.

Previous research has primarily examined the effects of these factors on VOT using carefully controlled speech elicited in phonetic labs, such as read word lists, read sentences, or read passages. However, how these factors influence VOT in naturally occurring spontaneous speech remains unclear, largely due to the difficulty in deriving phonetically robust VOT measures from conversational speech, which can be more time-consuming. Thus, the aim of this study is to investigate if the aforementioned factors affect VOT in spontaneous speech similarly to controlled experiments and to identify any potential interactions among these factors. Studying the variability of VOT production in spontaneous speech is important as it can shed light on how speakers produce speech in natural settings and help gain a better understanding of the complex nature of speech production and its variability.

## 2. Constraints on the Variability in VOT Production

### *2.1. Linguistic Factors*

Variation in VOT is constrained by a complicated set of linguistic factors (Auzou et al., 2000, Docherty, 1992). Phonological voicing and aspirates are the most significant factors affecting VOT, with VOT behaving differently for voiced and voiceless stops (voiced < unaspirated voiceless < aspirated voiceless). Furthermore, place of articulation heavily influences VOT durations, with VOT expected to increase progressively for bilabial, alveolar, and velar stops (Docherty, 1992; Lisker & Abramson, 1967; Nearey & Rochet, 1994). The phonological context also affects VOT, including following vowel height and following segment identity. Several experimental studies conducted in laboratories have observed that VOT durations are longer before high vowels than low vowels (Berry & Moyle, 2011; Klatt, 1975). Additionally, VOT durations are also found to be longer before consonants in complex onsets than before vowels in CV syllables (Docherty, 1992; Nearey & Rochet, 1994). These findings suggest that the phonetic context in which stop consonants are produced can impact VOT durations.

Recently, there have been investigations into various aspects of words that could affect VOT durations, but some findings remain inconclusive. In one study, Yao (2009) analyzed unplanned American spontaneous speech and discovered that more frequently used words have shorter VOT durations. However, in a replication study that employed read word lists, Yu et al. (2013) found no significant impact of lexical frequency on VOT. Another factor that could be relevant is syllable stress, which has been observed to lead to longer VOT durations, as noted by Cole et al. (2007) and Stuart-Smith et al. (2015). However, this trend is more consistent for voiceless stops than for voiced counterparts. Similarly, speech rate has a voiced-voiceless asymmetry, with VOT decreasing significantly as speech rate increases for voiceless stops, but not for voiced stops, as observed in studies by Miller et al. (1986) and Stuart-Smith et al. (2015).

### *2.2. Speaker-related Factors*

VOT can be influenced by various speaker-related factors such as age, ethnicity, and gender, and their interactions can also play a role. For example, Ryalls et al. (1997) and Ryalls et al. (2004) examined the effect of ethnicity and gender in younger and older African-American and Caucasian-American male and female speakers and found significant differences in VOT among younger speakers, with male and African-American speakers producing more voicing for voiced stops. However, in older speakers, no significant effects of ethnicity or gender were observed. Turning to the age factor, although several studies have investigated the relationship between VOT and aging, the results have been inconclusive. While Ryalls et al. (2004) reported that older speakers (over 70) have shorter VOT durations than younger speakers, other studies, such as Petrosino et al. (1993) and Torre and Barlow (2009), have found no significant age-related differences in VOT or complex interactions between age and gender. It follows that VOT values may reflect age both as a socially-conditioned life stage and as a physiological consequence of aging. Table 1 below shows a summary of factors constraining VOT durations.

**Table 1**

*Factors Constraining VOT Durations*

| | |
|---|---|
| anterior | posterior |
| low vowels | high vowels |
| preceding vowel | preceding consonant |
| unstressed syllables | stressed syllables |
| high lexical frequency | low lexical frequency |
| high speech rate | low speech rate |
| male | female |

## 3. The Study

The above discussion on the different constraints on VOT measures in experimental and carefully controlled studies leads us to the question whether these same constraints affect VOT production in spontaneous speech and how they interact with each other. In this paper, we aim to investigate the extent to which these constraints affect the duration of VOT in word-initial voiceless stops only. The reason for including only word-initial voiceless stops is that initial voiced stops are frequently devoiced in English but not always, and closure voicing is still observed in their phonetic realization, which can cause complications for annotation and analysis. By focusing on this specific aspect, we hope to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of factors such as lexical frequency, syllable stress, and speaker-related factors like ethnicity, age, and gender on VOT durations. Through this investigation, we hope to provide new insights into the mechanisms that underlie VOT production in spontaneous speech and the various factors that shape it.

### *3.1. Sample Description*

For the purposes of examining natural VOT production, speech data was collected from seasons 30-35 (2020) of the reality TV show The Challenge. The contestants on this show play in teams to compete against each other in a variety of missions to win prizes and advance in the game. Around 25 minutes of audio was extracted from the show, featuring twenty different contestants who speak different dialects of American English. Demographic information such as age, gender, and dialect spoken is provided in Table 2, along with the amount of data collected from each contestant. The exchanges between speakers are brief and consist mainly of questions and answers, with the overall speech register being casual and conversational. This type of spontaneous spoken data offers a valuable opportunity to investigate VOT production in the most natural context possible.

**Table 2**

*Demographic Information of Speakers and Amount of Data for Each Speaker*

| | **Speakers** | **Gender** | **Age** | **Dialect spoken** | **Total length of speaker's initial voiceless stops** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | P.P | M | 20 | North Central English | 0:59 |
| 2 | G.H | M | 23 | Inland Northern English | 1:33 |
| 3 | S.B | M | 23 | Metropolitan New York | 1:34 |
| 4 | V.P | M | 20 | Metropolitan New York | 0:35 |
| 5 | S.B | M | 23 | Metropolitan New York | 1:56 |
| 6 | L.R | M | 21 | Northeastern English | 1:07 |
| 7 | J.R | M | 27 | Pennsylvania | 1:05 |
| 8 | L.J | M | 25 | Philadelphia English | 0:55 |
| 9 | K.H | M | 25 | Philadelphia English | 0:48 |
| 10 | G.H | M | 22 | Southern | 1:27 |
| 11 | L.P | M | 39 | New Orleans | 0:52 |
| 12 | C.A | M | 25 | Western American English | 1:21 |
| 13 | N.A | F | 26 | Metropolitan New York | 1:42 |
| 14 | M.A | F | 24 | Northeastern English | 1:10 |
| 15 | N.D | F | 38 | Northeastern English | 1:17 |
| 16 | D.N | F | 31 | Northeastern English | 1:12 |
| 17 | D.W | F | 32 | Northeastern English | 1:01 |
| 18 | A.C | F | 25 | North Central English | 1:51 |
| 19 | K.J | F | 26 | Philadelphia English | 0:57 |
| 20 | C.V | F | 35 | Western American English | 1:32 |
| | | | | **Total** | **24:54** |

### *3.2. Data Preprocessing*

Before force-aligning each audio clip from The Challenge seasons 30-35 (2020), two research assistants cross-checked both the orthographic transcription and audio. Afterward, a version of the HTK-based aligner from FAVE (Rosenfelder et al., 2011) was utilized for the force-alignment process. VOT measurements (in ms) for all word-initial voiceless stops (n = 18,437) were semi-automatically conducted following a two-step procedure outlined in Stuart-Smith et al. (2015). AutoVOT software (Keshet et al., 2014) was used to measure VOTs for voiceless stops in the first step, and the results were manually inspected, corrected, and coded by three other research assistants in the second step.

The coding scheme consisting of three labels was utilized by three annotators. The first label indicated that the automatic prediction was correct, while the second label indicated that the automatic prediction was incorrect but could be easily corrected, and therefore was corrected. The third label was used when the data was unusable due to errors in alignment, speaker overlap, background noise, or transcription errors. Inter-coder agreement was determined by manually correcting 10% of the VOT data that was automatically predicted. Predictions from AutoVOT were corrected for 2,121 voiceless stops, which accounts for approximately 12.2% of the total predicted VOT measurements. Unusable VOT measurements for all three voiceless sounds accounted for 29.6% of the total data. Ultimately, the final dataset consisted of 12,272 tokens, including 2,786 [p] tokens, 5,379 [t] tokens, and 4,107 [k] tokens, after excluding the unusable VOT measurements. Table 3 illustrates the breakdown of tokens by the three labels.

**Table 3**

*Number and Proportion of Voiceless Stops Automatically Measured*

| **Voiceless stops** | **n** | **Correct** | **Corrected** | **Not usable** | **Final datasets (n)** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| [p] | 2,994 | 2,063 (68.9%) | 723 (24.1%) | 208 (7.0%) | 2,786 |
| [t] | 9,313 | 4,627 (49.7%) | 752 (8.1%) | 3,934 (42.2%) | 5,379 |
| [k] | 5,130 | 3,461(67.5%) | 646 (12.6%) | 1,023 (19.9%) | 4,107 |
| Total | 17,437 | 10,151 (58.2%) | 2,121 (12.2%) | 5,165 (29.6%) | 12,272 |

The two variables in our study, speaking rate and lexical frequency, were operationalized as follows. The rate at which a person speaks was determined by dividing the number of syllables in a phrase, which was identified as a portion of speech separated by at least 60 milliseconds of silence or non-speech, by the duration of that phrase in seconds. Kendall's (2013) approach was adopted to exclude pauses from the speaking rate calculation, with a cutoff of 60 ms. As for lexical frequency, it was determined by referring to Subtlex-UK, a new and improved word frequency database for British English, and transforming the frequency values into logarithmic scale after retrieving the orthographic form for each token.

### *3.3. Statistical Analysis*

The aim of this study is to investigate the correlations between VOT duration and seven variables outlined in Section 2. We utilized mixed-effects linear regression models with the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2014) in R (R Core Team, 2014) to achieve this, where VOT was represented as a function of the variables that were discussed earlier. Because we were mainly interested in voiceless stops with positive VOT values, which could result in an imbalanced distribution of VOT, we used the logarithm of VOT as the dependent variable in the models. The fixed and random effects incorporated into the models are described in detail below.

#### 3.3.1. Fixed Effects

The seven main effects, including five word-level variables and two speaker-level variables were included in the models. Specifications are detailed in Table 4 below:

**Table 4**

*Type and Levels of Variables Included in the Models*

| | **Variables** | **Type (levels)** |
|---|---|---|
| **Word-level** | Place of articulation | factor (bilabial, alveolar, velar) |
| | Following vowel | factor (non-high, high) |
| | Following segment identity | factor (vowel, consonant) |
| | Syllable stress | factor (unstressed, stressed) |
| | Lexical frequency | continuous |
| **Speaker-level** | Speaking rate mean | continuous |
| | Gender | factor (male, female) |

Helmert contrasts were used to code categorical variables with the intention of reducing collinearity and making it easier to understand the main effect terms in the models. Table 3 provides information about the levels of each variable used. In order to answer the research questions, we included main effect terms for the seven variables in our models. The continuous variables, Lexical frequency and Speaking rate mean, were centered by subtracting their mean. We evaluated the possibility of interactions between the variables by (1) generating graphs to identify potential interactions in cases where one variable appeared to adjust the other's effect on VOT, and (2) conducting stepwise backward model selection using the step() function in the lmerTest package in R to explore all potential two-way and three-way interactions between the seven variables.

#### 3.3.2. Random Effects

To account for the non-independence of tokens from individual words (12,272 tokens vs. 950 types), random effects were incorporated in the models for *words* and *speakers*. Random intercepts for both *words* and *speakers* were included, as recommended by Allen et al. (2003) and Sonderegger (2012), to address variations among speakers and words, along with other sources of variability. In each model, every possible by-word and by-speaker random slope was included to accommodate the variation among speakers and words in the impacts on VOT that fixed-effect terms captured. This method also prevents Type I error in the fixed-effect coefficients. Furthermore, by including both speaker random intercepts and slopes, it provides some control over factors that were not considered fixed factors in the models.

## 4. Results

### *4.1. Exploratory data analysis*

The relationship between VOT and the seven variables mentioned above is shown in Figures 1-7. Figure 1 shows plots of the relationship between VOT and gender. From this figure it can be seen that female speakers generally have longer VOT although it appears that male speakers vary in terms of VOT duration. Figure 2 shows plots of the relationship between speaking rate and VOT. There seems to be a small negative relationship between VOT and speaking rate as indicated by the relatively flat trend line as well as big standard error of the trend line.

**Figure 1**

*Relationship Between VOT and Gender*

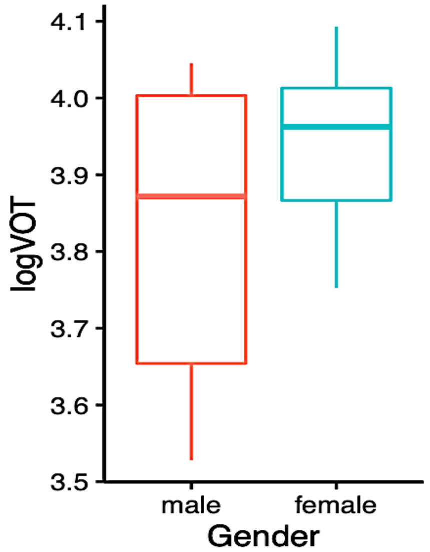



**Figure 2**

*Relationship Between VOT and Speaking Rate*

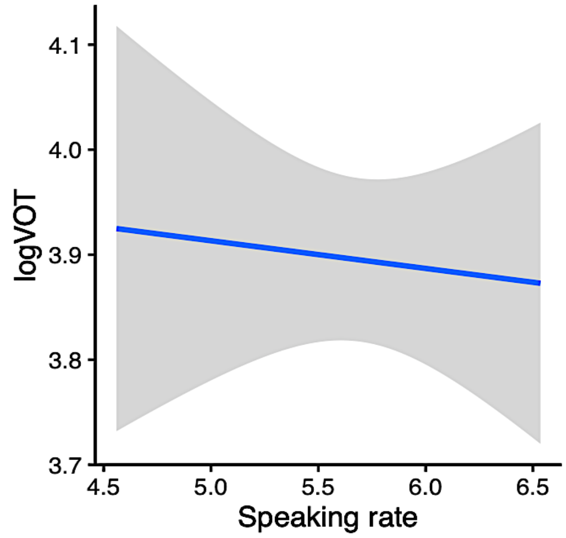



**Figure 3**

*Place of Articulation and VOT*

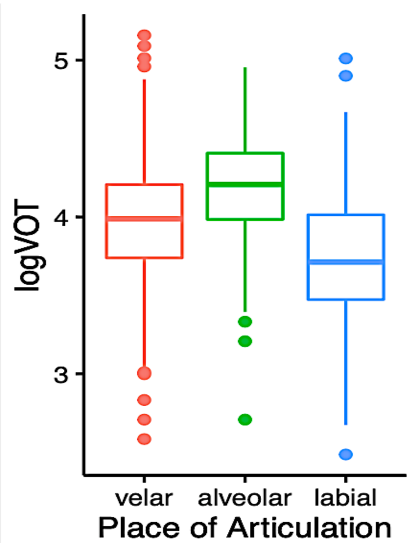



**Figure 4**

*Vowel Height and VOT*

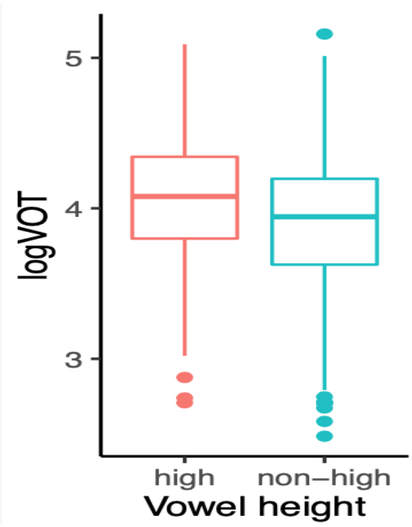


Figure 3 shows plots of the relationship between place of articulation and VOT production. As can be seen from Figure 3, the place of articulation of a stop can have an effect on its VOT production. Velar and alveolar stops appear to be produced with longer VOT compared to bilabial stops. However, highest VOT durations are observed with alveolar stops, which is unexpected given the earlier discussion. Figure 4 displays the relationship between VOT and vowel height in which VOT is larger with high vowels and smaller with low vowels, which is as expected.

**Figure 5**

*Following Segment Identity and VOT*

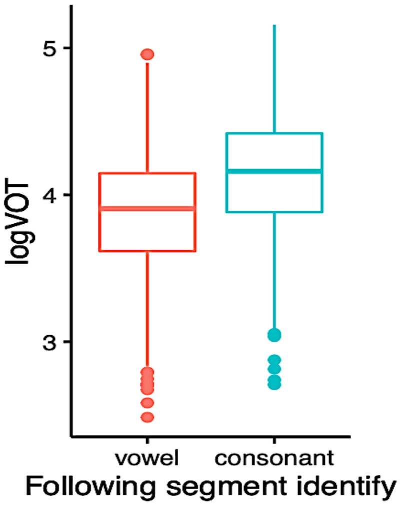



**Figure 6**

*Syllable Stress and VOT*

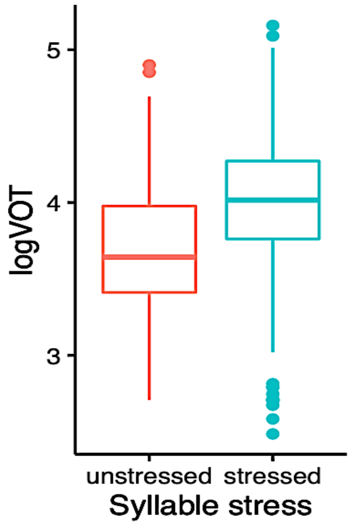
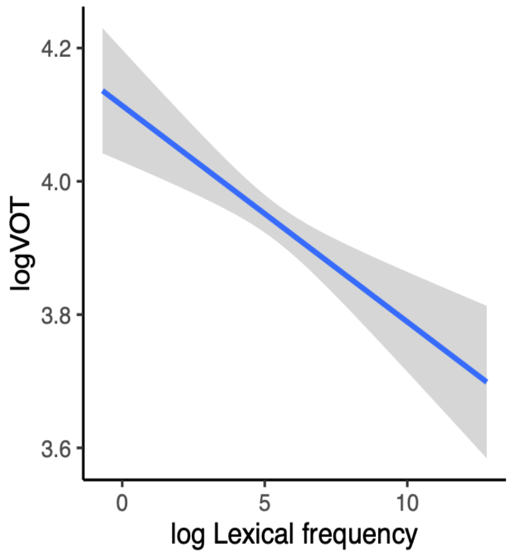



**Figure 7**

*Lexical Frequency and VOT*

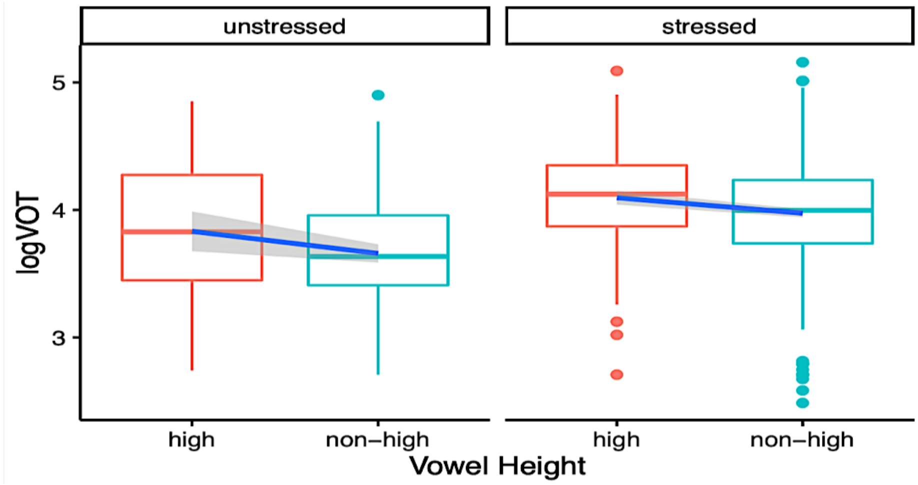



Another word-level factor, following segment identity, appears to modulate VOT as well, as can be seen in Figure 5. A stop consonant is likely to be produced with a longer VOT when it is followed by a consonant (in a consonant cluster) than by a vowel (in a CV syllable). Syllable stress appears to modulate VOT duration as well, as can be seen in Figure 6. It can be seen that when a stop consonant occurs in a stressed syllable it will be produced with a larger VOT. Lastly, as can be seen from Figure 7, larger VOT is observed in words with lower frequency, indicating an inverse relationship between VOT and word frequency.

To explore possible interactions among the variables, we plot all two-way and three-way interactions, showing the trend lines for mean VOTs in each interaction. For reasons of space, we only show figures which contain possible interactions, manifested by the divergent trend lines for mean VOTs. In Figure 8, the two trend lines are quite divergent, meaning the effect of vowel height on VOT varies depending on whether that the stop occurs in a stressed syllable or in an unstressed syllable. Such observation suggests a strong interaction between vowel height and syllable stress.

**Figure 8**

*Interaction Between Following Vowel Height and Syllable Stress*




Similar observations can be made from Figure 9 below, which indicates a possible interaction between vowel height and word frequency. The effect of lexical frequency on VOT duration appears to be modulated by the height of vowel following the stop. Another interaction can be observed between following segment identity and word frequency, as shown in Figure 10. Likewise, the effect of lexical frequency on VOT varies depending on the identity of the segment following the stop.

**Figure 9**

*Interaction Between Vowel Height and Lexical Frequency*

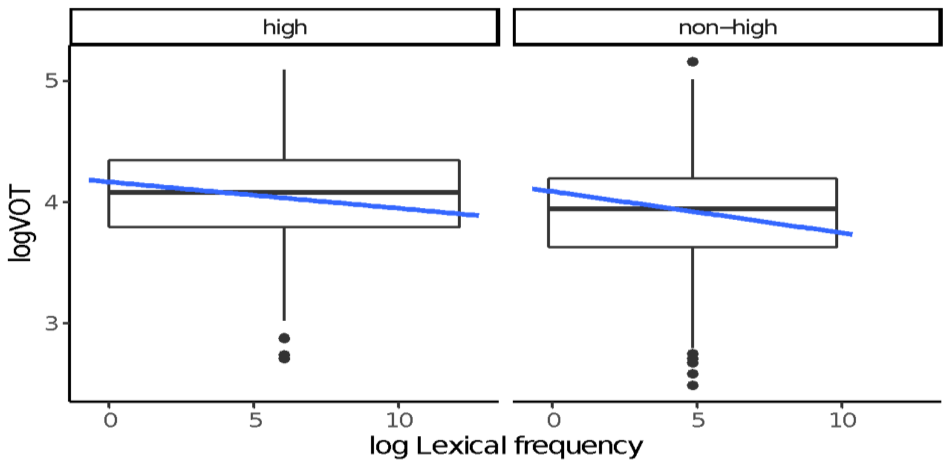
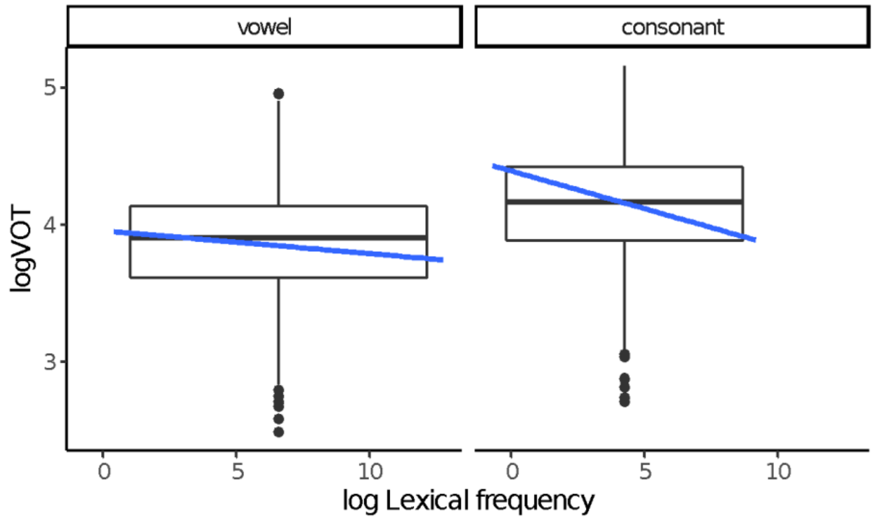


**Figure 10**

*Interaction Between Following Segment Identity and Lexical Frequency*




### *4.2. Results From the Mixed-Effects Linear Model*

Based on the above exploratory analysis, a mixed-effects linear regression model of VOT will include seven fixed-effects variables mentioned earlier and three interactions between vowel height and syllable stress, vowel height and lexical frequency, and following segment identity and lexical frequency. Also, in order for the coefficients of all effects to be comparable, all the values of variables are standardized before fitting into the model. The two by-word and by-subject random terms do not significantly affect VOT[1]. In Table 5 we only report the results for fixed-effect terms.

**Table 5**

*Mixed-effects Model Summary*

| Coefficient | EST | SE | *df* | *t* | *p*-value |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| (intercept) | 3.903 | 0.042 | 33.4 | 92.365 | 0.001*** |
| Gender | 0.109 | 0.071 | 20.4 | 1.551 | 0.136 |
| Speaking rate | -0.002 | 0.073 | 21 | -0.033 | 0.974 |
| Vowel height | -0.131 | 0.042 | 423 | -3.105 | 0.002*** |
| Place of articulation | -0.177 | 0.018 | 756.4 | -9.794 | 0.001*** |
| Syllable stress | 0.377 | 0.035 | 1388 | 10.641 | 0.001*** |

[1] We report random effects here, as suggested by an anonymous reviewer.

Random effects:

| Groups | Name | Variance | Std. Dev |
|---|---|---|---|
| word | (Intercept) | 0.04225 | 0.2055 |
| speaker | (Intercept) | 0.02334 | 0.1528 |
| Residual | | 0.16299 | 0.4037 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Following segment identity | 0.110 | 0.043 | 516 | 2.556 | 0.010* |
| Lexical frequency | -0.123 | 0.033 | 609.4 | -3.770 | 0.001*** |
| Vowel height : Syllable stress | -0.208 | 0.080 | 1424 | -2.597 | 0.009** |
| Vowel height : Lexical frequency | -0.138 | 0.066 | 63.3 | -2.099 | 0.036* |
| Lexical frequency : Following segment identity | -0.179 | 0.068 | 852.5 | -1.606 | 0.009** |

In our analysis of the factors that influence VOT, we initially examined speaker-level variables, such as *gender* and *mean speaking rate*, and found that they did not significantly impact VOT ($p = 0.136$ and $p = 0.974$, respectively), as presented in Table 5. We then proceeded to investigate word-level variables and discovered that all five variables we studied had a significant effect on VOT. Specifically, place of articulation had a significant influence on VOT production ($p = 0.001$). To further explore this relationship, we conducted post-hoc Tukey tests and observed that bilabials had a significantly shorter VOT than alveolars and velars ($p = 0.0001$), while alveolars and velars were not significantly different from each other ($p = 0.39$). Additionally, following vowel heights, following segment identity, word frequency and syllable stress all had statistically significant effects and in the expected direction. Specifically, VOT measures were significantly longer when the word-initial voiceless stops occurred in a stressed syllable of a frequently occuring word, were followed by a high vowel or a consonant.

Our analysis now turns to examining the interaction effects among the variables. Our model predicts a significant interaction between syllable stress and vowel height, indicating that the difference in VOT production between stressed and unstressed syllables is significantly influenced by whether the following vowel is high or non-high ($p = 0.009$). Additionally, we observed a significant interaction effect between vowel height and lexical frequency, where the difference in VOT between more and less frequent words depends on whether the following vowel is high or non-high ($p = 0.002$). Furthermore, the difference in VOT when followed by a consonant versus a vowel is significantly influenced by word frequency ($p = 0.009$). Overall, our mixed-effects linear regression model confirmed the findings from our exploratory data analysis.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to explore constraints on VOT variability in spontaneous speech, which has been relatively understudied compared to VOT in laboratory speech. This is due to the difficulties and time-consuming nature of analyzing VOT in spontaneous data. To overcome this challenge, we adopted a quick and feasible VOT measurement method developed by Stuart-Smith et al. (2015) that employs a semi-automatic procedure with the AutoVOT algorithm to analyze a large number of reliable VOT measures. We also examined both speaker-level and word-level factors that may influence VOT measures. In the following sections, we will compare our findings with previous research on VOT in laboratory speech to gain a better understanding of the extent to which our results align with established findings.

Several laboratory studies have demonstrated that speaking rate has an impact on VOT duration (Kessinger & Blumstein, 1997; Miller et al., 1986). However, our analysis of spontaneous speech data suggests that such variables have an insignificant effect. With respect to speaker gender, previous studies have shown that male speakers tend to produce significantly lower VOT than female speakers (Koenig, 2000; Morris et al., 2008; Oh, 2021; Ryalls et al., 1997; Whiteside & Irving, 1998; Whiteside & Marshall, 2001), although the results vary depending on age and ethnicity. In our study, we observe a weak relationship between VOT and gender. This may be attributed to our relatively small sample size of only 20, which could make it difficult to detect any trend.

Let's now shift our focus to the word-level factors that impact VOT production. Previous studies conducted under strictly controlled conditions in the laboratory have suggested that VOT variation is limited by the place of articulation. The literature often reports the VOT hierarchy, which suggests that the further back the place of articulation the longer the VOT (Cho & Ladefoged, 1999; Lisker & Abramson, 1964). This hierarchy is generally more noticeable with voiced stops in lab studies. Our analysis of spontaneous speech data revealed that bilabials had shorter VOTs than alveolars and velars, with no significant difference between the latter two, which supports the findings of Docherty (1992). The other word-level factors examined in our study showed significant effects in line with those reported in lab studies. Specifically, VOT was longer before high vowels (Berry & Moyle, 2011; Klatt, 1975) and shorter in more frequent words (Sonderegger, 2012; Yao, 2009). Moreover, syllable stress had a significant effect on VOT, with stops in stressed syllables having a significantly longer VOT than those in unstressed syllables (Cole et al., 2007; Lisker & Abramson, 1967; Stuart-Smith et al., 2015). Lastly, we found that the following segment after a word-initial stop, whether a consonant or a vowel, significantly influenced VOT duration, with VOT being longer when followed by a consonant than by a vowel. This aspect has not been extensively studied in previous research except for Klatt (1975), and thus our findings offer some novel insights that can be corroborated in lab studies.

## 6. Conclusions

The exploration of VOT in stop production has been comprehensive, although investigations of this aspect in naturally-occurring speech have been limited, owing to the difficulty of measuring VOT in conversational discourse. Nevertheless, we were able to surmount this challenge by implementing a rapid and reliable approach developed by Stuart-Smith et al. (2015), which utilized a semi-automatic process to analyze extensive VOT measurements using the AutoVOT algorithm. Our study demonstrated that word-level constraints had the anticipated impacts on VOT, while we did not detect any significant effects for speaker-level variables, such as speech rate and gender. Overall, our inquiry provides a fresh outlook on the range of factors that restrict VOT patterns in spontaneous speech, and future studies incorporating larger sample sizes or different populations are necessary to scrutinize these effects in greater detail.

## References

Allen, J. S., Miller, J. L., & DeSteno, D. (2003). Individual talker differences in voice onset time. *The Journal of the Acoustic Society of America, 113*, 544-552. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.1528172

Auzou, P., Ozsancak, C., Morris, R., Jane, M., Eustache, F., & Hannequin, D. (2000). Voice onset time in aphasia, apraxia of speech and dysarthria: A review. *Clinical Linguistics & Phonetics, 14*(2), 131-150. https://doi.org/10.1080/026992000298878

Bates, D., Maechler, M., Bolker, B., & Walker, S. (2014). *lme4: Linear mixed-effects models using 'Eigen' and S4*. R package version 1.1-7. https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/lme4/index.html.

Berry, J., & Moyle, M. (2011). Covariation among vowel height effects on acoustic measures. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 130*(5), 365-371. https://doi.org/10.1121%2F1.3651095

Cho, T., & Ladefoged, P. (1999). Variations and universals in VOT: Evidence from 18 languages. *Journal of Phonetics, 27,* 207-229. https://doi.org/10.1006/jpho.1999.0094

Cole, J., Kim, H., Choi, H., & Hasegawa-Johnson, M. (2007). Prosodic effects on acoustic cues to stop voicing and place of articulation: Evidence from Radio News speech. *Journal of Phonetics, 35*(2), 180-209.

Docherty, G. (1992). *The timing of voicing in British English obstruents.* Foris. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110872637

Forrest, K., Weismer, G., & Turner, S. (1989). Kinematic, acoustic, and perceptual analyses of connected speech produced by Parkinsonian and normal geriatric adults. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 85,* 2608-2622. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.397755

Kendall, T. (2013). *Speech rate, pause and sociolinguistic variation*, Palgrave Macmillan.

Keshet, J., Sonderegger, M., & Knowles, T. (2014). *AutoVOT: A tool for automatic measurement of voice onset time using discriminative structured prediction [Computer program]*,Version 0.91. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.4763995

Kessinger, R., & Blumstein, S. (1997). Effects of speaking rate on voice onset time in Thai, French, and English. *Journal of Phonetics*, *23,* 148-68. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1006/jpho.1996.0039

Klatt, D. H. (1975). Voice onset time, frication, and aspiration in word-initial consonant clusters. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 18,* 686-706. https://doi.org/10.1044/jshr.1804.686

Koenig, L. (2000). Laryngeal factors in voiceless consonant production in men, women, and 5-year-olds. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research, 43,* 1211-1228,

Lisker, L., & Abramson, A. S. (1964). A cross-language study of voicing in initial stops: Acoustical measurements. *Word*, *20*, 384-422.

Lisker, L., & Abramson, A. (1967). Some effects of context on voice onset time in English stops. *Language and Speech*, *10*, 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1080/00437956.1964.11659830

Miller, J., Green, K., & Reeves, A. (1986). Speaking rate and segments: A look at the relation between speech production and speech perception for the voicing contrast. *Phonetica, 43*(3), 106-115.

Morris, R., McCrea, C., & Herring, K. (2008). Voice onset time differences between adult males and females: Isolated syllables. *Journal of Phonetics, 36*(2), 308-317. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2007.06.003

Nearey, T., & Rochet, B. (1994). Effects of place of articulation and vowel context on VOT production and perception for French and English stops. *Journal of the International Phonetic Association*, *24*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0025100300004965

Oh, E. (2011). Effects of speaker gender on voice onset time in Korean stops. *Journal of Phonetics*, *39*(1), 59-67. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wocn.2010.11.002

Petrosino, L., Colcord, R., Kurcz, K., & Yonker, R. (1993). Voice onset time of velar stop productions in aged speakers. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 76,* 83-88. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1993.76.1.83

R Core Team (2014). *R: A language and environment for statistical computing.* R Foundation for Statistical Computing, Vienna, Austria. http://www.R-project.org/

Rosenfelder, I., Fruehwald, J., Evanini, K., & Yuan, J. (2011). *FAVE (Forced Alignment and Vowel Extraction).*

Ryalls, J., Zipprer, A., & Baldauff, P. (1997) A preliminary investigation of the effects of gender and race on Voice Onset Time. *Journal of Speech, Language and Hearing Research, 40*, 642-645. https://doi.org/10.1044/jslhr.4003.642

Ryalls, J., Simon, M., & Thomason, J. (2004). Voice onset time production in older Caucasian and African-Americans. *Journal of Multilingual Communication Disorders, 2,* 61-67. https://doi.org/10.1080/1476967031000090980

Sonderegger, M. (2012). *Phonetic and phonological dynamics on reality television*. University of Chicago dissertation.

Sonderegger, M., & Keshet, J. (2012). Automatic measurement of voice onset time using discriminative structured prediction. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 132,* 3965-3979. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.4763995

Sonderegger, M. (2015). Trajectories of voice onset time in spontaneous speech on reality TV. In The Scottish Consortium for ICPhS (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 18th International Congress of Phonetic Sciences*.

Stuart-Smith, J., Sonderegger, M., Rathcke, T., & MacDonald, R. (2015). The private life of stops: VOT in a real-time corpus of spontaneous Glaswegian. *Laboratory Phonology*, *6*, 505-549. https://doi.org/10.1515/lp-2015-0015

Torre, P., & Barlow, J. (2009). Age-related changes in acoustic characteristics of adult speech. *Journal of Communication Disorders*, *42*(5), 324-333. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcomdis.2009.03.001

Volaitis, L. E., & Miller, J. L. (1992). Phonetic prototypes: Influence of place of articulation and speaking rate on the internal structure of voicing categories. *The Journal of the Acoustical Society of America*, *92*(2), 723-735. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.403997

Whiteside, S. P., & Irving, C. J. (1998). Speakers' sex differences in voice onset time: a study of isolated word production. *Perceptual and Motor Skills, 86*(2), 651-654. https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.1997.85.2.459

Whiteside, S. P., & Marshall, J. (2001). Developmental trends in voice onset time: Some evidence for sex differences. *Phonetica, 58*(3), 196-210. https://doi.org/10.1159/000056199

Whiteside, S. P., Henry, L. & Dobbin, R. (2004). Sex differences in voice onset time: a developmental study of phonetic context effects in British English. *Journal of the Acoustical Society of America, 116*(2), 1179-1183. https://doi.org/10.1121/1.1768256

Yao, Y. (2009). Understanding VOT variation in spontaneous speech. In M. Pak (Ed.), *Current numbers in unity and diversity of languages* (pp.1122-1137). Linguistic Society of Korea.

Yu, A. C. L., Abrego-Collier, C., & Sonderegger, M. (2013). Phonetic imitation from an individual-difference perspective: Subjective attitude, personality and "autistic" traits. *PloS One*, *8*(9), e74746. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0074746

# NHỮNG YẾU TỐ RÀNG BUỘC THỜI GIAN KHỞI THANH CỦA PHỤ ÂM TẮC TRONG TIẾNG ANH: NGHIÊN CỨU TỪ LỜI NÓI TỰ NHIÊN

Nguyễn Thị Quyên

*Khoa Ngôn ngữ, Trường Đại học Quốc tế, Đại học Quốc gia TP.HCM,*

*Khu phố 6, Phường Linh Trung, Thành phố Thủ Đức, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Thời gian khởi thanh (voice onset time - VOT) là một giá trị định lượng độ lệch pha tính bằng mili giây giữa hoạt động đóng/mở của các cơ quan cấu âm trên thanh quản và dây thanh. Như đã biết, đây là một đại lượng quan trọng trong việc phân biệt các phụ âm hữu thanh và phụ âm vô thanh và bật hơi trong nhiều ngôn ngữ trên thế giới nói chung, và tiếng Anh nói riêng. Trong sản sinh phụ âm tắc, có nhiều nghiên cứu cho rằng giá trị đại lượng này bị ràng buộc bởi nhiều khía cạnh về người nói và đặc điểm ngữ âm của môi trường xung quanh phụ âm tắc. Trên thế giới đã có nhiều nghiên cứu về các yếu tố ràng buộc thời gian khởi thanh, nhưng hầu hết các nghiên cứu này đều dựa trên các thí nghiệm được thiết kế nghiêm ngặt trong phòng lab để thu thập ngữ liệu. Có ít nghiên cứu đặt vấn đề này dựa trên lời nói xảy ra một cách tự nhiên mà không thực hiện trong phòng lab. Do đó, nghiên cứu này đặt ra hai mục tiêu như sau: (1) Xác định xem các khía cạnh ảnh hưởng đến thời gian khởi thanh trong các nghiên cứu thực nghiệm trong phòng lab có gây ra ảnh hưởng tương tự trong lời nói tự nhiên hay không; (2) Khám phá những tương tác có thể xảy ra giữa những khía cạnh đó. Trong nghiên cứu này, chúng tôi tập hợp dữ liệu nói gồm các đoạn clip cắt từ một chương trình truyền hình thực tế đã được phân tích bằng một phương pháp đo VOT bán tự động cho phép xử lý nhanh chóng và tin cậy một số lượng lớn các giá trị VOT. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy các khía cạnh ở cấp độ từ chứa phụ âm vô thanh có ảnh hưởng tới giá trị VOT như đã được xác lập ở các nghiên cứu trong phòng lab. Tuy nhiên, nghiên cứu chỉ ra tác động không đáng kể của sự khác biệt cá nhân của người nói, cụ thể là tốc độ nói và giới tính của người nói, đối với giá trị VOT.

*Từ khóa*: thời gian khởi thanh, sản sinh phụ âm tắc, lời nói tự nhiên

# THROUGH THE EYES OF EFL TEACHERS AT TERTIARY LEVEL: UNVEILING THE IMPACT OF RESEARCH ON INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

Nguyen Anh Thi[1], Pham Trut Thuy[2,*], Mai Tan Thien[1], Le Thanh Thao[1], Phuong Hoang Yen[1], Nguyen Huong Tra[1], Huynh Thi Anh Thu[1]

[1] *Can Tho University, 3/2 Street, Xuan Khanh, Ninh Kieu, Can Tho, Vietnam*

[2] *Nam Can Tho University, Nguyen Van Cu Street, An Binh, Ninh Kieu, Can Tho, Vietnam*

Received 29 April 2023
Revised 28 July 2023; Accepted 30 August 2023

**Abstract:** This descriptive study aims to examine the perceptions of Vietnamese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers on the influence of research on their instructional practices. The study involved 50 highly proficient and experienced teachers from five universities located in the Mekong Delta region of southern Vietnam. A questionnaire consisting of 26 Likert-type items was used to collect data, and the teachers' perceptions of research effects were assessed based on their mean scores. The results indicated that research significantly enhanced teachers' comprehension of their teaching practices, prompting them to reflect more deeply on their teaching methodologies. Additionally, research facilitated the elucidation of language learning processes, widened sources for developing teaching ideas and experience, refined academic instructions, and encouraged reflective teaching practices. The study contributes to the existing literature on the influence of research on instructional practices and provides insight into the critical effects of research on teachers' practices. The results may inform policy and practice decisions on incorporating research into teacher training and professional development initiatives. Overall, this study highlights the importance of research in enhancing instructional methodologies and promoting reflective teaching practices.

*Keywords*: EFL teachers, research, instructional practices, Vietnam

## 1. Introduction

Investigation into the interdependence between research and pedagogy has been the subject of scholarly scrutiny for an extended temporal span, with Humboldt (1810) being attributed as the pioneering savant to discern the interconnectedness between these practices in the 19th century. In the intervening years, a plenitude of inquiries has been undertaken to elucidate the symbiosis between research and didactic methodologies, with some academicians positing that research can bolster pedagogy by proffering contemporaneous resources and stimulating student engagement (Burnaford et al., 2000). Research additionally assumes a pivotal role in honing teachers' instructional competencies by harmonizing their pedagogical objectives with commensurate actions.

Within the purview of second language acquisition (SLA), the interrelation between research and instructional techniques is intricate, and the import of such investigations for classroom pedagogy is frequently accentuated. While certain researchers endeavor to ameliorate language education via SLA research (e.g., Erlam, 2008; Nassaji, 2012), others

---

* Corresponding author:
Email address: ptthuy@nctu.edu.vn

manifest trepidations apropos the repercussions of research on linguistic instruction (e.g., Chamot, 2004; Heift & Chapelle, 2013). Divergent perspectives abound with respect to the applicability of research to pedagogy, with some proponents advocating for a propitious nexus, whereas others contend that research and instruction occupy disparate dimensions (Neumann, 1996). Notwithstanding the existence of myriad investigations examining the interplay between research and pedagogy, a paucity of focus on teachers' viewpoints prevails. Therefore, it is incumbent upon scholars to undertake a study probing teachers' perceptions vis-à-vis the impact of research pursuits on their didactic methodologies.

While the universal dialogues on the interplay between research and pedagogy have evolved over the centuries, it is pivotal to situate this discourse within the specific socio-cultural and educational milieu of Vietnam. The Southeast Asian nation, with its rich tapestry of history, culture, and pedagogical traditions, brings forth unique nuances that shape the pedagogical underpinnings and research dynamics (Pham & Hayden, 2019). Vietnam has, in the past few decades, undergone a transformative journey in its educational sector, driven by the nation's keenness to integrate globally and its aspirations to elevate its human development indices (Le & Le, 2020). As part of this transformative narrative, English language instruction has emerged as a paramount arena, given the language's pivotal role as a global lingua franca and Vietnam's ambitions in the domains of trade, tourism, and technology (Tran & Tanemura, 2020). While the nexus between research and pedagogy has been recognized in global academic paradigms, the interplay assumes particular significance in the Vietnamese context.

In Vietnam, a country where pedagogical traditions have historically been influenced by a blend of Confucian values and more recent socialist educational doctrines (Truong et al., 2017), the introduction and acceptance of modern research-driven pedagogical techniques can be seen as both an evolution and a revolution. Recent years have witnessed a burgeoning emphasis on evidence-based teaching in Vietnamese educational institutions. This is driven by both top-down policy reforms advocating for a more research-informed pedagogy and grassroots movements among teachers, many of whom are now exposed to global pedagogical discourses through training programs, international collaborations, and academic exchanges (Tri, 2023). However, challenges persist. While the Vietnamese education sector recognizes the merits of research-driven pedagogy, systemic constraints, including infrastructural limitations, lack of training in research methodologies, and sometimes a cultural hesitance to depart from traditional teaching techniques, may impede the seamless integration of research into classroom practices (Le, 2017). Furthermore, the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL teachers, who operate at the confluence of global English language teaching norms and indigenous Vietnamese pedagogical traditions, are particularly salient. Their lived experiences, intrinsic motivations, and the extrinsic challenges they confront in melding research with pedagogy offer invaluable insights. Such insights not only illuminate the current state of EFL instruction in Vietnam but also guide future policies, capacity-building initiatives, and curricular reforms to ensure that the symbiosis between research and pedagogy is both meaningful and efficacious in the Vietnamese context.

Concomitantly, this study's primary aim is to examine the perceptions of Vietnamese EFL teachers concerning the effects of research initiatives on the enhancement of their teaching methods. The research question guiding this study is, "*How do Vietnamese EFL teachers perceive the impact of research on their pedagogical practices?*" The study strives to identify distinct elements of research that influence teachers' teaching practices, providing EFL teachers with insights into harnessing research to amplify their instructional skill and efficacy. In addition, this study aims to delve into teachers' anticipations of how research can bolster their pedagogical strategies and teaching techniques. This study, therefore, motivates teachers to engage in research with the aim of consistently improving their instructional standards and proficiency.

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Definition of "Research"*

Research can be characterized as an erudite exploration that engenders novel cognition through the unearthing and systematization of unprecedented information, or the inception of profound comprehension of extant knowledge and praxis (Kim, 1990). This process necessitates the formulation of perspicacious inquiries, scrutinizing phenomena, extrapolating interpretations, and amassing, orchestrating, and appraising empirical evidence (Bryman, 2007; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006). Additionally, it encompasses the execution of inferential reasoning, arriving at cogent deductions, and subjecting said conclusions to meticulous evaluation in order to ascertain their congruity with the postulated hypotheses (Hartwick & Barki, 1994; Mohammadi, 2016). In this study, "research" is conceptualized as an intellectual endeavor that fosters the development of new understanding by uncovering and organizing previously unexplored information or by deepening the grasp of existing knowledge and practices. The process entails formulating astute questions, examining phenomena, deriving insights, and gathering, arranging, and assessing data. Furthermore, it involves employing logical inference to reach sound conclusions and rigorously evaluating these conclusions to ensure their alignment with the proposed hypotheses.

### *2.2. Research Features*

Research can be delineated as methodical, deliberate, and inquisitive in nature, encompassing the utilization of veracious and dependable procedures, methodologies, and techniques devised to maintain impartiality and objectivity (Manfra, 2019). In the realm of higher education, establishments have transitioned their concentration from pedagogical endeavors to incorporate investigative pursuits, with didactic prowess and inquiry constituting paramount indicators of quality within the academic institutions (Coate et al., 2001; Richard et al., 2009; Tennant et al., 2009). Teachers have perpetually demonstrated adroitness in scholarly examination, and research constitutes an indispensable facet of their vocational trajectory as it cultivates their erudition and domains of proficiency, facilitates the unearthing of contemporary ideations, and augments their scholastic competencies (Babkie & Provost, 2004; Ulla et al., 2017). Ellis (2012) postulates that pedagogical milieu-based research can contribute tripartitely to the orchestration of instructional modalities. Primarily, it proliferates the repertoire of pedagogical schemas accessible for lesson preparation. Subsequently, it codifies the gamut of examined pedagogical schemas, proffering a systematic classification of schema varieties. Lastly, it furnishes empirical scrutiny of the application of these schemas within learning environments, empowering teachers to prognosticate the outcomes engendered by the execution of a particular schema. It behooves instructors to make autonomous determinations regarding the incorporation of pedagogical schemas into their lesson plans, predicated upon their pragmatic acumen, with research equipping them with the requisite tools to make judicious decisions.

### *2.3. Nexus between Research and Teaching Practices*

Nassaji (2012) posited an inquiry into the usefulness of SLA research for language teaching. Diverging views on this subject exist, with some proponents suggesting that SLA research generally improves language teaching practices (Larsen-Freeman, 1998; Pica, 2005), while detractors argue it has little impact (Block 2000; Crookes, 1993). Early SLA researchers (Hatch, 1978; Tarone et al., 1976) cautioned against heedlessly applying SLA research to teaching, citing the limitations of scope and methodology. However, beyond the confines of SLA, there are vast territories of pedagogical research spanning areas such as curriculum design, technology-enhanced teaching, and educational psychology. These areas, too, have seen their share of debate regarding the application of research to direct classroom practices.

Recent SLA studies offer valuable insights into learners' consciousness in SLA processes, input and interaction, and learners' needs and motivation, but their relevance to teaching practices requires careful evaluation. Such evaluation necessitates an instructor's intimate knowledge and experience with classroom teaching practices (Clements & Sarama, 2008). One approach to determine the pedagogical relevance of SLA research is to utilize it to address practical difficulties that teachers have identified as significant. However, this method can be challenging, given that researchers in various areas of SLA may lack familiarity with the challenges surrounding classroom teaching, and their sense of relevance may differ from that of teachers. Therefore, researchers require the assistance, understanding, and engagement of teachers to draw appropriate conclusions about the relationship between research and teaching practices. Understanding the nature and situations of practical difficulties is necessary to solve problems in language teaching (Labaree, 2003).

The significance of this topic, particularly within the context of Vietnam, cannot be understated. As Vietnam strives towards educational modernization, the alignment of research with practical teaching methods is imperative to elevate its pedagogical standards. While there are scattered studies addressing the implications of research in Vietnamese pedagogy, a consolidated exploration, particularly concerning tertiary EFL teachers, is largely absent. Notwithstanding the existence of inquiries delving into the efficacy of research in bolstering teachers' instructional techniques on a global scale (e.g., Elsen et al., 2009; Geschwind & Broström, 2015; Neumann, 1992; Tight, 2016), the examination of tertiary-level teachers' perceptions vis-à-vis the ramifications of research endeavors on their didactic methodologies within the Vietnamese milieu remains conspicuously deficient. Few localized studies in Vietnam have grappled with this complex intersection, thereby underscoring a gap in the literature. Therefore, it is imperative to undertake a scholarly investigation to ascertain the degree to which Vietnamese EFL tertiary teachers discern the impact of research pursuits on their pedagogical practices.

## 3. Methods

### *3.1. Research Design*

This study embodies a descriptive nature and employs a quantitative approach to scrutinize the perceptions of Vietnamese teachers regarding the efficacies of research in enhancing their instructional practices. A descriptive study utilizing a quantitative approach is deemed suitable for this study because its aim is to furnish a comprehensive and precise picture of the present state of teachers' perceptions of research impacts on their teaching practices. The quantitative approach enables the study to collect numerical data that can be analyzed statistically, providing objective and accurate results that can be extrapolated to a larger population of teachers (Brannen, 2005; Plonsey et al., 2007). Descriptive research is especially useful when the intention is to accurately depict a phenomenon or existing conditions. In this instance, the study seeks to describe teachers' perceptions of the impact of research on their teaching practices, thus rendering the descriptive study an appropriate approach. Furthermore, the quantitative approach allows for a standardized method of data collection, which can bolster the reliability and validity of the results (Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002).

The quantitative research design proves to be the optimal choice for this study due to a multitude of reasons. Firstly, it aligns seamlessly with the study's descriptive nature, catering to its need for a meticulous portrayal of the current scenario surrounding Vietnamese teachers' perceptions about research's influence on their instructional methods. Secondly, this design's ability to collect, process, and analyze numerical data in a standardized manner ensures the generation of objective, precise, and statistically robust outcomes, lending credibility to the research findings. Additionally, it bolsters the validity and reliability of the results, creating a strong foundation for future references. Finally, the quantitative design's potential for extrapolation facilitates generalization of results, thereby making the study findings applicable to a broader teacher population. Thus, through its provision of clarity, objectivity, and wide applicability, the quantitative research design fulfills the unique requirements of this study at a certain level.

### *3.2. Participants*

The participants of this study consisted of 50 English language teachers recruiting from five esteemed universities located in the southern region of the Mekong Delta of Vietnam. This specific focus on the target participants from these research sites was due to several reasons. These universities are renowned for their high standards of English language instruction, making their faculty a rich source of experienced and knowledgeable professionals. Furthermore, the Mekong Delta region represents a diverse cultural and socio-economic spectrum, allowing the study to capture a wide range of teaching experiences and perceptions. It should be mentioned that the selection of 50 participants in this study was not arbitrary. In fact, the sample size is often determined based on the study's goals, the depth of data required, and the practicalities of data collection (Desu, 2012). While larger samples can provide a broader overview, smaller samples allow for a more detailed, thorough, and nuanced exploration of each participant's responses. For this particular study, 50 participants were considered sufficient to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the research topic, while also ensuring that each participant's experiences and perspectives were thoroughly analyzed. In addition, by choosing those teachers from this specific demographic and geographic location, the research sought to tap into their unique experiences of using research to enhance their teaching practices, thereby making the findings more nuanced and representative.

Furthermore, these participants were carefully chosen based on their considerable proficiency in the English language, substantiated by their advanced academic qualifications and recognized language certifications. Many of the teachers held advanced degrees, such as Master's or Doctorates in English language teaching or Applied Linguistics, and a significant portion had internationally recognized English proficiency accreditations such as IELTS or TOEFL. This intentional focus on teachers with advanced degrees aimed to delve into a specific niche within the broader spectrum of EFL teachers at the tertiary level, understanding that these teachers represent a subgroup within that demographic. Out of the participant, 60% were males (n=30 out of 50), while the remaining 40% were females (n=20 out of 50). On average, these pedagogues had been imparting knowledge on the English language for roughly 14.6 years, with an experience range spanning between 5 and 29 years. Notably, every participant enlisted in this research endeavor had extensive experience not only in teaching the English language but also in conducting research activities, thereby rendering them highly suitable for the purpose of the study. The selection process for the participants was especially rigorous and significant. This was because the study needed participants who had substantial experience in conducting research, in order to have an accurate understanding of the impact of research on their teaching strategies. Only such experienced individuals could offer valuable insights into how research impacts instructional practices. This experience-based knowledge was considered critical to contribute meaningfully to the study's objectives. Conversely, it was strongly believed that teachers with little or no research experience could not fully comprehend the importance of conducting research in their field, and thus would not be suitable for the study. Therefore, ensuring participants met these specific criteria of substantial research experience and a keen awareness of its impact was an essential part of the selection process.

### *3.3. Questionnaire as the Data Collection Instrument*

The present inquiry was conducted utilizing a questionnaire as the preeminent instrument for data collection. This particular methodology was selected due to its practicality and convenience, particularly when dealing with a large and heterogeneous population (Bartram, 2019; Kabir, 2016). In addition to its feasibility, employing a questionnaire guaranteed ethical considerations, such as preserving participants' anonymity and confidentiality, and reinforced the study's veracity (Bartram, 2019). The questionnaire adopted in this study encompasses three distinct sections. The first section primarily aimed to acquire demographic information from the participants, encompassing parameters such as age, gender, teaching experience, and research experience. The second and third sections, consisting of 26 Likert-type items, are classified into five clusters, scrutinizing two fundamental issues: (1) teachers' perceptions of the influence of research activity on their teaching practices, and (2) their anticipations towards research.

The items' ratings range from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The design of the five clusters and 26 items employed in this study was constructed on Nassaji's (2012) theoretical framework, whose aim was to scrutinize instructors' viewpoints on the correlation between SLA research and language pedagogy. These clusters represent distinct thematic areas related to how SLA research impacts teaching practices. To illustrate, four items (1, 2, 6, and 25) address the theme of "Reflective Teaching and Decision Making," investigating how SLA research assists teachers in understanding, reflecting upon, and making decisions about their teaching practices. Three items (3, 12, and 19) fall into a cluster relating to "Understanding Language Learning Processes," focusing on how SLA research helps elucidate the processes of language acquisition and the challenges associated with it. Three items (4, 14, and 26) might form a "Instructional Design and Planning" cluster, looking at how research can expand sources for teaching ideas, influence the design of teaching materials, and inform theoretical frameworks for effective classroom teaching. Eight items (7, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 23, and 24) comprise a "Teaching Methods and Evaluation" cluster, examining how SLA research guides teachers in selecting appropriate teaching methods, planning and modifying their lessons, and evaluating their effectiveness. Finally, eight items (5, 9, 13, 17, 18, 20, 21, and 22) belong to a cluster on "Professional Development (PD) and Classroom Management," looking into how SLA research aids in the development of academic instructions, classroom management skills, understanding of students' related factors, and provision of supportive feedback. Each of these clusters directly relates to the study's research objectives, which aim to investigate the impacts of SLA research on various aspects of English language teaching. By dividing the questionnaire items into these thematic clusters, the study can systematically explore teachers' perspectives on these different areas, providing a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research's influence on teaching practices. It should be noted that the questionnaire used in the current study was adapted and modified to fit the specific objectives of the study. Moreover, the questionnaire was composed in English, undergoing meticulous review by a field specialist to ensure accuracy and appropriateness.

To guarantee the questionnaire's reliability and validity, a series of actions were undertaken. Firstly, the Likert-type items were meticulously constructed to ensure clarity, brevity, and precision. This process involved consulting with experts in the field of SLA and Language Pedagogy to confirm the suitability of the used items. Secondly, the questionnaire was pretested with a sample of participants to ensure that the questions were comprehensible and that the Likert scale was appropriate. Thirdly, the questionnaire was administered to a pilot group of participants to confirm that it measured what it was intended to measure. Fourthly, the data obtained from the questionnaire was analyzed using statistical software to ensure that it could be accurately measurable. Finally, the questionnaire's reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency. In addition, the validity of the questionnaire was evaluated using content validity, a measure of whether the questionnaire measured what it was intended to measure. By adopting these measures, it can be concluded that the questionnaire was highly valid and reliable which could be officially used for data collection.

### *3.4. Procedures*

At the onset of the study, the research team utilized electronic means of communication to contact prospective participants, disseminating information regarding the objective of the study and soliciting their voluntary participation. The data collection process comprised two sequential stages. The first stage was a pilot phase aiming at ensuring the questionnaire's reliability while the second involved the formal administration of the questionnaire to gather quantitative data on teachers' perceptions concerning the impact of research on their pedagogical practices and their anticipations of research's potential to promote pedagogical practices. To ensure the questionnaire's soundness, the researcher meticulously fashioned it and subjected it to the scrutiny of two experts within the relevant field. Subsequently, the questionnaire underwent a pilot phase, wherein it was administered to a sample of ten university teachers to assess its content, form, reliability, and validity. The pilot phase sought to unearth any prospective blemishes in the questionnaire and assure the dependability and validity of the instrument. The outcome of the Cronbach alpha analysis indicated that the questionnaire manifested a high degree of reliability ($\alpha$=0.93), signifying the questionnaire's suitability for employment in the study. The questionnaire was then dispensed officially to 50 teachers via Google Forms, with a response rate of 100%. The researcher disseminated to each teacher a hyperlink to the Google Form, accompanied by a formal communication detailing the research's objectives and requesting their participation. Furthermore, in-depth guidelines were proffered to assist the participants in completing the questionnaire.

### *3.5. Data Analysis*

In the present investigation, the information procured from the questionnaire was analyzed using version 22 of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences software. The primary objective of the analysis was to scrutinize the teachers' perceptions concerning how research impacts their pedagogical practices and their anticipations for the influence of research on their teaching activities. Descriptive statistics tests were utilized to estimate the central tendencies and variability of the data. Additionally, Paired Sample t-tests were executed to compare and evaluate any significant differences between paired responses, offering insights into specific areas where teachers might perceive different levels of impact from research on distinct aspects of their teaching. To guarantee that the data collected from the questionnaire was reliable, a Cronbach alpha analysis was conducted. This analysis exhibited a significant degree of reliability for the questionnaire, manifested by a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.92. This coefficient suggests that the questionnaire has a substantial level of internal consistency, which indicates that the data derived from it is dependable and can be employed for further data analysis.

## 4. Results and Discussions

Table 1 presents the outcomes of the Descriptive Statistics test based on teachers' responses regarding the influence of SLA research on their teaching performance.

**Table 1**

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Doing Research on Their Overall Teaching Practices*

| Clusters | N | Min | Max | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Reflective Teaching and Decision Making | 50 | 1.87 | 5.00 | 4.30 | .46 |
| Understanding Language Learning Processes | 50 | 1.74 | 5.00 | 4.27 | .52 |
| Instructional Design and Planning | 50 | 1.54 | 5.00 | 4.21 | .42 |
| Teaching Methods and Evaluation | 50 | 1.51 | 5.00 | 4.23 | .42 |
| Professional Development and Classroom Management | 50 | 1.48 | 5.00 | 4.24 | .41 |

The results show that there is consistency in the teachers' responses across different clusters. All of the means are above 4.0, which implies a general agreement or positive stance towards the impacts of SLA research on their pedagogical performance. The relatively low standard deviations suggest that there is not much variability in the responses and most teachers have a similar viewpoint regarding the matter. This observation aligns well with the broader discourse in the field. For instance, Nassaji (2012) had earlier highlighted the potential benefits of utilizing SLA research in refining language teaching practices. The current findings corroborate these sentiments, pointing to an industry-wide recognition of these benefits. However, it is equally essential to consider counter-narratives. Block (2000) argued that SLA research might have limited practical implications in classroom settings. Yet, the data in Table 1 suggests that on the ground, practitioners — in this case, teachers — perceive tangible benefits from SLA research, at least in their self-assessment of their pedagogical performance. Another critical perspective that emerges when juxtaposing the current results with past studies is the shifting stance over time. Early SLA researchers like Hatch (1978) cautioned against the direct application of SLA research to teaching, emphasizing the potential limitations. Fast forward to the present, the prevailing trend, at least as evident from the current dataset, indicates that teachers are more open, if not enthusiastic, about integrating SLA research insights into their pedagogical strategies.

In the endeavor to understand the perceived impact of research involvement on teaching practices, the study probed into teachers' perspectives across five pivotal competency clusters, stated in Table 1. Among these, teachers stated that their involvement in research had the most pronounced effect on "Reflective Teaching and Decision Making", registering a mean score of 4.30. Paired sample t-tests revealed a significant difference in perception between "Reflective Teaching and Decision Making" and "Instructional Design and Planning" ($t=2.95$; $p<.05$). These findings suggest that the teachers perceived their research engagements as being particularly influential in enhancing reflective and decision-making capacities. Akin to findings from Hagevik et al. (2012), the current results reiterate the importance of research in fostering a reflective teaching approach.

The results of the Descriptive Statistics test (see Table 2) present a succinct synopsis of teachers' perceptions concerning the impact of research on their advancement in instructional practices.

**Table 2**

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Impact of Doing Research on Their Specific Instructional Practices*

| **Research helps…** | **N** | **Min** | **Max** | **Mean** | **SD** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| assist them in the development of a better understanding of their teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.42 | .36 |
| encourage them to become more reflective about their teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.36 | .21 |
| explain the language learning processes that create conditions for effective language teaching | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.34 | .65 |
| expand sources that could help them build their teaching ideas and experience | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.32 | .33 |
| develop their academic instructions | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.30 | .12 |
| foster their reflective teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.30 | .36 |
| utilize appropriate teaching methods | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.28 | .14 |
| guide their teaching planning | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.28 | .28 |
| provide guided practices for teachers to complete their teaching job effectively | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.28 | .33 |
| enable them to make necessary changes in their teaching content and methods | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.26 | .19 |
| aid in their adaptation to changes in their teaching content and methods | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.26 | .28 |
| provide insights into the nature of second language acquisition, from which teaching processes that could best facilitate students' natural language learning processes could be designed | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.26 | .21 |
| verify their understanding of the subject matter | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.24 | .29 |
| contribute significantly to the process of designing teaching | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.22 | .15 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| materials | | | | | |
| design more comprehensive lesson plans | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.22 | .22 |
| enable them to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching content and methods | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .69 |
| facilitate the development of classroom management skills | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .45 |
| enable them to understand their students' related factors more insightfully | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .47 |
| aim to discover the problems of L2 learning, from which the most practical methods to tackle them could be suggested | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .69 |
| uncover and develop practical solutions for their teaching problems | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .58 |
| provide teachers with supportive feedback, from which they could adjust and develop their teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.20 | .54 |
| establish a fundamental interrelation between the aims and purposes of teaching and research | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.18 | .51 |
| suggest appropriate teaching strategies that could help develop students' academic knowledge | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.18 | .78 |
| provide teachers with sound evaluation systems that could help assess students more thoroughly | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.16 | .65 |
| enhance their decision-making ability during their teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.10 | .89 |
| focus on a theoretical framework to drive effective classroom teaching practices | 50 | 1.00 | 5.00 | 4.10 | .78 |

Overall, the highest mean score (M=4.42) was for assisting teachers in developing a better understanding of their teaching practices, followed by encouraging them to become more reflective about their teaching practices (M=4.36), explaining the language learning processes that create conditions for effective language teaching (M=4.34), expanding sources that could help them build their teaching ideas and experience (M=4.32), developing their academic instructions (M=4.30), fostering their reflective teaching practices (M=4.30), utilizing appropriate teaching methods (M=4.28), guiding their teaching planning (M=4.28), providing guided practices for teachers to complete their teaching job effectively (M=4.28), enabling them to make necessary changes in their teaching content and methods (M=4.26), aiding in their adaptation to changes in their teaching content and methods (M=4.26), providing insights into the nature of second language acquisition, from which teaching processes that could best facilitate students' natural language learning processes could be designed (M=4.26), verifying their understanding of the subject matter (M=4.24), contributing significantly to the process of designing teaching materials (M=4.22), designing more comprehensive lesson plans (M=4.22), enabling them to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching content and methods (M=4.20), facilitating the development of classroom management skills (M=4.20), enabling them to understand their students' related factors more insightfully (M=4.20), aiming to discover the problems of L2 learning, from which the most practical methods to tackle them could be suggested (M=4.20), uncovering and developing practical solutions for their teaching problems (M=4.20), providing teachers with supportive feedback, from which they could adjust and develop their teaching practices (M=4.20), establishing a fundamental interrelation between the aims and purposes of teaching and research (M=4.18), suggesting appropriate teaching strategies that could help develop students' academic knowledge (M=4.18), providing teachers with sound evaluation systems that could help assess students more thoroughly (M=4.16), enhancing their decision-making ability during their teaching practices (M=4.10), and focusing on a theoretical framework to drive effective classroom teaching practices (M=4.10), according to the test results.

The results of this study present a nuanced understanding of teachers' perceptions of the role of research in their pedagogical practices. It offers a novel emphasis on the benefits of research as a catalyst for self-awareness and introspection in teaching methodologies, providing insights that extend beyond those established in prior studies. This research's focus on the internal dimensions of teaching, namely self-reflection and self-awareness, provides a unique perspective within the context of English language instruction in Vietnam, a field where this aspect may have previously been underexplored. What sets this study apart is the strong correlation it establishes between teacher-led research and a deeper understanding of pedagogical practices. While earlier research by Farrell (2013) and Lambirth et al. (2021) had also suggested that teachers who engage in research tend to evaluate and modify their teaching practices more effectively, this study adds further depth by connecting research with the development of self-awareness and self-reflection in teachers. This complements and extends the theoretical frameworks proposed by Schön (1983) and van Manen (1991) and solidifies the role of research as a tool for continuous reflection and improvement in teaching practices. Additionally, this study adds to the current discourse on teaching improvement by re-emphasizing the importance of feedback and continuous PD, which have been previously discussed by Hattie and Timperley (2007) and Day and Gu (2014). However, it does so by intertwining these concepts with teacher-led research, offering a novel perspective on how teachers can better utilize feedback and PD opportunities to refine their teaching methods. In doing so, it pushes the boundaries of the current understanding of effective pedagogy and invites further investigation into the role of teacher-led research in the PD of teachers.

This study further presents a fresh perspective on the utility of research as a tool for fostering self-reflection among teachers, elucidating language acquisition processes, and expanding available resources for pedagogical improvement. The novelty lies in the connection it makes between these three areas and the resultant impact on instructional practices. Notably, the study moves beyond the established understanding of the benefits of teacher reflection and continues learning, as proposed by Korthagen and Kessels (1999). It extends their postulation by providing empirical evidence of how self-reflection triggered by research can help teachers bridge the gap between theoretical pedagogical knowledge and its practical application, especially within the context of English language instruction. Additionally, the study offers a fresh contribution by linking the expansion of teaching resources to research. While Desimone (2009) highlighted the concept of teacher PD, this study adds a new layer by demonstrating how research can enrich the resources available to teachers, thus enhancing their PD. Importantly, this study reiterates the importance of understanding language acquisition processes for effective language instruction, a concept highlighted by Ellis (2012). However, it adds nuance to this understanding by emphasizing how teacher-led research can deepen teachers' comprehension of these processes, enabling them to develop more effective teaching strategies. This observation provides an innovative lens to view the role of research in language instruction, underscoring its importance not only as a tool for understanding pedagogical practices but also as a method for enhancing the efficacy of language teaching.

Moreover, the research presents new findings indicating that teachers value research not just for its role in enhancing self-reflection and comprehension of pedagogical strategies, but also for its practical applications, such as improving lesson plans, instructional materials, and content delivery. A unique contribution of this study is the empirical demonstration of how research aids teachers in making critical changes to their teaching methodologies and content. While previous research (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011; Hargreaves, 1996) have attested to the positive impact of teacher engagement in research on PD and student outcomes, this study illuminates how research specifically assists in transforming pedagogical practice. Moreover, the study provides a nuanced understanding of the notion of "reflective teaching." Beyond reiterating the importance of teachers scrutinizing their instructional practices and making necessary adjustments, as emphasized by Schön (1983) and Zeichner and Liston (1987), the study shows how research can act as a catalyst for such reflection. The study also enriches previous findings on the role of PD in bolstering teaching practices (Desimone, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Wei et al., 2009). It explores how research, as a form of PD, can provide teachers with a diverse array of resources to support their teaching practices, adding depth to the perspectives of Darling-Hammond and Sykes (1999) and Fullan (1991). In essence, this research breaks new ground by revealing the practical and transformative benefits of teacher engagement in research, demonstrating its value in promoting reflective teaching, fostering PD, and enhancing instructional practices.

Last but not least, this study sheds new light on the role of feedback in teacher PD and instructional enhancement. While previous research (Hattie & Timperley, 2007) has established the positive impacts of feedback on student learning and teacher improvement, this study explores how teachers themselves perceive feedback as a catalyst for refining their instructional strategies. This represents a notable shift in focus, illuminating how teachers internalize and apply feedback to enhance their professional growth. Moreover, the research introduces the concept of "instructive feedback," which offers a nuanced perspective on how feedback can function as a mechanism for identifying both strengths and weaknesses in teachers' instructional practices. This innovative concept furthers the understanding of the comprehensive nature of feedback, emphasizing its role not just in pinpointing areas of improvement, but also in highlighting areas of proficiency. The study also underscores the significance of a culture of perpetual learning within the teaching profession. While it reinforces findings from Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) about the importance of continuous PD, it expands on these by arguing that feedback is central to fostering a culture of continual learning. This illustrates how feedback can act as a driving force for unending professional growth, keeping teachers updated on the evolving needs of students, emerging instructional strategies, and technological advancements. In sum, the study extends the understanding of the role of feedback in teacher PD and instructional enhancement when teachers do research, introducing novel perspectives on the concept of instructive feedback and the significance of a culture of perpetual learning within the teaching profession.

## 5. Conclusion

This study carves out a unique position in research literature on the influence of research activities on teaching, with its focus on Vietnamese EFL tertiary teachers, a relatively underexplored demographic. The detailed exploration of their perspectives on the interplay between research and pedagogy provides fresh insights into the enhancement of teaching efficacy, emphasizing the reflective and transformative potential of research engagement. The study uncovers that research not only deepens teachers' comprehension of their teaching practices but also nurtures a culture of introspection and self-awareness - adding a novel layer to the existing body of literature on teacher research and practice. Furthermore, the investigation illuminates the role of research in explicating language acquisition processes, thereby enriching language instruction, and its capacity to expand the range of available resources for refining teaching methods and experiences. Employing a comprehensive and nuanced questionnaire to explore these dimensions further distinguishes this study. The findings underscore the need for teacher involvement in research and PD, reaffirming their significant roles in improving classroom practices and student outcomes. The emphasis on reflective teaching, continuous learning, and access to diverse resources and feedback for professional growth aligns with previous research, confirming the importance of keeping abreast of the evolving needs of students, emerging pedagogical techniques, and technological advancements. These insights carry considerable implications for teacher education and PD programs, suggesting a need to accentuate research engagement, reflective teaching, and continuous learning in fostering effective teaching practices and improving student outcomes. Consequently, this study substantially contributes to understanding the relationship between research and teaching, offering invaluable guidance for future policies and practices related to integrating research into teacher education and PD initiatives.

The study exclusively scrutinized English language teachers at quintet academic institutions situated in the Mekong Delta region of southern Vietnam, which may circumscribe the generalizability of the extrapolations to alternate locales and subject matter. Furthermore, the diminutive sample size comprised a mere 50 exceptionally adroit and seasoned teachers, which might not accurately typify the more extensive population of instructors in Vietnam. Additionally, the employment of the quantitative methodology may have been inadequate in capturing the full gamut and profundity of the teachers' perceptions apropos the ramifications of research on their pedagogical techniques. In an effort to surmount these constraints, prospective studies may undertake a more expansive examination, encompassing a diverse cohort of teachers hailing from a multiplicity of regions and disciplinary fields, with the aim of procuring a comprehensive comprehension of the manner in which research shapes instructional stratagems in Vietnam. Furthermore, the adoption of a mixed-methods paradigm, amalgamating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, could potentially elicit more profound insights into the pedagogues' experiential knowledge and viewpoints concerning the repercussions of research on their didactic practices. Lastly, probing the potential impediments and challenges that teachers encounter whilst incorporating research into their instructional methodologies, and discerning efficacious approaches to surmounting these obstacles, could facilitate the formulation of well-informed policy and practice determinations concerning the integration of research into teacher education and professional advancement initiatives.

## References

Babkie, A. M., & Provost, M. C. (2004). Teachers as researchers. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, *39*(5), 260-268. https://doi.org/10.1177/10534512040390050201

Bartram, B. (2019). Using questionnaires. In *Practical Research Methods in Education* (pp. 1-11). Routledge.

Block, D. (2000). Revisiting the gap between SLA researchers and language teachers. *Links & Letters*, (7), 129-143. https://raco.cat/index.php/LinksLetters/article/view/22721/22555

Brannen, J. (2005). Mixing methods: The entry of qualitative and quantitative approaches into the research process. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *8*(3), 173-184.

Bryman, A. (2007). The research question in social research: What is its role?. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *10*(1), 5-20. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570600655282

Burnaford, G. E., Fischer, J., & Hobson, D. (2000). *Teachers doing research: The power of action through inquiry* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Chamot, A. U. (2004). Issues in language learning strategy research and teaching. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, *1*(1), 14-26.

Clements, D. H., & Sarama, J. (2008). Experimental evaluation of the effects of a research-based preschool mathematics curriculum. *American Educational Research Journal*, *45*(2), 443-494. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831207312908

Coate, K., Barnett, R., & Williams, G. (2001). Relationships between teaching and research in higher education in England. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *55*(2), 158-174. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2273.00180

Cochran-Smith, M., & Lytle, S. L. (1999). The teacher research movement: A decade later. *Educational Researcher*, *28*(7), 15-25. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X028007015

Crookes, G. (1993). Action research for SL teachers—going beyond teacher research. *Applied Linguistics*, *14*, 130-144. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/14.2.130

Darling-Hammond, L., & McLaughlin, M. W. (2011). Policies that support professional development in an era of reform. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *92*(6), 81-92. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109200622

Darling-Hammond, L., & Richardson, N. (2009). Teacher learning: What matters? *Educational Leadership*, *66*(5), 46-53.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (1999). *Teaching as the learning profession: Handbook of policy and practice*. Jossey-Bass.

Darling-Hammond, L., & Sykes, G. (1999). Wanted, a national teacher supply policy for education: The right way to meet the "highly qualified teacher" challenge. *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, *11*, 33. https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v11n33.2003

Day, C., & Gu, Q. (2014). *Resilient teachers, resilient schools: Building and sustaining quality in testing times*. Routledge.

Desimone, L. M. (2009). Improving impact studies of teachers' professional development: Toward better conceptualizations and measures. *Educational Researcher*, *38*(3), 181-199. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08331140

Desu, M. M. (2012). *Sample size methodology*. Elsevier.

Ellis, R. (2012). *Language teaching research and language pedagogy*. John Wiley & Sons.

Elsen, M., Visser-Wijnveen, G. J., Van der Rijst, R. M., & Van Driel, J. H. (2009). How to strengthen the connection between research and teaching in undergraduate university education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *63*(1), 64-85. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2273.2008.00411.x

Erlam, R. (2008). What do you researchers know about language teaching? Bridging the gap between SLA research and language pedagogy. *International Journal of Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *2*(3), 253-267. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501220802158958

Farrell, T. S. C. (2013). *Reflective language teaching: From research to practice*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Geschwind, L., & Broström, A. (2015). Managing the teaching–research nexus: Ideals and practice in research-oriented universities. *Higher Education Research & Development*, *34*(1), 60-73. https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2014.934332

Guskey, T. R. (2002). Professional development and teacher change. *Teachers and Teaching*, *8*(3), 381-391. https://doi.org/10.1080/135406002100000512

Hagevik, R., Aydeniz, M., & Rowell, C. G. (2012). Using action research in middle level teacher education to evaluate and deepen reflective practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *28*(5), 675-684. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2012.02.006

Hargreaves, A. (1996). *Teaching as a research-based profession: Possibilities and prospects*. Teacher Training Agency.

Hartwick, J., & Barki, H. (1994). Hypothesis testing and hypothesis generating research: An example from the user participation literature. *Information Systems Research*, *5*(4), 446-449. https://doi.org/10.1287/isre.5.4.446

Hatch, E. (1978). *Second language acquisition research*. Newbury House.

Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The power of feedback. *Review of Educational Research, 77*(1), 81-112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Heift, T., & Chapelle, C. A. (2013). Language learning through technology. In S. M. Gass & A. Mackey (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of second language acquisition* (pp. 573-588). Routledge.

Humboldt, W. von. (1810). Über die innere and äußere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin. In H. Weinstock (Ed.), *Wilhelm von Humboldt* (pp. 95-103). Fischer Bücherei.

Kabir, S. M. S. (2016). Basic guidelines for research. *An introductory approach for all disciplines*, *4*(2), 168-180.

Kim, W. (1990). Object-oriented databases: definition and research directions. *IEEE Transactions on knowledge and Data Engineering*, *2*(3), 327-341. https://doi.org/10.1109/69.60796

Korthagen, F. A., & Kessels, J. P. (1999). Linking theory and practice: Changing the pedagogy of teacher education. *Educational Researcher*, *28*(4), 4-17. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X028004004

Labaree, D. F. (2003). The peculiar problems of preparing educational researchers. *Educational Researcher*, *32*(4), 13-22. https://doi.org/10.12987/9780300128819-006

Larsen-Freeman, D. (1998). On the scope of second language acquisition research. *Language Learning*, *48*(4), 551-56.

Lambirth, A., Cabral, A., McDonald, R., Philpott, C., Brett, A., & Magaji, A. (2021). Teacher-led professional development through a model of action research, collaboration and facilitation. *Professional Development in Education*, *47*(5), 815-833. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2019.1685565

Le, H. H. (2017). English language university teachers' difficulties in research engagement: A case study in Vietnam. *JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)*, *2*(2), 91-100. https://doi.org/10.21070/jees.v2i2.979

Libarkin, J. C., & Kurdziel, J. P. (2002). Research methodologies in science education: The qualitative-quantitative debate. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, *50*(1), 78-86. https://doi.org/10.1080/10899995.2002.12028053

Manfra, M. M. (2019). Action research and systematic, intentional change in teaching practice. *Review of Research in Education*, *43*(1), 163-196. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X18821132

Mohammadi, K. A. (2016). Hypothesis in the Literary Researches. *Literary Criticism*, *9*(34), 7-32. http://lcq.modares.ac.ir/article-29-5794-en.html

Nassaji, H. (2012). The relationship between SLA research and language pedagogy: Teachers' perspectives. *Language Teaching Research*, *16*(3), 337-365. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168812436903

Neumann, R. (1992). Perceptions of the teaching-research nexus: A framework for analysis. *Higher Education*, *23*, 159-171. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00143643

Neumann, R. (1996). Researching the teaching-research nexus: A critical review. *Australian Journal of Education*, *40*(1), 5-18. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494419604000102

Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Leech, N. L. (2006). Linking research questions to mixed methods data analysis procedures. *The Qualitative Report*, *11*, 474-498.

Pica, T. (2005). Classroom learning, teaching, and research: A task-based perspective. *The Modern Language Journal*, *89*(3), 339-352. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2005.00309.x

Pham, L. T., & Hayden, M. (2019). Research in Vietnam: The experience of the humanities and social sciences. *Journal of International and Comparative Education*, *8*(1), 27-40. http://dx.doi.org/10.14425/jice.2019.8.1.27

Plonsey, R., Barr, R. C., & Bioelectricity, A. (2007). *Quantitative Approach*. Springer.

Richard, J. L., Singer, J. D., Willett, J. B., & Light, R. J. (2009). *By design: Planning research on higher education*. Harvard University Press.

Schön, D. A. (1983). *The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action*. Basic Books.

Tarone, E., Swain, M., & Fathman, A. (1976). Some limitations to the classroom applications of current second language acquisition research. *TESOL Quarterly*, 19-32. https://doi.org/10.2307/3585936

Tennant, M., McMullen, C., & Kaczynski, D. (2009). *Teaching, learning and research in higher education: A critical approach*. Routledge.

Le, T. T., & Le, X. M. (2020). English language teaching reforms in Vietnam: EFL teachers' perceptions of their responses and the influential factors. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, *16*(1), 29-40. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2020.1846041

Tight, M. (2016). Examining the research/teaching nexus. *European Journal of Higher Education*, *6*(4), 293-311. https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2016.1224674

Tran, P. M., & Tanemura, K. (2020). English in Vietnam. *World Englishes*, *39*(3), 528-541. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12489

Tri, D. H. (2023). Teachers as change agents in the implementation of English-medium instruction policy in Vietnam. *European Journal of Language Policy*, *115*(1), 127-145. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/886599

Truong, T. D., Hallinger, P., & Sanga, K. (2017). Confucian values and school leadership in Vietnam: Exploring the influence of culture on principal decision making. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *45*(1), 77-100. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215607877

Ulla, M. B., Barrera, K. I. B., & Acompanado, M. M. (2017). Philippine classroom teachers as researchers: Teachers' perceptions, motivations, and challenges. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)ar*, *42*(11), 52-64. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.245575319218538

van Manen, M. (1991). *The tact of teaching: The meaning of pedagogical thoughtfulness*. State University of New York Press.

Wei, R. C., Darling-Hammond, L., Andree, A., Richardson, N., & Orphanos, S. (2009). *Professional learning in the learning profession: A status report on teacher development in the United States and abroad*. National Staff Development Council.

Zeichner, K., & Liston, D. (1987). Teaching student teachers to reflect. *Harvard Educational Review, 57*(1), 23-49. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.57.1.j18v7162275t1w3w

# TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA NGHIÊN CỨU KHOA HỌC ĐỐI VỚI THỰC TIỄN GIẢNG DẠY MÔN TIẾNG ANH DƯỚI GÓC NHÌN CỦA GIẢNG VIÊN ĐẠI HỌC

Nguyễn Anh Thi[1], Phạm Trút Thùy[2], Mai Tấn Thiện[1], Lê Thanh Thảo[1], Phương Hoàng Yến[1], Nguyễn Hương Trà[1], Huỳnh Thị Anh Thư[1]

*[1] Trường Đại học Cần Thơ, Đường 3 tháng 2, Phường Xuân Khánh, Quận Ninh Kiều, Thành phố Cần Thơ, Việt Nam*

*[2] Trường Đại học Nam Cần Thơ, Đường Nguyễn Văn Cừ, Phường An Bình, Quận Ninh Kiều, Thành phố Cần Thơ, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu quan điểm của một số giảng viên tiếng Anh về tác động của nghiên cứu khoa học (NCKH) đối với hoạt động giảng dạy. Khách thể nghiên cứu bao gồm 50 giảng viên hiện đang công tác tại 5 trường đại học tại khu vực Đồng bằng sông Cửu Long ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Công cụ thu thập dữ liệu cho nghiên cứu bao gồm một bảng câu hỏi khảo sát với 26 tiểu mục được thiết kế theo thang đo Likert. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy hoạt động NCKH góp phần cải thiện đáng kể sự hiểu biết của giảng viên về các nội dung liên quan đến việc thực hành giảng dạy, thúc đẩy họ suy ngẫm sâu hơn về phương pháp giảng dạy của mình. Ngoài ra, NCKH giúp giảng viên hiểu rõ và sâu sắc hơn về quá trình học tập, mở rộng nguồn cho việc phát triển ý tưởng và kinh nghiệm giảng dạy, tinh chỉnh hướng dẫn học thuật, và khuyến khích khả năng chiêm nghiệm trong quá trình giảng dạy. Kết quả nghiên cứu còn góp phần làm giàu nguồn tài liệu về việc đánh giá tác động của NCKH đối với thực hành giảng dạy của giảng viên. Có thể thấy, kết quả nghiên cứu mang lại giá trị tham chiếu quan trọng cho các quyết định về chính sách cũng như thực tiễn về việc kết hợp hoạt động NCKH vào đào tạo và các sáng kiến phát triển chuyên môn. Nghiên cứu cũng nhấn mạnh tầm quan trọng của hoạt động NCKH trong việc cải thiện phương pháp giảng dạy và thúc đẩy sự chiêm nghiệm trong dạy học của đội ngũ giảng viên tại Việt Nam.

*Từ khóa*: giảng viên tiếng Anh, nghiên cứu khoa học, thực hành giảng dạy, Việt Nam

# EXPLICITNESS OF COHESIVE DEVICES IN TWO VIETNAMESE TRANSLATIONS OF AN ENGLISH NOVEL

Vu Thi Thu Thuy*

*VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 28 June 2023
Revised 20 August 2023; Accepted 30 August 2023

**Abstract:** This preliminary qualitative research aims to examine the changes in the level of explicitness of cohesive elements during the translation process. It does so by comparing an excerpt from Jane Austen's English novel "Pride and Prejudice" (1993) with its two Vietnamese translations by Diep Minh Tam (2002) and Lam Quynh Anh and Thien Nga (2017). The study focuses on how these translations handle cohesive elements based on Halliday and Hassan's cohesion taxonomy (1976). It also considers the tendency for explicitation, as suggested by Blum-Kulka's hypothesis (1986) and Gumul's framework (2017). The analysis involves identifying these cohesive devices in the source text and comparing them with their counterparts in the target texts to detect translational shifts towards greater explicitness. Additionally, the study examines how the two Vietnamese translations differ from each other in handling these elements. The findings of this descriptive study reveal that both Vietnamese translations employ explicitation techniques, including reiteration, the transformation of pro-forms into lexical cohesion, and the restoration of substitution and clausal ellipses used in the original text. The analysis also reflects different translation decisions in transferring the same source language content into the target language between the two translators, which manifests in the usage of explicitation shifts in the target language texts under study.

*Keywords*: cohesive devices, translational shifts, explicitation

## 1. Introduction

Newmark (1988, p. 5) defines translation as the act of "rendering the meaning of a text into another language in a manner consistent with the author's original intention." He also differentiates between semantic and communicative translation. In his words, semantic translation focuses on capturing the exact contextual meaning of the original within the cultural and linguistic confines of the target language. Communicative translation, however, aims to produce a translation that reads fluently and is easily understandable by the target audience, even if it means making certain changes to the text to adapt to the cultural and linguistic norms of the target language.

Also stated by Newmark (1987, p.295), cohesion has consistently been identified as the most valuable element in the realm of discourse analysis and text linguistics when it comes to its application in translation. A central priority for translators is the creation of coherent renditions in the target language that mirror the source language texts. For a translation to effectively communicate, it should adhere to the cohesive devices of the target language rather than those of the source language. This is because languages differ significantly in how they connect words and sentences, and cohesive devices and their governing rules are intrinsically

* Corresponding author.
Email address: thuyvu.ulis@gmail.com

tied to the nature of each language.

Numerous scholars have explored the notion that various languages possess distinctive arrangements of cohesive elements and techniques for establishing coherence (Hasan, 1984). The inherent variations in cohesion have been examined by Blum-Kulka (1986), who argues that translation inevitably results in modifications to both the textual and discursive relationships (p. 18). Similarly, Schäffner (2002) acknowledges the unavoidable occurrence of shifts in the translation of cohesive elements, while Larson (1984) suggests that a one-to-one translation of these elements would likely distort the intended meaning of the source text. Therefore, it is essential to recognize cohesive elements for what they are and manage them appropriately during translation. Regarding narrative texts, van Leuven-Zwart (1990) maintains that adjustments to formal connections in translation can impact the narrative function of the text.

Studies have delved into the comparative aspects of cohesive elements within specific language pairs, for instance, Kirk (2005) investigates changes in cohesion and bonding patterns in translations from English to Korean, Wu (2014) examines shifts in cohesive elements when translating English texts into Chinese. As with any type of discourse, the communicative value of translated texts is enhanced by their cohesive texture. The coherent flow of the written discourse as a unitary whole depends to an important extent on the effective use of cohesive devices.

Many studies have investigated the use of cohesive devices in comparative analysis of English and Vietnamese; however, all of them tended to focus on recognizing and comparing the frequency of cohesive devices in selected texts. There have been few studies investigating the translational shifts of cohesive devices from the English source text into Vietnamese translated texts or vice versa. Therefore, this research was done with the purpose of examining cohesive devices in a new light, which is to test the explicitation hypothesis.

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen was selected as the research corpus for a variety of reasons. Firstly, it is considered a timeless narrative, despite its age, due to its ability to resonate with readers across different eras. The narrative style allows readers to experience the events much like the characters, without complex storytelling techniques, which enhances the story's relatability. Additionally, the novel explores numerous themes such as love, reputation, class, family, inclusion, and gender. These themes are intricately woven into the unfolding story, with events and character interactions providing a rich source of linguistic features for examination and discussion.

The primary research query in this study is: "How do translational shifts towards explicitness manifest when cohesive devices are rendered from an excerpt of 'Pride and Prejudice' into the two Vietnamese translations?"

In the upcoming sections, we will explore the theoretical foundation of this research, elucidating the methodology employed, and presenting the findings derived from the data corpus.

## 2. Theoretical Background

In the realm of language and translation studies, the intricacies of creating coherence in written texts and the strategies employed to achieve this coherence are of paramount importance. This research paper is intended to provide an insight into these issues; therefore, discussion of the linguistic tools that bind elements within a text – cohesive devices – will be brought to the fore, which is followed by presentation of explicitation hypothesis and translational shifts manifesting explicitness in the target language text.

### *2.1. Cohesion*

Discourse analysis and textual linguistics are the disciplines chiefly dealing with cohesion. Cohesion is also a paramount concern in the field of translation as it involves not merely the conversion of individual sentences but also the intricate interplay among them.

Halliday and Hassan (1976) introduce a comprehensive framework of cohesion which has become influential in the analysis of cohesive devices. Their approach takes into account both the linguistic features (grammatical and lexical) and the discourse-level functions of cohesive devices, allowing for a thorough examination of how these elements contribute to the text's overall coherence. Furthermore, this framework is recognized to be language-independent, meaning it can be applied to different languages, making it versatile for the analysis of cohesive devices in a wide range of linguistic contexts. Halliday and Hassan's taxonomy of cohesion, therefore, has been applied in numerous studies and research projects, enhancing its credibility and reliability as a theoretical framework.

Their taxonomy posits the existence of both grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. The former encompasses reference, substitution, ellipsis, and conjunction, while the latter includes reiteration and collocation.

Reference involves the use of pronouns, articles, or adverbs to refer backward or forward to an entity mentioned within the linguistic or situational context. This form of reference can be categorized into three types: personal (e.g., I, you, he), comparative (e.g., such, similarly), and demonstrative (e.g., this, there).

Substitution, on the other hand, denotes the replacement of one linguistic item with another, emphasizing a relationship within the language itself rather than altering the meaning. It encompasses nominal substitution (using "one," "ones," "same"), verbal substitution (utilizing auxiliary verbs like "do" or "did"), and clausal substitution (employing words such as "so" or "not").

Ellipsis is the concept of omitting certain parts of a sentence with the assumption that a preceding sentence will clarify the intended meaning. It manifests in nominal, verbal, and clausal forms.

Conjunctions, in contrast, are words or phrases that signify systematic connections between what follows and what precedes in a text, indicating logical semantic relationships among phrases, clauses, and sentences. Four primary types of conjunctions include additive (e.g., "and," "also"), adversative (e.g., "but," "however"), causal (e.g., "so," "because of this"), and temporal (e.g., "then," "next").

Lexical cohesion is established through the structural relationships among vocabulary items. It encompasses reiteration, which involves the repetition of lexical items or the use of synonyms within a given context. While collocation is a crucial aspect of lexical cohesion, it is often underrepresented in studies due to its complexity, and therefore, we will solely focus on reiteration in this study.

Now that we have examined categories of cohesive devices, which are beneficial for the understanding and analysis of textual coherence. In the context of our research question, which investigates the manifestation of translational shifts towards explicitness, it is imperative to delve deeper into the discussion of explicitation shifts to establish the theoretical background for the study.

### *2.2. Explicitation in Translation*

Explicitation in translation refers to the deliberate or unintentional inclination of translators to make their translations more explicit than the source texts. The basic assumption for the analysis of explicitation is that the element explicitated in the target text has to be present implicitly in a linguistically traceable way in the source text. Considerable evidence supports the presence of voluntary explicitation in literature. This concept finds its roots in the influential work "Stilistique Comparée du Français et de L'anglais" by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958). They defined explicitation as a "stylistic translation technique" involving the clarification in the target language of what remains implicit in the source language due to its clear context or situation.

After Vanderauwera (1985) presented numerous examples of explicating shifts in English translations of Dutch novels, Séguinot (1988, p.108) made one of the earliest attempts to categorize explicitation, aiming to differentiate its various forms. He categorized explicitation based on surface manifestations, identifying three ways in which it becomes evident: firstly, something is expressed in the translation that was absent in the original; secondly, something implied or inferred through presupposition in the source text is explicitly stated in the translation; and thirdly, an element in the source text is accentuated in the translation through focus, emphasis, or lexical choice.

Blum-Kulka (1986: 19-21), on the other hand, associates explicitation with an increase in explicitness in a target text through adjustments in cohesion and coherence at the discourse level. In simpler terms, explicitating shifts occur when the translator expands the target text by adding extra words or incorporating explicit cohesion markers. She introduces the "explicitation hypothesis," suggesting that the process of interpreting the source text may lead to a target language text that is more redundant than the source text. This redundancy is conveyed through heightened cohesive explicitness in the target language text.

Klaudy (1993/1998), a prominent linguist in the field of translation studies, has provided a well-regarded typology of explicitation, which is widely referenced in translation research. According to Klaudy, explicitation occurs when several transformations take place during the translation process. He identifies five forms of modification as follows: (1) *General-to-Specific Transformation*: This occurs when a unit in the source language with a broader or more general meaning is replaced by a unit in the target language with a narrower or more specific meaning; (2) *Complex-to-Simple Transformation*: In this case, the complex meaning of a word in the source language is distributed across multiple words in the target language; (3) *Addition of New Elements*: New meaningful elements are introduced in the target language text that were not present in the source text; (4) *Splitting Sentences*: A single sentence in the source language is divided into two or more sentences in the target language; (5) *Extension or Elevation*: Source language phrases are extended or elevated into clauses in the target language, among other transformations.

Klaudy (1998) further categorizes explicitation into four types (1) *Obligatory Explicitation:* This type is driven by inherent differences in the syntactic and semantic structures of languages. Translators are compelled to make explicit what is implicit in the source text due to these structural disparities; (2) *Optional Explicitation*: Here, the decision to make certain elements explicit in the translation is based on differences in text-building strategies and stylistic preferences between languages. Translators have the choice to decide whether to use explicitation; (3) *Pragmatic Explicitation*: This is often linked to cultural differences, pragmatic explicitation occurs when there is a lack of common knowledge in the target-language cultural community that is assumed in the source-language culture; (4) *Translation-Inherent Explicitation*: This type is attributed to the inherent nature of the translation process itself. It suggests that explicitation is a natural outcome of the translation process, possibly stemming from the need to convey a clear message in the target language.

Klaudy's typology presents a comprehensive structure for grasping the diverse aspects and reasons for explicitation in translation. However, this research aligns with Gumul's (2017) explicitation taxonomy in translation, which builds upon the work of previous scholars like Blum-Kulka (1986) and Séguinot (1988), provides a thorough framework for identifying various surface manifestations of explicitation. This classification encompasses a wide range of linguistic features and strategies employed by translators to make the target text more explicit compared to the source text. Here is a summary of the key indicators of explicitation in Gumul's taxonomy (2017):

**Adding connectives**: Introducing words or phrases that enhance the logical and semantic connections between sentences and paragraphs.

**Intensifying cohesive ties**: Strengthening the links between cohesive devices or making categorical shifts in cohesive elements.

**Lexicalizations of pro-forms**: Shifting from referential cohesion to lexical cohesion by using specific words instead of pronouns.

**Reiteration**: Repeating words or phrases to emphasize or clarify meaning.

**Filling out elliptical constructions**: Completing sentences or clauses that were initially elliptical or incomplete.

**Reconstructing substitution**: Restoring substitution elements that may have been omitted or simplified in the source text.

**Inserting optional "That"**: Adding the word "that" where it might not have been explicitly present in the source text.

**Adding modifiers and qualifiers**: Including adjectives or adverbs to provide additional information and context.

**Inserting hedges**: Adding cautious language or qualifiers to mitigate the strength of statements.

**Inserting discourse organizing items**: Introducing items like conjunctions or transition words to improve the flow and coherence of the text.

**Adding proper names**: Substituting generic names with specific names or providing full names instead of pseudonyms or nicknames.

**Full expression for acronyms or abbreviations**: Providing the complete expansion or explanation for acronyms or abbreviations.

**Including additional explanatory remarks**: Adding explanatory comments or descriptions to clarify concepts.

**Adding examples**: Inserting illustrative examples to enhance understanding.

**Replacing nominalizations with verb phrases**: Transforming nominalizations (noun forms) into verb phrases to make the text more action-oriented.

**Disambiguating lexical metaphors**: Clarifying the meaning of lexical metaphors or replacing them with similes.

**Lexical specification**: Substituting words with more specific meanings to convey precise nuances.

**Meaning specification**: Articulating ideas that were implicit or inferable from the context.

**Distributing meaning**: Spreading the meaning of a source text unit across several units in the target text for clarity.

**Punctuation modification**: Adding, changing, or adjusting punctuation marks to aid comprehension and organization.

Gumul's taxonomy (2017) is a relatively recent development in the field of translation studies which is specifically designed to detail translation strategies with the research objective of understanding how translators make text more explicit during the translation process. This allows other researchers to systematically analyze and classify the various ways in which translators make implicit information more explicit in the target text. The results of such studies will shed light on the rendition of higher-quality target texts as well as understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances.

### *2.3. Previous Studies*

There has been a growing interest in empirical research into explicitation since the day it was recognized. Besides the aforementioned scholars such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1958), Vanderauwera (1985), Séguinot (1988), Blum-Kulka (1986), and Klaudy (1998), Shlesinger (1995) noted the presence of cohesion shifts characterized by the substitution of elements such as ellipsis with the repetition of specific lexical items or their synonyms in a bi-lateral corpus of English to Hebrew language. Shlesinger further suggests that this discovery can serve as the basis for an explicitation hypothesis, which can be applied to written translations as well (Shlesinger, 1995, p. 210). Meanwhile, Puurtinen (2004) looks for linguistic indicators of explicitation at the level of lexis. At the level of syntax, indicators include the distribution in translated and non-translated texts of devices explicitating optional choices (Olohan and Baker, 2000; Jiménez-Crespo, 2011). The level of discourse embraces explicitating shifts in lexical cohesion in translated texts as compared to their sources (Øverås, 1998), conjunctive explicitness (Pápai, 2004) and explicative reformulation (Xiao, 2011).

Few studies have been carried out to investigate explicitation in translation shifts in the rendition of cohesive devices on the English-Vietnamese corpus. However, there have been efforts to investigate nominalisations in the English-Vietnamese corpus with a view to shed light on translation explicitation.

Le (2014) conducted research into the translation of nominalizations in official or legal language. Notably, this study identified explicitation as a prominent strategy employed by translators, particularly when dealing with nominals ending in -ation and -ment. The research further categorized explicitation into three levels: lexical, syntactic, and stylistic. It revealed that lexical explicitation, often involving the restoration of elliptical units from the source text, was the most frequently employed level. Le and Nguyen (2018) expanded upon Le's work, using a similar analytical framework to explore the translation of nominalizations across different genres. Their study reaffirmed the significance of lexical explicitation as a translation strategy, showcasing its prevalence in various text types. This consistency underscores the importance of lexical explicitation in addressing the challenges posed by nominalizations in translation. Nguyen and Truong (2022) delved deeper into explicitating shifts in the translation of English nominals with specific suffixes (-tion and -er) into Vietnamese. Employing quantitative corpus analysis, this study identified seven distinct types of explicitating shifts and outlined their typical characteristics. By doing so, the research not only confirmed the existence of explicitation in translating nominalizations from English into Vietnamese but also provided a nuanced understanding of the strategies employed.

In summary, these studies collectively highlight the role of explicitation as a vital translation strategy in the English-Vietnamese context, particularly when dealing with complex linguistic structures like nominalizations. They contribute valuable insights that can inform both translation practitioners and researchers in this field. However, the unresearched gap regarding explicitation in the translation of cohesive devices, which is of paramount importance for the coherence of a text, has necessitated this research paper.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Research Design*

To achieve the objective of this research paper, a combination of qualitative corpus analysis and quantitative data processing was employed. This methodological approach allowed for a comprehensive examination of cohesive devices based on Halliday & Hassan's cohesion taxonomy (1976). The study utilized a parallel corpus, focusing on the first two chapters of Jane Austen's literary novel "Pride and Prejudice" (1993) and its two Vietnamese translations, one by Diep Minh Tam (2002) published by the Publishing House of Literature (TL text 1), and the other by Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga (2017) published by Nha Nam Publishing House (TL text 2).

The source text, comprising 1,652 words, serves as the foundation for the analysis. These initial chapters introduce the story's background and feature conversations between Mr. and Mrs. Bennett, centered around the common familial theme of socializing and arranging marriages for their daughters. This preliminary study not only facilitates a thorough understanding of the translation shifts for cohesive devices from English to Vietnamese texts but also contributes to investigation into the reproduction of textual features in source language text to the target language texts in translation studies.

### *3.2. Data Processing and Analysis*

The research methodology employed a multi-step process. Initially, the resource for the study was keyed into the computer for data collection. This includes both the source language text and the two translated versions under study. Then, Microsoft Word program with its search power and Microsoft excel package were utilized in the process of calculating the frequency and categories of the phenomena discussed. The researcher had to scrutinize the appearance of cohesive devices retrieved from the source text data in order to certify the reliability of the data collected for further analysis and discussion.

Triangulation was resorted to with a view to warrant the validation of the data analysis. In other words, two colleagues of the researcher's, who specialized in linguistics, were consulted during the corpus-building process. These colleagues acknowledged the existence and categories of the cohesive devices identified from the source language text. This ensures that the researcher had recognized the appropriate phenomena before implementing further investigation.

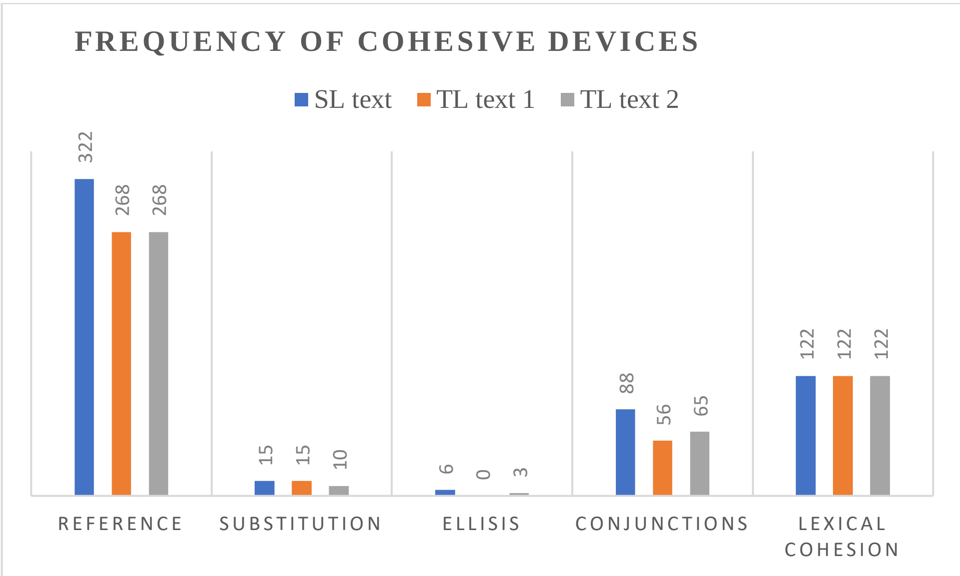
Subsequently, the cohesive devices in the two Vietnamese translations were identified and compared with their counterparts in the source language text. This comparative analysis aimed to recognize the translational shifts that transpired during the rendition of textual features from English to Vietnamese, with specific attention to the distinctive forms these shifts took. These forms can be related to the addition or omission of information in the translated texts.

In the final phase of the analysis, the taxonomy of explicitation surface manifestations proposed by Gumul (2017) was utilized. This taxonomy encompasses a broad spectrum of explicitating shifts, but the researcher primarily focused on identifying common shifts in explicitness pertaining to the translation of cohesive devices. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of these phenomena within the interpretative process, shedding light on the nuances of translation shifts related to cohesion.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

**Table 1**

*Frequency of Cohesive Devices in the Corpus Studied*




In terms of the distribution pattern of cohesion, reference emerges as the most prominent cohesive device in the source language (SL) text, featuring a total of 322 referents that encompass definite article, personal pronouns, demonstratives, comparative ties. Among these types of reference, personal pronouns account for the largest proportion, followed by lexical cohesion with 122 occurrences. This is understandable for a narrative genre of this text. Reference is also observed to maintain its dominance in the two translated versions, yet demonstrate explicitating shifts, which will be discussed in the next section. However, the difference in the frequency of reference between the SL text and TL texts can be understood to have resulted from the change in information structure (by means of punctuation modification), with the non-existence of definite article and the omission of reference in some cases in the target language texts. Lexical cohesion, mostly represented by reiteration, remains consistent in the data corpus.

There is not much difference in other cohesive devices between the SL text and the two TL texts when it comes to lexical cohesion and substitution as the frequency of these elements seem to be stable (122 occurrences and 10 to 15 manifestations, respectively); however, closer investigation into their presence revealed explicitating shifts as there is lexical specification, restoration of substitution elements that have been omitted or simplified in the source text. Ellipsis, present in the SL text, is observed to have been restored to its full form in both translated texts.

## 5. Explicitation Shifts in the Translation of Cohesive Devices

### *5.1. Reiteration*

Reiteration is prominent lexical cohesion in the translated texts. As shown in the frequency of cohesive devices, lexical cohesion seems to be transferred intact to the TL texts. However, explicating shifts are observed when punctuation marks are added to aid comprehension (Gumul, 2017), thus creating new sentences with the repetition of the same subject as shown in the example below.

e.g. *... that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately.*

*Ngày thứ hai tuần rồi* ***anh*** *đi đến trên một xe tứ mã cỡ trung* ***để xem qua trước****.* ***Anh*** *thích chỗ này lắm* ***nên đồng ý ngay*** *với ông Morris.* (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 21)

*Hôm thứ hai vừa rồi* ***cậu ta*** *đi một cỗ xe độc mã xuống đây* ***để xem ngôi nhà****, tỏ ra thích nó* ***tới mức thỏa thuận xong xuôi*** *luôn với ông Morris.* (Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p.5)

In another case, reiteration is seen in the use of synonym “the place” – “ngôi nhà” (the house), which helps make the reference explicit, facilitating readers’ comprehension.

### *5.2. Transformation of Pro-Forms Into Lexical Cohesion*

Notably, explicitation shifts are observed in the case of demonstratives, where English pronouns such as "that," "it," and "them" are often transformed into nouns in the Vietnamese translations. This process is synonymous with lexicalization of pro-forms, as discussed in Gumul’s taxonomy (2017). This transformation serves to make explicit what is being referred to in the TL. For example:

e.g.1. *“But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.*

*I see no occasion for* ***<u>that</u>****.”* (Austen, 1993, p. 3)

*“Chỉ là anh ấy có thể yêu một trong mấy đứa con gái ta, vì thế ông phải đi thăm xã giao anh ấy càng sớm càng tốt.*

*Tôi ko thấy có cơ hội* ***<u>viếng thăm</u>*** *nào.”* Diep Minh Tam (2002, p. 22)

*“Nhưng rất có khả năng cậu ta sẽ xiêu lòng vì một trong mấy đứa nó, bởi vậy khi cậu ta tới nơi ông phải sang thăm hỏi ngay nhé.*

*<u>Không đời nào</u>!”* (Translated by Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 6)

As seen in the example 1 above, the pro-form “that’, which can be understood as “việc đó, chuyện đó”, in the SL text refers to “the act of visiting” by Mr. Bennet. However, it has been explicated into a noun in the TL text 1, which can be understood as ‘(such) a visit’ or ‘visiting’ in back translation (I see no occasion for such a visit/ visiting). In this story, Mrs Bennet is insisting on her husband, Mr. Bennet, visiting Charles Bingley, a wealthy young gentleman who has just rented the mason of Netherfield Park. The arrival of Mr. Bingley at the neighborhood has raised high hope for Mrs Bennet, who has always been desperate to see her five unmarried young daughters to be well married. Paying a visit to others, at the time when the story takes place, is considered a way of socializing, establishing social connections, from which other pursuits can be gratified.

Looking at the second Vietnamese translation by Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, it is observed that the whole utterance with the pro-form "that" (I see no occasion for **that**) has been transformed into a short and abrupt decline, excluding the pro-form and changing the syntactic structure, in TL text 2 ("Không đời nào" or "Never" in back translation).

With this example, it can be said that TL text 1 displays more explicitness in translation than TL text 2. However, the two target language texts display a reverse in the translator's choice of translational shift in the following example.

e.g.2. *"Mr. Bennet was among the earliest of those who waited on Mr. Bingley. He had always intended to visit him, though to the last always assuring his wife that he should not go; and till the evening after the visit was paid she had no knowledge of it.* ***It*** *was then disclosed in the following manner."* (Austen, 1993, p. 6)

*"Ông Bennet là một trong số những người đi thăm xã giao anh Bingley sớm nhất. ông luôn có ý định đi gặp anh, mặc dù ông vẫn nói với vợ là mình không muốn đi. Chỉ khi đến buổi tối sau lần gặp gỡ, bà vợ mới biết được tin này."* (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 24)

*"Ông Bennet là một trong những người đầu tiên đi thăm Bingley. Ông đã nuôi ý định sang gặp anh chàng mặc dù tới phút chót vẫn khăng khăng bảo vợ rằng ông chẳng việc gì phải đi, thành thử đến tới buổi tối của cái hôm ông đi thăm Bingley về bà vợ mới hay biết sự tình.* ***Câu chuyện*** *bấy giờ được tiết lộ theo cách thức như thế này."* (Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 8)

In this example, the translation by Diep Minh Tam has left out the transitional sentence that introduces the story which is going to be told about Mr Bennet's visit to Mr Bingley's new residence. This act can be regarded as a move to implicitation by the translator when the details of the story are elaborated thereafter.

Meanwhile, in the works by Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga (TL text 2), the original sentence is preserved with the pronoun 'it', representing 'the visit' in the SL text, being lexicalized into another noun "câu chuyện" in the TL text 2. The act of preserving the whole sentence here, I believe, is truthful to the original work. Moreover, the translational shift of explicitation comes into play in this case with the rendition of the pronoun "it". By making explicit the meaning of the pronoun "it" in the SL text into another noun "câu chuyện" (the story) but not "việc đi thăm anh Bingley" (the visit to Mr. Bingley) or "chuyến đi" (the visit), the translator is conveying an idea that the following part is a story of the previous event to be unfolded.

e.g.3. *"Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!"*

*"How so? How can* ***it*** *affect* ***them****?"* (Austen, 1993, p. 3)

*"À! Còn độc thân, chắc hẳn rồi! Một người độc thân có gia sản lớn, cả bố hay năm nghìn mỗi năm. Kể ra cũng là điều hay cho mấy đứa con gái nhà ta!*

*Hay như thế nào?* ***Chuyện ấy*** *thì có liên quan gì đến* ***mấy đứa****?"* (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 21)

*"Ồ! Độc thân chứ, chắc chắn luôn! Một anh chàng độc thân khá giả, lợi tức bốn đến năm ngàn bảng mỗi năm. Thật may phước cho các con gái chúng ta!*

*May thế nào kia? Làm sao* ***chuyện đó*** *lại ảnh hưởng tới* ***con mình*** *cho được?"* (Lam

Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 6)

As seen in this instance, the pronouns "it" and "them" in the SL texts are explicitated when they are lexicalized into nouns "chuyện" and "con mình" with the addition of demonstrative words in both TT texts (i.e. "ấy, đó" and "chuyện ấy", "chuyện đó") to make explicit what is referred to in the context of the story (Gumul, 2017). Such words (ấy, đó) increase the coherence of the translated texts, reminding the readers of the topic discussed between Mr. and Mrs. Bennett (a wealthy young gentleman who has just moved into the neighborhood and become a topic of interest for families with mature daughters.) As said, Mrs. Bennett is nurturing a high hope of seeing her daughters to be married, especially to financially secured gentlemen, such as Mr. Bingley. Therefore, she immediately perceives the connection between the arrival of such persons and her desires for her girls and considers it as luck.

Supposing those pronouns ("it" and "them") are transferred literally to the target language as "nó, chúng", the meaning will not be as clear as the expressions by "chuyện ấy/ chuyện đó; mấy đứa/ con mình" in the TL texts.

### *5.3. Restoration of Substitution and Clausal Ellipses*

Given the limited corpus of this research, it was observed that the frequency of substitution and ellipsis is significant. However, the rendering of these ties clearly displayed explicitating shifts. Specifically, the following translational shifts of explicitness were recognized when substitution and elliptical constructions are restored to full forms.

e.g.4. *"Have you heard that Netherfield park is let at last?"*

*Mr Bennet replied that* ***<u>he had not</u>*** *(0).* (Austen, 1993, p. 11)

*"Ông Bennet trả lời rằng* ***<u>ông chưa biết</u>****"* (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 20)

*"Ông Bennet trả lời* ***rằng chưa*** *(0).*" (Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 5)

In this example, there is a clausal ellipsis in the English sentence. The modal verb *hadn't* is used instead of repeating the clause (*heard that Netherfield is let at last*). This clausal ellipsis, *he had not,* is explicitated by virtue of lexical means '*known'* ('biết') (in the translation by Diep Minh Tam (2002) but is implicated, equalling the sense of the original text in the translation by Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga (2017). With this instance, the TL text 1 has displayed a trend towards explicitation, compared to the orientation for implicitness in the TL text 2.

By making vague information become more precise in the translation, explicitation makes use of lexical means to realize this objective. Lexical explicitation is also seen in cases whereby signs of re-capturing the elliptical units of the original segment are marked in the translation. This type of explicitation is regarded as necessary because it makes the translation closer to the target language norms while increasing the explicitness of the translated texts. Therefore, we have the expansion of the implicit meaning in the SL text, making the message in the TL texts clearer and thus easier to understand. A similar phenomenon is observed in the following examples:

e.g.5. *"Have you heard that Netherfield park is let at last?"*

*Mr Bennet replied that he had not <u>(0).</u>*

***"<u>But it is</u>*** *<u>(0)</u>*," (Austen, 1993, p. 11)

***"<u>Có người đến thuê rồi</u>."*** (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 20)

***"<u>Thế mà chuyện là vậy đấy</u>!"*** (Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 5)

The clausal ellipsis in *"it is,"* leaves out the information of *let at last.* In the two translations, this clausal ellipsis is explicitated into a complete sentence repeating what has been announced previously "Có người đến thuê rồi." or "Thế mà chuyện là vậy đấy!". The translation in the TL text 1 explicitates the message produced in the previous utterance (an eliciting question with a passive structure) by paraphrasing the passive form into an active structural construction (somebody did something). I guess that the translator intends to highlight the purpose of Mrs. Bennett's conversation as she is referring to the gentleman who has rented the mansion of Netherfield park. Mrs Bennett is trying to draw her husband's attention to the appearance of the tenant so that he can pay a visit and establish social connections for her girls to be introduced. Meanwhile, the TL text 2 summarizes the whole event by replacing "*it*" (which refers to *Netherfield park* in the original text) with a new noun *"(câu) chuyện" ("the story")*. By this way, the translator seems to have established the event mentioned (Netherfield park is let at last) as the background of a story to be told later on during the course of conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Bennett.

e.g.6. "*I do not believe Mrs. Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and* ***I have no opinion of her****."*

*"No more* ***have I****," said Mr. Bennet; "and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you."* (Austen, 1993, p. 6)

*"Mẹ không tin bà Long chịu giới thiệu. Bà ta có hai đứa cháu gái. Bà có tính ích kỷ, đạo đức giả, và mẹ không có ý kiến gì về bà ấy."*

*Ông Bennet nói*

*"****Tôi cũng không có ý kiến gì hơn,****"* (Diep Minh Tam, 2002, p. 24)

*"Mẹ chẳng tin bà Long sẽ làm bất cứ điều gì như vậy. Bà ta còn những hai cô cháu gái kia kìa. Người thì ích kỷ, đạo đức giả, mẹ chả có ấn tượng tốt đẹp gì về bà ta."*

*"****Tôi cũng thế****," ông Bennet nói.* (Lam Quynh Anh & Thien Nga, 2017, p. 8)

The clausal ellipsis and inversion structure "*have I*" (by Mr Bennet) in the original text has been explicitated in the translation of Diep Minh Tam (TL text 1) with the repetition of the information mentioned in the previous utterance (by Mrs Bennet) *"opinion of her" – "ý kiến gì"*. This makes the meaning of the utterance given by Mr Bennet explicit and clear in the translated text, helping readers keep track of the conversation taking place now. The TL text 2, on the other hand, orients towards implicitation when preserving the original message's structure, keeping the translated utterance in short form using referencing items (*cũng thế, cũng vậy)* to reiterate similarity or agreement.

The analysis of the examples above has shown a tendency to make the target language texts more redundant than the source language text as explitating shifts are observed as to reference, substitution and ellipsis.

## 6. Conclusion

Translation is a complex process involving the interpretation and rendering of a message from one language to another. Translators must navigate linguistic differences and make strategic choices to effectively convey the intended meaning to the target audience. Cohesion, an important aspect of textuality, is crucial for ensuring that a text is coherent and meaningful.

This qualitative study sought to compare a passage from Jane Austen's English novel "Pride and Prejudice" (1993) with its two Vietnamese translations by Diep Minh Tam (2002) and Lam Quynh Anh, Thien Nga (2017). The primary objective was to examine the various translation shifts that occur when rendering cohesive devices, drawing from Halliday and Hassan's cohesion model (1976). The study particularly focused on the concept of explicitation, as proposed by Blum-Kulka (1986/2000) and Gumul (2017).

The findings of this descriptive study reveal that both Vietnamese translations exhibit explicitating shifts through techniques such as reiteration, lexicalization of pro-forms (shifting from referential cohesion to lexical cohesion), and the restoration of substitution and clausal ellipses found in the original text. Furthermore, the comparative analysis indicates that the translation by Diep Minh Tam (2002) tends to employ translational shifts of explicitness more frequently, which may suggest that explicitation is contributory in facilitating readers' understanding of the story line and textual cohesion.

As said previously, other studies on textual cohesion tend to focus on the frequency or translation strategies in rendering cohesive relations from a source language text to a target language text. This study, despite being limited in the data corpus as is preliminary research into the issue of discourse and textuality on translated texts, has highlighted how the process of translation involves making linguistic and stylistic choices to bridge the gap between languages, with a particular focus on enhancing explicitness in the target texts. The results of this empirical research are primarily expected to have a bearing upon raising interest in similar investigations into the issue of textuality and represent a starting point for more extensive examination of the translational and contrastive aspects of cohesive devices, contributing to empirical studies that validate explicitation hypothesis and the notion of translation universals in general as well as literary translation in particular.

## References

Arhire, M. (2017). Cohesive devices in translator training: A study based on a Romanian translational learner Corpus. *Meta, 62*(1), 155–177. https://doi.org/10.7202/1040471a

Austen, J. (1993). *Pride and prejudice*. Wordsworth Classics.

Baker, M. (1992). *In other words: A coursebook on translation*. Routledge.

Baker, M. (1993). Corpus linguistics and translation studies: Implications and applications. In M. Baker, G. Francis, & E. Tognini-Bonelli (Eds.), *Text and technology: In honour of John Sinclair* (pp. 233-250). John Benjamins.

Baker, M. (Ed.). (1998). *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies*. Routledge.

Bassnett, Susan (2002). *Translation studies.* Reviewed edition. Routledge.

Baumgarten, N., Meyer, B., & Özçetin, D. (2008). Explicitness in translation and interpreting: A critical review and some empirical evidence (of an elusive concept). *Across languages and cultures*, *9*(2), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1556/Acr.9.2008.2.2

Becher, V. (2011). *Explicitation and implicitation in translation: A corpus-based study of English-German and German-English translations of business texts*. Universität Hamburg.

Blum-Kulka, Shoshona and Levenston, Eddie (1983). Universals of Lexical Simplification. In Claus Faerch and Gabriele Kasper, (Eds.), *Strategies in inter-language communication*, 119-139. Longman.

Blum-Kulka, S. (1986). Shifts of cohesion and coherence in translation. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The translation studies reader* (pp. 298-313). Routledge.

Brown, G., & Yule, G. (1983). *Discourse analysis*. Cambridge University Press.

Cerban, M. (2010). Types of lexical relations: Reiteration. *Annals of the University of Craiova, Series: Philology, English, Year XI, No.2*. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2768575

Diệp Quang Ban (1992). *Ngữ pháp tiếng Việt* (tập 2). NXB Giáo dục.

Diệp Quang Ban (1999). *Văn bản và liên kết trong tiếng Việt*. NXB Giáo dục.

Diệp Quang Ban (2003). *Giao tiếp, văn bản, mạch lạc, liên kết, đoạn văn*. NXB Khoa học Xã hội.

Diệp Quang Ban (2009). *Giao tiếp diễn ngôn và cấu tạo của văn bản*. NXB Giáo dục.

Diệp Minh Tâm (2002). *Kiêu hãnh và định kiến*. NXB Văn học.

Dimitrova, E.B. (2005). *Expertise and explicitation in the translation process*. John Benjamins.

Đỗ Hữu Châu (1997). *Từ vựng ngữ nghĩa tiếng Việt*. NXB Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội.

Frankenberg-Garcia, A. (2009). Are translations longer than source texts ? A corpus-based study of explicitation. In A. Beeby, P. Rodriguez, & P. Sanchez-Gijon (Eds.), *Corpus use and translating: Corpus use for learning to translate and learning corpus use to translate* (pp. 47-58). John Benjamins.

Gumul, E. (2017). A study into explicitating behaviour of trainee interpreters. *Explicitation in simultaneous interpreting.* Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Śląskiego. Katowice 2017.

Halliday, M., & Hassan, R. (1976). *Cohesion in English*. Longman.

Halliday, Michael A.K. (1985/1994). *An introduction to functional grammar*, 2nd edition. Edward Arnold.

Hoàng Phê (Chủ biên) (1996). *Từ điển Tiếng Việt.* NXB Đà Nẵng.

Hopkinson, C. (2008). *Shifts of explicitness in translation. A Czech–English study*. Universitas Ostraviensis.

House, J. (2004). Explicitness in discourse across languages. In Juliane House, Werner Koller & Klaus Schubert (eds.), *Neue Perspektiven in der Übersetzungs- und Dolmetschwissenschaft*, 185–208. Bochum: AKS.

Južnič, T. (2013). Bridging a grammar gap with explicitation: A case study of the nominalized infinitive. *Across Languages and Cultures, 14*(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1556/Acr.14.2013.1.4

Kirk, Sung Hee (2005). *Cohesion shifts in English-Korean Translation.* Doctoral Dissertation. University of Manchester.

Klaudy, K. (1993). Explicitation. In A. Mauranen & P. Kujamaki (Eds.), *Translation universals: Do they exist?* (pp. 153-9). John Benjamins.

Klaudy, K. (1998). Explicitation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 80-84). Routledge.

Klaudy, K., & Karoly, K. (2005). Implicitation in translation: Empirical evidence for operational asymmetry in translation. *Across Languages and Cultures, 6*, 13-28.

Lâm Quỳnh Anh & Thiên Nga. (2021). *Kiêu hãnh và định kiến.* NXB Nhã Nam.

Larson, Mildred L. (1984). Meaning-based translation*: A guide to cross-language equivalence*. University Press of America.

Laviosa-Braithwaite, S. (2001). Universals of translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Routledge encyclopedia of translation studies* (pp. 288-291). Routledge.

Laviosa-Braithwaite, S. (2008). Description in the translation classroom: Universals as a case in point. In A. Pym, M. Shlesinger, & D. Simeoni (Eds.), *Beyond descriptive translation studies.* John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Le, Thi Giao Chi (2018). A study of universal strategies in Vietnamese translation of-ment nominalisation in English official texts. *Journal of Science and Technology, 8*, 129.

Leuven-Zwart, Kitty M. van (1990). *Translation and original: Similarities and dissimilarities. II. Target*, (1), 69-95.

Lotfipour-Saedi, K. (1997). Lexical cohesion and Translation Equivalence. *Meta, 42*(1), 185–192. https://doi.org/10.7202/004014ar

Minh Chinh, N. (2022). Some basic functions of translation. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 38*(2), 151-161. https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/index.php/fs/article/view/4964

Martin, J.R. (1992). *English text: System and structure*. Benjamins.

Mcshane, Marjorie. J. (2005). *A theory of Ellipsis*. Oxford University Press.

Moud, H., & Bekkouche, M. S. (2020). Shifts of cohesion in subtitling from English into Arabic: A corpus-based study on explicitation of reference, substitution, and ellipsis. *AWEJ for Translation & Literary Studies, 4*(3), 191-197. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4002926

Newmark, Peter (1988). *Approaches to Translation.* Prentice Hall.

Nguyen, Bui Thuy Minh & Truong, Bach Le (2022). Exploring explicitation in translating English nominalisation into Vietnamese. *Scientific Journal of Linguistics and Culture, 6*(2).

Olohan, M., & Baker, M. (2000). Reporting "that" in translated English: Evidence for subconscious processes of explicitation?. *Across Languages and Cultures, 1*(2), 141-158.

Olohan, M. (2002). Leave it out! Using a comparable corpus to investigate aspects of explicitation in translation. *Cadernos de Traducao, 1*(9), 153-169.

Øverås, L. (1998). In search of the third code: An investigation of norms in literary translation. *Meta, 43*(4), 571-588. http://id.erudit.org/iderudit/003775ar

Pápai, V. (2004). Explicitation: A universal of translated text ?. In A. Mauranen & P. Kujamaki (Eds.), *Translation universals: Do they exist?,* (pp. 143-164). John Benjamins.

Paltridge, B. (2012). *Discourse analysis: An introduction* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury.

Puurtinen, T. (2004). Explicitation of clausal relations: A corpus-based analysis of clause connectives in translated and non-translated Finnish children's literature. In A. Mauranen & P. Kujamäki (Eds.), *Translation universals: Do they exist?,* (pp. 165-176). John Benjamins.

Pym, Anthony (2010). *Exploring Translation Theories*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203869291

Quirk, R., & Greenbaum, S. (1976). *A university grammar of English*. The Australian government.

Saldanha, G. (2008). *Explicitation revisited: Bringing the reader into the picture*. Unpublished seminar paper. https://d-nb.info/999838504/34

Schäffner, C. (2000). Discourse analysis for translation and translator training: status, needs, methods. *Current Issues in Language and Society, 7*(3), 177-184. https://doi.org/10.1080/13520520009615580

Séguinot, C. (1988). Pragmatics and the explicitation hypothesis. *TTR: Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, 1(2). https://doi.org/10.7202/037024ar

Shlesinger, Miriam (1995). Shifts in cohesion in simultaneous interpreting. *The Translator, 1*(2), 193-214.

Tanskanen, S. (2006). *Collaborating towards coherence: Lexical cohesion in English discourse*. Benjamins.

Toury, G. (1978/2012). The nature and role of norms in literary translation. In L. Venuti (Ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (3rd ed., pp. 168–181). Routledge.

Toury, G. (1995/2012). *Descriptive translation studies – and beyond* (Revised ed.). John Benjamins.

Trần Ngọc Thêm (1981). Một cách hiểu về tính liên kết văn bản. *Tạp chí Ngôn ngữ, 2*.

Trần Ngọc Thêm (1999). *Hệ thống liên kết văn bản tiếng Việt*. NXB Khoa học Xã hội.

Trosborg, Anna (2002). Discourse analysis as part of translator training. In Christina Schäffner (Ed.), The Role of Discourse Analysis for Translation and Translator Training. *Contemporary Issues in Language and Society, 3*, 9-52. Multilingual Matters.

Van Van, H. (2022). Interlingual translation: An attempt at understanding some basic concepts. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 38*(6), 1-29. https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/index.php/fs/article/view/4880

Vinay, J. P., & Darbelnet, J. (1958/1995). *Comparative stylistics of French and English: A methodology for translation (Vol. 11)*. John Benjamins Publishing.

Venuti, L. (Ed.). (2000). *The translation studies reader*. Routledge.

Wilson, P. (2014). *Mind the gap* (1st ed.). Taylor and Francis. https://www.perlego.com/book/1554820/mind-the-gap-ellipsis-and-stylistic-variation-in-spoken-and-written-english-pdf

Wu, Jing (2014). Shifts of cohesive devices in English-Chinese translation. *Theory and practice in language studies, 4*(8), 1659-1664. https://doi.org/10.4304/tpls.4.8.1659-1664

# TÍNH TƯỜNG MINH CỦA PHƯƠNG TIỆN LIÊN KẾT TRONG HAI BẢN DỊCH TIẾNG VIỆT CỦA MỘT TÁC PHẨM VĂN HỌC

Vũ Thị Thu Thủy

*Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội,*
*Đường Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Tính tường minh của các phương tiện liên kết văn bản có thể thay đổi trong quá trình dịch thuật. Vì vậy, trong nghiên cứu định tính ban đầu này, tác giả tiến hành so sánh một phần của tác phẩm "Kiêu hãnh và định kiến" của nhà văn Jane Austen (1993) với hai bản dịch tiếng Việt được thực hiện bởi Diệp Minh Tâm (2002), và Lâm Quỳnh Anh và Thiên Nga (2017) nhằm tìm hiểu các bước chuyển dịch tường minh trong việc chuyển ngữ các phương tiện liên kết. Nghiên cứu này dựa trên các lý thuyết về liên kết của Halliday và Hassan (1976), giả thuyết về tính tường minh của Blum-Kulka (1986/2000) và thang phân loại của Gumul (2017). Để đạt được mục đích của nghiên cứu, tác giả xác định các phương tiện liên kết được dùng trong văn bản gốc (quy chiếu, thay thế, rút gọn, liên từ, và liên kết từ vựng), sau đó tiến hành so sánh với hai bản dịch để nhận diện các chiến lược dịch tường minh. Hai bản dịch cũng được so sánh với nhau để tìm sự khác biệt trong chuyển dịch phương tiện liên kết của hai nhóm dịch giả. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy chuyển dịch tường minh trong văn bản dịch được áp dụng qua kỹ thuật lặp từ, sử dụng danh từ thay thế cho đại từ chỉ định, khôi phục phép thế và phép rút gọn mệnh đề bằng cách thêm thông tin. Phân tích bản dịch cũng cho thấy sự khác biệt trong quyết định dịch thuật của các dịch giả khi truyền tải một văn bản gốc sang văn bản đích, thể hiện ở việc sử dụng các chiến lược chuyển dịch tường minh trên khối liệu của nghiên cứu này.

*Từ khóa:* phương tiện liên kết, các bước chuyển dịch, minh bạch hóa/ tường minh

# PRE-SERVICE EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION OF TEACHING COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT OVER THE TESOL COURSE

Nguyen Minh Tu*

*Ho Chi Minh University of Industry and Trade,*
*140 Le Trong Tan, Tay Thanh Ward, Tan Phu District, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

Received 24 July 2023
Revised 16 August 2023; Accepted 26 August 2023

**Abstract:** The English teaching practice is an essential part of a TESOL methodology course as it can offer TESOL students or pre-service English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers valuable experience in actual teaching environments. Additionally, TESOL methodology courses play a crucial role in providing pre-service EFL teachers with excellent chances to master their professional knowledge to become competent language teachers in the future. In this regard, pre-service teachers' improvement in knowledge, attitudes, and professional skills in teaching English is of vital importance to their teaching career since they assist pre-service EFL teachers in displaying teaching abilities. This study aimed at examining pre-service teachers' perception of their teaching competency development after taking 45 periods of the English teaching course, which is a compulsory course in the MA program. 121 pre-service EFL teachers, whose majors are TESOL methodology, answered the self-assessment questionnaire survey in this study. The SPSS software was utilized for data analysis. The findings disclosed that pre-service EFL teachers believed that their teaching competencies were developed after learning the teaching practice course. Specifically, they improved their knowledge and teaching skills so as to attract students to their lessons. Pedagogical implications are suggested for policymakers and teacher trainers to enhance pre-service EFL teachers' teaching competencies based on the preliminary results of the current study.

*Keywords:* English teaching practice, pre-service EFL teachers, teaching competency, TESOL courses

## 1. Introduction

It is generally agreed that teaching competency performs a vital role in the process of teaching since it assists teachers to demonstrate their confidence in their abilities. Thus, teachers' teaching competency may contribute to the efficacy of classroom practice (Dignath, 2021). Accordingly, the English teaching practice (ETP) is vital for teachers to gain their competencies in teaching so that their teaching quality can be improved. Additionally, the ETP enables language teachers to enhance their professional competence and teaching skills as well in order to become effective and qualified teachers.

Apart from that, the ETP is one of the key components of the training process, which provides teachers with wonderful opportunities to bring theories to actual classroom settings (Azeem, 2011; Foncha et al., 2015). In addition, Komba and Kira (2013) stated that the ETP provides student teachers with a great opportunity to increase their exposure to real teaching contexts, which helps them gain teaching competence. Thus, acquiring teaching abilities has a

* Corresponding author.
Email address: tunm@hufi.edu.vn

significant impact on the enhancement of teaching and learning quality (Alqiawi & Ezzeldin, 2015; Bhargava & Pathy, 2011). Hence, pre-service teachers are offered a chance in order to attempt the art of teaching before embarking on their real teaching career (Kiggundu & Nayimuli, 2009).

Additionally, Blašková et al. (2014) highlight that university teachers' competency in teaching the English language benefits their university and students. Therefore, training teachers is prioritized by training institutions as it helps teachers to achieve academic standards (Tran, 2020). In fact, it is important that teachers should have considerable skills as well as competencies to meet the demands of today's education reforms (Zhumash et al., 2021). According to Sadeghi and Richards (2021), teacher training approaches provide the necessary skills for teachers to gain new teaching experiences in the classroom. In a similar vein, in the Vietnamese context, training pre-service EFL teachers to be skilled teachers in the future is important to language teachers and educators in recent years. Apart from that, Bhargava and Pathy (2011) stated that pre-service teachers' attitudes toward teaching professions are crucial as positive attitudes can lead to their motivation for improving their teaching capabilities so that they are able to become adept teachers.

Regarding the significance of this study, it will make a valuable contribution toward the understanding of pre-service teachers' perception about developing their teaching competency after taking the teaching practice course. In fact, comprehending their attitudes and beliefs in terms of their teaching competency development (TCD) is critical as they can help university administrations and teacher trainers provide appropriate training programs and efficient teaching methods, which is beneficial to pre-service EFL teachers' TCD. Besides, this study is significant as it contributes to a vast body of research on pre-service teachers' assessment of their TCD after learning MA programs. What is more, the findings of this study could provide deep insights into pre-service EFL teachers' invaluable experience in putting theory into practice.

In the context of Vietnam, it can be observed that training EFL teachers to achieve the academic standards of English language teaching (ELT) has been stimulated to date. In this line, fiats and directions for high standards on teaching competency among Vietnamese EFL teachers are provided by Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training (MOET) in order to help EFL teachers reach such standards. In respect of ELT, MOET (2014) offered Vietnamese EFL teachers a general teaching competency framework including five key areas: knowledge of the subject and the curriculum, knowledge of ELT, knowledge of language learners, ethics and values in language teaching, and collaboration and practice in teaching the English language. Regarding knowledge of the subject and curriculum, it involves English capacity, a deep understanding of the English language system and foreign culture, and the ability to make use of teaching materials. In terms of knowledge of teaching English, it includes teaching methodology, the capability of designing lessons, organizing learning activities, evaluating students' performances, selecting teaching resources, and applying technology to teaching English. Knowledge of language learners embraces an understanding of students' attitudes toward their English language learning and the ability to increase students' creativity and critical thinking. With respect to ethics and values in the teaching profession, it encompasses teachers' competency in teaching English, the cooperation between teachers and students, teachers' capacity for teaching English, and teachers' contributions to the field. Finally, in terms of collaboration and English language teaching practice, it involves closer cooperation among schools as well as teachers' self-evaluation of their teaching competency.

Thus, this framework is essential to teacher training programs as it provides schools and universities with explicit guidelines so as to evaluate teaching competency among pre-service teachers, high school teachers, and tertiary teachers so that the quality of ELT is enhanced. Nevertheless, teacher training program in Vietnam encounters considerable problems, which prevents the development of students' discipline and practice teaching ability (Le & Tran, 2022). One of the key issues of teacher development programs is that they are not of high quality (Dede et al., 2009), which results in teachers' lack of subject knowledge or suitable skills (Khan et al., 2016). Another problem is that universities do not provide students with a sufficient environment to enhance their soft skills as well as the teaching practice is ineffective (Tran, 2012). The third problem concerns the improvement in the quality of training programs that help pre-service EFL teachers to use English and apply knowledge to their teaching.

Therefore, this paper attempts to scrutinize pre-service EFL teachers' perception of their ELT competence enhancement after completing the course in English teaching practice at a higher institution in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC), Vietnam. To this end, this study seeks to respond to the following research question:

*What is pre-service teachers' perception of their language teaching competency development after the English teaching practice course?*

## 2. Literature Review

### *2.1. Definitions of Teaching Competency*

Nemet (2018) defined teaching competency as the ability of teachers to apply their knowledge, attitudes, and teaching skills to stimulate students to their learning. In addition, teaching competency refers to teachers' ability to manage the process of teaching and learning activities (Aulia, 2021; Channa & Sahito, 2022; Ghufron et al., 2022). Moreover, teaching competency is defined as skills and abilities that are possessed by teachers so as to make the learning environment effective (Sekar, 2016). From the aforementioned definitions, teaching competency is regarded as teachers' capabilities for sharing their academic knowledge and employing efficient methods of teaching so as to engage students in the learning process.

### *2.2. Components of Teaching Competency*

Numerous researchers and practitioners (e.g., Brosh, 1996; McDiarmid & Clevenger-Bright, 2008; Paramanik & Barman, 2019; Pramatarindya & Sukidjo, 2018; Sekar 2016; Zeichner, 2010) have asserted that teaching competency involves fundamental components such as knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Teachers' knowledge involves "an understanding of the relationship between content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge" (Grant, 2008, p. 127). According to Bardakci and Ünaldı (2021), content knowledge refers to teachers' knowledge of the subject matter that they are teaching while pedagogical content knowledge is knowledge that forms a basis for language teaching and learning activities. Particularly, pedagogical content knowledge embraces curriculum planning, material designs, evaluation, reflective teaching, classroom management, and teaching four language skills (Aulia, 2021; Richards, 2011). With respect to skills, they are performances by teachers in order to organize their lectures including interpreting tasks, checking students' understanding, and guiding students' practice (Richards, 2010). Concerning attitudes, they refer to the relationship between teachers and students so as to help students achieve their learning goals (Mullock, 2003).

In this light, three principal components of pre-service EFL teachers' perception of teaching competency after the English teaching practice periods in this study encompass knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

### *2.3. Pre-service Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency Development After the English Teaching Practice Course*

There have been several studies that have investigated the views of pre-service teachers on developing teaching competencies during teaching practice periods in various settings. In foreign contexts, a study by Freeman et al. (2014) disclosed that pre-service language teachers found that it was challenging for them to manage classrooms efficiently in order to complete their teacher preparation program. In addition, Yüksel (2014) explored pre-service teachers' appraisal of their teaching competency. The results showed that they believed that they acquired professional competence in terms of teaching. In 2018, Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández examined pre-service EFL teachers' conceptualizations of their ELT. The findings indicated that pre-service language teachers had an awareness of their teaching practice's significance and they believed that their mentor provided theory and valuable experience for their teaching competence improvement. Besides, Özdaş (2018) concluded that pre-service language teachers gained considerable experience in teaching through the teaching practice course. Karim et al. (2019) have pinpointed that pre-service teachers believed that teacher training courses could enhance their pedagogical and linguistic competence. Yin (2019) explored attitudes to experiences among pre-service teachers in a teacher training course. The findings indicated that participants perceived that the university course provided them with various necessary skills to prepare for lectures and reflect on their teaching practice.

In 2020, Afalla and Fabelico explored pre-service teachers' teaching competency. The findings revealed that teachers increased their teaching capability. Kihwele and Mtandi (2020) confirmed that pre-service teachers perceived clearly the significance of teacher practice since it assists them to sharpen their pedagogical skills. Furthermore, Uzun (2022) investigated opinions on pronunciation teaching among Turkish pre-service teachers. This study involved 150 pre-service EFL teachers who completed a survey. The findings showed that participants viewed pronunciation as a crucial part of language learning as well as further training in teaching pronunciation was needed.

Within the context of Vietnam, Ly and Tran (2019) investigated pre-service teachers' perceptions of their identity establishment after the teaching practicum in Vietnam. The results indicated that participants developed their professional identities after practicing their English teaching. In 2021, Nguyen and Nguyen explored pre-service language teachers' perceptions of the standard of a training course. There were 39 teachers who participated in the interviews. It was indicated that pre-service language teachers agreed that this course was of very high quality. Trinh et al. (2022) examined EFL teachers' self-efficacy and their classroom management in the Mekong Delta. This study employed a mixed methods design including a questionnaire, interviews, and classroom observations. This study involved 46 teachers from three high schools who answered the questionnaire. There were 12 teachers who attended the interviews and 6 teachers who allowed the researchers to observe their classes. The findings revealed that teachers who had a higher level of self-efficacy could manage their classes more skillfully than those with a lower level of self-efficacy.

Thus, it is noticeable that there is a scarcity of scholarship that explored pre-service EFL teachers' viewpoints on TCD over the course of English teaching practice in the Vietnamese context. Hence, it is vital to come under the scrutiny of pre-service EFL teachers' perception of teaching competency enhancement after completing an English teaching practice course in their

MA program at a university in HCMC, Vietnam.

## 3. Methodology

### *3.1. Research Setting*

This quantitative study was carried out at the Faculty of English Language in a college which is situated in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Particularly, this institution provides different training programs such as Bachelor's program and MA in the TESOL program so that students can choose their majors easily. The TESOL program focuses on three specialized courses, namely Translation and Interpretation, Business English, and TESOL Methodology. It is observed that numerous students, who did not have experience in ELT, participated in the TESOL methodology course. However, they were able to gain knowledge of the subject and curriculum, have positive attitudes toward their teaching career, and improve their teaching skills after studying the ETP course.

Graduate students who choose the TESOL Methodology major should take four courses including Teaching Methodology I, Teaching Methodology II, Classroom Management Strategies, and Contrastive Linguistic Analysis and Language Teaching. Each course involves 3 credits, hence TESOL students have to complete 12 credits for these courses. In particular, the course of ETP is a principal part of Teaching Methodology II, which was taught within 45 periods. The main objectives of the course involve the skills to design lesson plans for different language skills, the skills to perform different teaching lessons with the assistance of teaching aids, and the skills to observe other teachers' teaching and offer comments on their teaching. Additionally, there are 9 sessions that are involved in this course. During the ETP course, TESOL students had to study lectures on teaching techniques, followed by classroom observations (five sections). Concerning the four last sections, participants practiced their teaching in small groups twice during their course. Each group had to deliver their lessons within 1 hour. Other students played the role of learners and completed an observation form. TESOL students received feedback and comments on their performance from their teacher trainers and classmates after exhibiting their teaching ability.

### *3.2. Research Participants*

The current study aimed to explore pre-service EFL teachers' perception of their teaching competency development after the ETP course. To this end, a cohort of 121 pre-service EFL teachers, who pursued their MA in the TESOL Methodology course, was involved in this study. This study employed convenience sampling as it is a non-probability sample strategy which is appropriate for research that required simple access to participants (Creswell, 2014). The participants majored in the TESOL methodology at an institution in Ho Chi Minh City. Specifically, there were 35 males (28.9 %) and 86 females (71.1 %). Regarding their age, 59 participants (48.7%) were under 22, 55 participants (45.5 %) were between 22-24, and 7 participants (5.8%) were over 24. Concerning teaching experience, nearly 52% of participants had teaching experience at various posts, namely tutor (27.3 %), teaching assistant (19.8 %), and full-time teacher (4.1 %). However, there were 59 participants (48.8 %) who have not had experience in teaching English.

### *3.3. Research Instrument*

A quantitative method was employed in the present study so as to explore pre-service teachers' perception of their English teaching competency enhancement after studying the ETP course. The questionnaire, which was constructed on the basis of MOET's framework (2014) and adapted from Paramanik and Barman's (2019) questionnaire due to its reliability, involves two sections. Section A asked about participants' demographic information. Section B involves 24 items which are divided into three groups including pre-service teachers' perception of teaching competency in terms of knowledge (10 items), pre-service teachers' perception of teaching competency regarding skills (10 items), and pre-service teachers' perception of teaching competency in terms of attitudes (4 items). Those items were designed based on a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was prepared in English. Next, such a questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese in order to help the participants grasp the questions completely. The Cronbach's alpha of the questionnaire is 89 (24 items). This indicated that the questionnaire was highly reliable.

### *3.4. Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedures*

In terms of data collection, before conducting the main study, the questionnaire was piloted with five pre-service teachers to ensure instrument reliability. To that end, the Cronbach's alpha is run to assure the reliability of the piloted questionnaire then a follow-up insignificant modification is carried out. In this study, the values of the researcher are impartial and objective as the researcher remains independent of the data as well as holds a neutral viewpoint; therefore, the findings are a reliable and objective indicator of pre-service teachers' perception of teaching competency development. The questionnaire then was delivered to 121 pre-service teachers via Google Forms after they finished the course of English teaching practice. It took them about 25 minutes to fill in the questionnaire. Regarding data analysis, the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was employed to analyze data in relation to descriptive statistics (Mean: M, Standard deviation: SD). The interval scale of the mean scores is comprehended as 1.00-1.80: strongly disagree; 1.81-2.60: disagree; 2.61-3.40: neutral; 3.41-4.20: agree; and 4.21-5.00: strongly agree.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### *4.1. Results*

#### 4.1.1. Pre-service Teachers' Perception of Language Teaching Competency After Studying the English Teaching Practice Course

As illustrated in Table 1, the average mean score of pre-service teachers' perception of teaching competency after the teaching practice session is 4.26 (SD=.60) out of five. This means that they strongly agreed that their teaching competencies were developed after learning the teaching practice course. Among the three components of language teaching competency, the mean score of knowledge (M=4.28; SD=.59) reached the highest level while that of skills (M=4.26; SD=.64) took the second place. However, attitudes achieved a lower average mean score (M=4.23; SD=.70). This is understood that pre-service EFL teachers perceived their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward their teaching competence at a significant level.

**Table 1**

*Pre-service Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency After the Teaching Practice Course*

| **Content** | N=121 | |
|---|---|---|
| | M | SD |
| **Knowledge** | 4.28 | .59 |
| **Skills** | 4.26 | .64 |
| **Attitudes** | 4.23 | .70 |
| **Total** | 4.26 | .60 |

#### 4.1.2. Components of Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency After the Teaching Practice Course

Table 2 demonstrates that participants heartily agreed that after the English teaching practice course, they have had the capability to "design lesson plans for different skills" (item 1: M=4.52, SD=.53), "write an observation form" (item 2: M=4.43, SD=.68), "give comments and evaluate a teaching class" (item 3: M=4.21, SD=.76), "teach vocabulary" (item 4: M=4.47, SD=.69), and "teaching pronunciation" (item 5: M=4.23, SD=.76). In addition, they were in agreement that they had the ability to "teach grammar" (item 6: M=4.10, SD=.76), "teaching speaking skill" (item 8: M=4.19, SD=.75), and "teaching writing skill" (item 10: M=4.11, SD=.76). Nevertheless, they strongly concurred that after taking the English teaching practice course, they were able to "teach listening skill" (item 7: M=4.21, SD=.73), "teaching reading skill" (item 9: M=4.28, SD=.71). In brief, the findings show that pre-service EFL teachers agreed that they gained detailed knowledge of teaching competence after such course.

**Table 2**

*Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency in Relation to Knowledge*

| No. | After the English teaching practice course, I have had the ability to…. | N=121 | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | **SD** |
| 1 | design lesson plans for different skills. | 4.52 | .53 |
| 2 | write an observation form. | 4.43 | .68 |
| 3 | give comments and evaluate a teaching class. | 4.21 | .76 |
| 4 | teach vocabulary. | 4.47 | .69 |
| 5 | teach pronunciation. | 4.23 | .76 |
| 6 | teach grammar. | 4.10 | .76 |
| 7 | teach listening skill. | 4.21 | .73 |
| 8 | teach speaking skill. | 4.19 | .75 |
| 9 | teach reading skill. | 4.28 | .71 |
| 10 | teach writing skill. | 4.11 | .76 |

Table 3 indicates that pre-service EFL teachers strongly agreed that they had the ability to "organize teaching activities effectively" (item 11: M=4.35, SD=.76), "manage teaching time effectively" (item 12: M=4.28, SD=.75), "use teaching techniques efficiently" (item 13: M=4.23, SD=.75), "ask questions to increase the learners' interaction" (item 14: M=4.22, SD=.81), "use teaching aids effectively" (item 15: M=4.38, SD=.71), "give instructions for learning activities effectively" (item 16: M=4.28, SD=.73), "have a passion for my teaching career" (item 18: M=4.38, SD=.79). Apart from that, they agreed that acquired the competence to "give feedback on learners' learning activities effectively" (item 17: M=4.17, SD=.76), "control my voice suitably for each lesson" (item 19: M=4.16, SD=.78), "use English for my teaching effectively" (item 20: M=4.16, SD=.76) after the teaching practice sessions. In general, such findings give information about participants' awareness of their skill development after the English teaching course.

**Table 3**

*Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency in Relation to Skills*

| **No.** | **After the English teaching practice course, I have had the ability to….** | **N=121** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | **M** | **SD** |
| 11 | organize teaching activities effectively. | 4.35 | .76 |
| 12 | manage teaching time effectively. | 4.28 | .75 |
| 13 | use teaching techniques efficiently. | 4.23 | .75 |
| 14 | ask questions to increase the learners' interaction. | 4.22 | .81 |
| 15 | use teaching aids effectively. | 4.38 | .71 |
| 16 | give instructions for learning activities effectively. | 4.28 | .73 |
| 17 | give feedback on learners' learning activities effectively. | 4.17 | .76 |
| 18 | have a passion for my teaching career. | 4.38 | .79 |
| 19 | control my voice suitably for each lesson. | 4.16 | .78 |
| 20 | use English for my teaching effectively. | 4.16 | .76 |

As displayed in Table 4, pre-service EFL teachers strongly concurred that after taking the English teaching practice course, they were able to treat all learners equally" (item 24: M=4.38, SD=.74). Nevertheless, they believed that they had the ability to "use teaching methods to engage learners in the lectures" (item 21: M=4.17, SD=.83), "manage the classroom effectively" (item 22: M=4.16, SD=.73), and "motivate learners to study actively" (item 23: M=4.20, SD=.81). Generally, research participants had positive attitudes toward their teaching competency development after the teaching practice course.

**Table 4**

*Pre-service EFL Teachers' Perception of Teaching Competency in Relation to Attitudes*

| **No.** | **After the English teaching practice course, I have had the ability to….** | **N=121** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | M | SD |
| 21 | use teaching methods to engage learners in the lessons. | 4.17 | .83 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22 | manage the classroom effectively. | 4.16 | .73 |
| 23 | treat all learners equally. | 4.38 | .74 |
| 24 | motivate learners to study actively. | 4.20 | .81 |

***4.2. Discussion***

This study revealed some key findings. Pre-service teachers perceived that learning the English teaching practice course could enhance their capabilities of teaching the English language. This finding was in alignment with Afalla and Fabelico (2020), Karim et al. (2019), Kihwele and Mtandi (2020), and Yüksel (2014) who asserted that pre-service language teachers developed their capacity for ELT as well as mastered their skills thanks to teacher training courses. A plausible explanation for this finding could be that participants had a great awareness of the requirements for the ELT career. Therefore, they attempted to enhance their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward teaching competency in order to satisfy the professional standards of ELT. Another possible explanation for this could be that participants may find the teaching practice course helpful as it could assist them to gain knowledge and skills so that they were confident in their competence in teaching English. Besides, they could develop their teaching methods during the teaching practice periods. Moreover, it can be implied that participants received strong support from their universities and teacher trainers.

With respect to knowledge, pre-service teachers hold positive views about their competencies in designing lesson plans for their lectures after studying the teaching practice course. This finding was aligned with Yin's (2019) study on perceptions of pre-service language teachers' practical experiences during a teacher training course, which indicated that the course offered them essential skills at preparing their lectures. It can be implied that pre-service language teachers acknowledged the importance of acquiring knowledge of the subject and teaching the English language, hence they acquired pedagogical knowledge of their subject after the ETP course. Consequently, they were skilled in preparing their lesson plans, which engage students in the learning process. Besides, pre-service teachers realized that their pronunciation teaching was enhanced after the ETP course. This finding was different from Uzun's (2022) study which disclosed that pre-service teachers should attend advanced training in teaching pronunciation. It can be explained that Vietnamese pre-service EFL teachers recognized the critical importance of pronunciation in ELT and learning. Hence, they have spent considerable time on English phonetics and phonology practice in order to have excellent pronunciation, which can help them have the capacity for correcting their students' pronunciation so that their students are able to have proper English pronunciation.

In terms of skills, pre-service language teachers believed that they organized their teaching activities effectively. This finding of the study was similar to that of Özdaş (2018) who confirmed that pre-service language teachers gained considerable experience in teaching English through the teaching practice course. This can be explained that pre-service EFL teachers comprehended their students' needs as well as they had tremendous opportunities to be exposed to sufficient teaching practice sessions when attending the course, which resulted in their ability to arrange various activities for their classes effectively. In addition, pre-service teachers developed an abiding passion for their teaching career after the ETP course. This finding was aligned with Castañeda-Trujillo and Aguirre-Hernández's (2018) study, which indicated that pre-service teachers perceived the significance of the ETP course. A possible explanation for this could be the ETP course performs a pivotal role in inspiring pre-service teachers' devotion to ELT. In fact, pre-service EFL teachers' passionate interest in ELT is developed after taking the ETP course, which helps them have immense enthusiasm for ELT.

Regarding attitudes, pre-service language teachers also held a firm belief that the English teaching practice course could enhance their classroom management skills. This finding was dissimilar from Freeman et al. This study (2014) uncovered that pre-service teachers could not manage their classes effectively, which is deemed a new finding of this study as it may contribute to a body of research on classroom management skills among pre-service language teachers during their ELT practice. It can be inferred that pre-service EFL teachers recognized the critical importance of professional ethics and values in ELT, which resulted in their considerable effort to manage classroom activities successfully.

**5. Conclusions**

The present study indicated that pre-service EFL teachers firmly believed that their teaching competencies were developed after taking the English teaching practice course, which is a significant course in their MA program. In addition, knowledge, skills, and attitudes were considered as three core components that led to their TCD after the English teaching practice periods. Therefore, some pedagogical implications are proposed. First of all, teacher trainers should provide pre-service teachers with clear directions for adopting effective strategies for teaching English language skills as well as employ a wide range of teaching methods when teaching pre-service teachers so that pre-service teachers can broaden their horizons in terms of teaching approaches and their ability to teach language skills can be enhanced. Second, it is imperative that teacher trainers raise an awareness of the importance of gaining thorough knowledge of English grammar among pre-service teachers, which assists them in improving their English grammar teaching. Third, it is teacher trainers who instruct pre-service learners to give detailed comments and evaluate their classes effectively so that pre-service teachers are able to provide valuable feedback on their students’ performance and assess their teaching classes accurately. Fourth, it is necessary for teacher trainers to offer pre-service teachers constructive advice on how to interact well with students in the classrooms so that pre-service teachers can build a close rapport with their students; therefore, students’ active engagement in the lessons can be promoted.

What is more, policymakers and curriculum designers should offer various courses on effective teaching techniques so that pre-service teachers’ teaching abilities can be developed. Moreover, it is vital for university administrations to invite some experts in ELT to share their hands-on experience in teaching the English language, which helps pre-service teachers improve their ELT efficiently. Furthermore, diverse training programs should be provided in order to help pre-service EFL teachers have confidence in ELT capacities.

Besides, pre-service teachers should cultivate positive attitudes toward their teaching career so that they can make every endeavor to improve their teaching skills in order to be successful in their English teaching and become skillful language teachers. Finally, not only do pre-service EFL teachers use English for their teaching effectively, but they also need to be aware of how they control their tone of voice suitably for each lesson in order to facilitate a pleasant environment and motivate learners to the lessons.

Nonetheless, this study imposes some limitations. First of all, this study adopted solely the quantitative method. Therefore, future studies should adopt a mixed-methods approach in order to have more reliable results. In particular, interviews should be employed in order to triangulate the findings from the questionnaire so that insights into pre-service teachers’ perception of teaching competence development can be gained. Secondly, this study only recruited 121 pre-service teachers at one university in Ho Chi Minh City, which is considered a small sample. Hence, future research should involve more participants and explore more universities to generalize the results. Thirdly, this study merely focuses on pre-service EFL teachers' perception of their TCD after the English teaching practice course, which is difficult to make generalizations about the findings. Hence, future research should involve EFL teachers' and teacher trainers' perception of teaching competence development after the ELT course.

## References


Afalla, B.T., & Fabelico, F.L. (2020). Pre-service teachers' pedagogical competence and teaching efficiency. *Journal of Critical Review*, *7*(11).

Alqiawi, D., & Ezzeldin, S. (2015). A suggested model for developing and assessing competence of prospective teachers in Faculties of Education. *World Journal of Education*, *5*(6), 65-73. https://doi.org/10.5430/wje.v5n6p65 Aulia, V. (2021). Ways of EFL teachers in developing their pedagogical competences. *Voices of English Language Education Society*, *5*(1), 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.29408/veles.v5i1.3032

Azeem, M. (2011). Problems of prospective teachers during teaching practice. *Academic Research International*, *1*(2), 308-316. http://savap.org.pk/journals/ARInt./Vol.1(2)/2011(1.2-32).pdf

Bardakci, M., & Ünaldı, I. (2021). Foreign language teachers' competencies. In Büyükkarcı, K., & Önal A. (Eds). *Essentials of applied linguistics and foreign language teaching: 21st century skills and classroom applications*, 121-135. ISRES Publishing.

Bhargava, A., & Pathy, M. (2011). Perceptions of student teachers about teaching competencies. *American Educational Journal of Contemporary Research*, *1*(1), 77-81. https://aijcrnet.com/journals/Vol._1_No.1_July_2011/10.pdf

Blašková, M., Blaško, R., & Kucharčíková, A. (2014). Competences and competence model of university teachers, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *159*, 457 – 467. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.407

Brosh, H. (1996). Perceived characteristics of the effective language teacher. *Foreign language Annals*,*29*(2), 125-136. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.1996.tb02322.x

Castañeda-Trujillo, J. E., & Aguirre-Hernández, A. J. (2018). Pre-service English teachers' voices about the teaching practicum. *HOW*, *25*(1), 156-173. https://doi.org/10.19183/how.25.1.420

Channa, W.M., & Sahito, Z. (2022). Effect of pedagogical competences of English language teachers on their students' academic achievement: A qualitative study. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *2*(11), 2274-2281. https://doi.org/10.17507/tpls.1211.06

Creswell, J.W. (2014). *A concise introduction to mixed methods research*. SAGE publications.

Dede, C., Ketelhut, D.J., Whitehouse, P., Breit, L., & McCloskey, E.M. (2009). A research agenda for online teacher professional development. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *60*, 8-19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022487108327554

Dignath, C. (2021). For unto every one that hath shall be given: Teachers' competence profiles regarding the promotion of self-regulated learning moderate the effectiveness of short-term teacher training. *Metacognition and Learning*, *16*, 555-594. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11409-021-09271-x

Foncha, J.W., Abongdia, J.A., & Adu, E. (2015). Challenges encountered by student teachers in teaching English language during teaching practice in East London, South Africa. *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, *9*(2), 127-134. https://doi.org/10.1080/09751122.2015.11890302

Freeman, J., Simonsen, B., Briere, D., & MacSuga-Gage, A.S. (2014). Pre-service teacher training in classroom management: A review of state accreditation policy and teacher preparation programs. *Teacher Education and Special Education*, 37(2), 106-120. https://doi.org/10.1177/0888406413507002

Ghufron, M.A., Taufiq, A., & Riskiyanto, M. (2022). Pre-service English teachers' pedagogical competence in teaching English: A case of teaching internship program (TIP). *Englie: English Learning Innovation*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.22219/englie.v3i1.19382

Grant, C.A. (2008). Teacher capacity. In Marylyn CochranSmith, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, D. John McIntyre (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Enduring questions in changing contexts.* Routledge/ Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2008.00421.x

Karim, A., Shahed, F.H., Mohamed, A.R., Rahman, M.M., Ismail, S.A.M.M. (2019). Evaluation of the Teacher Education Programs in EFL Context: A testimony of student teachers' perspective. *International Journal of Instruction*, *12*(1), 127-146. http://dx.doi.org/10.29333/iji.2019.1219a

Khan, F., Fauzee, O., Daud, Y. (2016). Teacher training, problems and the challenges: A comparative study between India and Pakistan. *Gomal University Journal of Research*, Special Issue II.

Kiggundu, E., & Nayimuli, S. (2009). Teaching practice: A make or break phase for student teachers. *South African Journal of Education, 29(3), 345-358.*

Kihwele, J.E., & Mtandi, R. (2020). Impact of teaching practice on pre-service teachers' pedagogical competencies in Tanzania. *East African Journal of Education and Social Sciences, 1*(1), 101-111. https://doi.org/10.46606/eajess2020v01i01.0011

Komba, S.E., & Kira, E.S. (2013). The effectiveness of teaching practice in improving student teachers' teaching skills in Tanzania. *Journal of Education and Practice, 4*(1), 157-163.

Le, M.H.D., & Tran, T.Q. (2022). Factors affecting TESOL students' English language teacher identity development. *TNU Journal of Science and Technology, 227*(04), 30-37. http://dx.doi.org/10.34238/tnu-jst.5265

Ly, T.M.T., & Tran, H.T.T. (2019). EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of the effects of teaching practicum experiences on their professional identity development. *International Journal of Advanced Scientific Research and Management, 4*(12).

McDiarmid, W., & Clevenger-Bright, M. (2008). Rethinking teacher capacity. In Marylyn CochranSmith, Sharon Feiman-Nemser, D. John McIntyre (Eds.). *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education, Enduring questions in changing contexts.* Routledge/ Taylor & Francis.

Mullock. B. (2003). What makes a good teacher? The perceptions of postgraduate TESOL students. *Prospect, 18*(3), 3-24.

Nemet, M.B. (2018). A correlation between teachers' social and pedagogical competences and school culture. *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies, 69*(135), 142-155.

Nguyen, T.A., & Nguyen, L.N.T. (2021). Vietnamese EFL pre-service teachers' perceptions of the quality of a training course on English language teacher education. *Can Tho University Journal of Science, 13*(3), 30-38. https://doi.org/10.22144/ctu.jen.2021.038

Özdaş, F. (2018). Evaluation of pre-service teachers' perceptions for teaching practice course. *Educational Policy Analysis and Strategic Research, 13(2).* https://doi.org/10.29329/epasr.2018.143.5

Paramanik, N., & Barman, P. (2019). Status of the teacher competency among the B.Ed. trainee teachers: An analytical study. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences, 9(2).*

Pramatarindya, M.L., & Sukidjo (2018). Improving professional competence for teachers. *The Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Educational Research and Innovation*. http://dx.doi.org/10.2991/iceri-18.2019.54

Richards, J.C. (2010). Competence and performance in language teaching. *RELC Journal*, *41*, 101-122. https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688210372953

Richards, J.C. (2011). Exploring teaching competence in language teaching. *The Language Teacher*, *35(*4). https://jalt-publications.org/files/pdf-article/plen1.pdf

Sadeghi, K. & Richards, J.C. (2021). Professional development among English language teachers: challenges and recommendations for practice. *Heliyon, 7*(*9*).

Sekar, M.A. (2016). Teaching competency of B.Ed. female teacher trainees. *An International Indexed, Refereed & Peer Reviewed Bi-Annual Journal in Education, 3*(2), 1-3. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED594688.pdf

Tran, T.Q. (2020). Student teachers' perception of their teaching competency assessed by a framework for assessing student teacher's English teaching competency (FASTETC). *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 36(*3), 164-177.

Tran, T.T. (2012). Graduate employability: Interpretation versus expectation. In Brown, N., Jones S.M. and Adam, A. (Eds). *Research and Development in Higher Education: Connections in Higher Education, 35*, 317-325.

Trinh, L.Q., Nguyen, L.H.T., & Le, T.T. (2022). EFL teachers' self-Efficacy and classroom management: Perceptions, practices and reflections on professional learning and development. *European Journal of English Language Studies, 2*(1), 1-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.12973/ejels.2.1.1

Uzun, T. (2022). Preservice English teachers' attitudes and beliefs about learning and teaching pronunciation. *Dil Dergisi Language Journal, 173*(2), 22-42.

Vietnam's Ministry of Education and training (MOET) (2014). *Official Dispatch No. 792/ BGDĐT-NGCBQLGD, dated February 25th, 2014, on English Teacher Competency Framework*. Ministry of Education and Training.

Yin, J. (2019). Connecting theory and practice in teacher education: English-as-a-foreign-language pre-service teachers' perceptions of practicum experience. *Innovation and Education, 1*(4). https://doi.org/10.1186/s42862-019-0003-z

Yüksel, H.G. (2014). Teachers of the future: Perceived teaching competences and visions of pre-service English language teachers. *International Journal of Human Sciences, 11*(2). https://www.j-humansciences.com/ojs/index.php/IJHS/article/view/2920

Zeichner, K. (2010). Preparing globally competent teachers: A U.S. perspective' 2010 colloquium on the internationalization of teacher education. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators*. University of Washington.

Zhumash, Z., Zhumabaeva, A., Nurgaliyeva, S., Saduakas, G., Lebedeva, L.A., & Zhoraeva, S.B. (2021). Professional teaching competence in preservice primary school teachers: Structures, criteria, and levels. *World Journal on Educational Technology: Current Issues, 13*(2), 261-271. https://doi.org/10.18844/wjet.v13i2.5699

# NHẬN THỨC CỦA GIÁO SINH NGOẠI NGỮ VỀ SỰ PHÁT TRIỂN NĂNG LỰC GIẢNG DẠY QUA KHÓA HỌC TESOL

Nguyễn Minh Tú

*Trường Đại học Công Thương TP. Hồ Chí Minh,*

*140 Lê Trọng Tấn, Phường Tây Thạnh, Quận Tân Phú, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam*

**Tóm tắt:** Tập giảng tiếng Anh là một phần quan trọng của khóa học TESOL vì buổi tập giảng cung cấp cho học viên TESOL hoặc giáo sinh ngoại ngữ những kinh nghiệm quý báu về môi trường giảng dạy thực tế. Thêm vào đó, những khóa học TESOL góp phần quan trọng giúp giáo sinh có nhiều cơ hội trau dồi kiến thức chuyên môn và trải nghiệm thực tế để trở thành giáo viên tiếng Anh có năng lực trong tương lai. Về mặt này, sự cải thiện về kiến thức, thái độ, và kỹ năng trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh rất quan trọng đối với giáo sinh vì điều này giúp họ thể hiện năng lực giảng dạy của mình. Nghiên cứu này khảo sát nhận thức của 121 giáo sinh chuyên ngành TESOL về sự cải thiện năng lực giảng dạy của họ sau khóa học tập giảng tiếng Anh thông qua bảng câu hỏi kháo sát tự đánh giá năng lực. Phần mềm SPSS được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy những giáo sinh này tin rằng năng lực giảng dạy của họ đã được nâng cao sau khóa học. Cụ thể là họ đã cải thiện kiến thức và kỹ năng để thu hút người học vào bài tập giảng của mình. Những khuyến nghị đã được đề xuất dành cho những người thực hiện chính sách cũng như giảng viên hướng dẫn nhằm giúp giáo sinh phát triển năng lực giảng dạy.

*Từ khóa*: tập giảng Tiếng Anh, giáo sinh ngoại ngữ, năng lực giảng dạy, khóa học TESOL

# BOOK REVIEW

## MODELLING PARALANGUAGE USING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL SEMIOTICS: THEORY AND APPLICATION

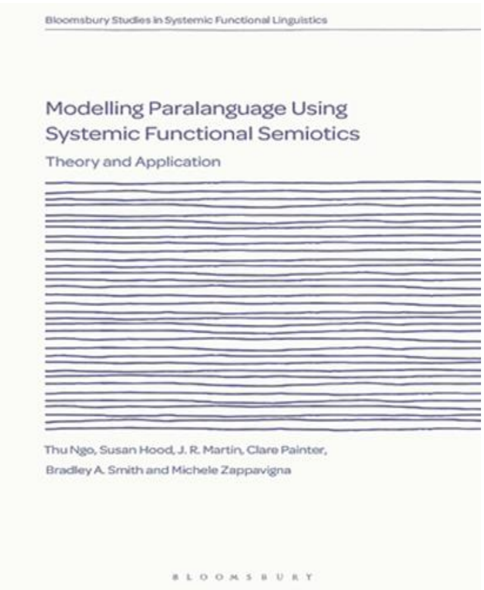
Authors: Thu Ngo, Susan Hood, J. R. Martin, Clare Painter, Bradley A. Smith and Michele Zappavigna

Publisher: Bloomsbury Academic, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2021

Nguyen Hong Lien*

*Faculty of English, Hanoi National University of Education,*
*136 Xuan Thuy, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 13 July 2023
Revised 4 August 2023; Accepted 24 August 2023




Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) has been increasingly favored in multimodal studies, with contributions at the theoretical and practical levels expanding over a wider range of semiotic modalities. Among these semiotic modalities, dynamic discourse such as vlogs, video clips, face-to-face lecturers, etc. have been coherent entities to embrace meanings with their multi layers. Concerning these registers, as communication is transmitted, both verbal language and non-verbal language supports communicators to send and receive information effectively. Following the SFL approach, Thu Ngo, Susan Hood, J. R. Martin, Clare Painter, Bradley A. Smith and Michele Zappavigna (2021) work together to suggest a new term "paralanguage" for the non-verbal language including gestural resources, facial expression, posture, body movement, and vocalizations. Based on this definition, the authors further develop their discussions on a model to investigate paralanguage that accompanies spoken English discourse in their book named "Modelling Paralanguage Using Systemic Functional Semiotics: Theory and Application", which is in a Bloomsbury Studies in Systemic Functional Linguistics series. This book has provided linguistics and researchers an unprecedentedly comprehensive framework following social semiotic approach to analyse the meaning making of semiotic resources via non-verbal communication.

* Corresponding author.
Email address: nguyenhonglien@hnue.edu.vn

The book consists of seven chapters, and the contributions of the authors are clearly specified. Brad Smith's expertise on prosodic phonology, Clare Painter's proficiency in language development and Jim Martin's discussions on general modelling issues are illustrated in Chapter 1, 2, 3 and 7. The remaining chapters, chapter 4, 5 and 6 describing the application of SFL's metafunctions in the paralanguage model are co-authored by Michele Zappavigna with her research in social networking, Thu Ngo with her work on animated films and Susan Hood with her study on academic discourse.

**Chapter 1 "Embodied meaning: A systemic functional perspective on paralanguage"** offers an overview of the book, and is definitely the chapter that readers should read first. It commences with a brief introduction of the SFL and how this theory influences the authors' model of paralanguage. Furthermore, the authors emphasize that the term "paralanguage" for this framework refers to "semiosis dependent on language and is realized through both voice quality and body language (including facial expression, gesture, posture and body movement)" (p. 3). In addition, this chapter also explains how semiosis (systems of signs), which paralanguage belongs to, is distinguished from somasis (non-semiotic behavior). To address the relationship between language and paralanguage from two dimensions, considered by Zappavigna and Martin (2018) as "linguistic body language" and "epilinguistic body language", Ngo et al. (2021) propose a more transparent terminology. The former is named as sonovergent paralanguage - "paralanguage that converges with the prosodic phonology of spoken language" (p. 22) and the latter as semovergent paralanguage – "paralanguage that converges with meanings made possible by having language" (p. 22). These are the key systems to be applied in the model. The chapter ends with a summary of the model and examples of the application of the framework.

After the introduction, in **Chapter 2 "An ontogenetic perspective on paralanguage",** the authors employ an ontogenetic approach to the theorization of paralanguage since this approach highlights the expression of meaning via face and body during communication. The chapter discusses the phases of language development, from the child's first semiotic system, the protolanguage, with its multimodal expression forms, to the transition into the mother tongue and the adult communication. Each of these stages includes various expressive resources, allowing language users to express "paralinguistically alongside verbal language, with both eventually organized along metafunctional lines" (p. 45). The view on the transition from infant protolanguage to adult language has convincingly argues why paralanguage is vital from the beginning in communication.

**Chapter 3 "The semiotic voice: Intonation, rhythm and other vocal features"** provides a description of the phonological systems of language that illustrate the model. Following the viewpoint that English is a stress-timed language, the authors present key terms in the system, namely salience and rhythm, tone, tonality and tonicity and other features of the semiotic voice such as pitch change, pitch range, or pitch height in addition to the phonological transcription conventions. The authors advise analysts to "get to know the discourse semantic functions of various choices in intonation, rhythm and other systems of the semiotic voice" (p. 88) to be able to perform such meticulous phonological analyses.

In the remaining chapters, Ngo et al. (2021) elaborate on employing SFL's concept of metafunction to manifest degrees of convergence of paralanguage with language – degrees of concurrence for ideational meaning, degrees of resonance for interpersonal meaning and degrees of synchronicity for textual meaning. In particular, ideational meaning involves resources for construing reality, interpersonal meaning involves resources for enacting social relations and textual meaning involves resources for composing information flow.

**Chapter 4 "Ideational semovergence: Approaching paralanguage from the perspective of field"** focuses on how ideational meaning is comprehended in paralanguage. The authors study entities and figures as resources for embodied ideational meaning across language and paralanguage with hand shapes or hand/arm movements. A detailed system network of paralinguistic entities and paralinguistic figures is presented with examples from a YouTube Vlog. This chapter also discusses the degrees of concurrence between language and paralanguage, in particular, some paralanguage is realized only in language (e.g a specific brand name), some co-realized in language and paralanguage (e.g a syringe) and some are realized only in paralanguage (to be further argued in chapter 7). In addition, the chapter claims that only semovergent paralanguage in terms of ideational meaning can be illustrated. Phonology, adversely, does not construe ideation; therefore, the model is not comprised of ideational sonovergence.

**Chapter 5 "Interpersonal paralanguage: Approaching paralanguage from the perspective of social relations"** explores the ways that facial expression, voice quality, body movements, and placement, in conjunction with spoken language, communicate sentiments and enact social interactions with instances from an animated movie. From an interpersonal perspective, sonovergent paralanguage resonates with tone and entails movements of parts of the body or face that rise and fall in tune with the intonation contours of the prosodic phonology. On the other hand, semovergent paralanguage potentially resonates with appraisal resources through facial expression, bodily stance, muscle tension, hand/arm position and motion and voice quality. The semovergent paralanguage adapts the system of appraisal from Martin and White (2005) with Attitude (only Facial Affect and Voice Affect are applicable), Engagement (Monogloss, Heterogloss) and Graduation (Force, Focus). This chapter also argues how social relations are realized through three paralinguistic systems from Painter et al. (2013), including Proximity, Orientation and Power. The authors close the chapter on discussion on how these paralinguistic resources can interact with each other, that is, intrasemiotically and how these paralinguistic resources can interact with language, that is, intersemiotically.

The last metafunction, textual, is demonstrated in **Chapter 6 "Textual convergence: Approaching paralanguage from the perspective of information flow"**. It focuses on how paralanguage interacts with spoken language to control the flow of information. The identification (introducing and tracking entities) and periodicity (structuring waves of information in discourse) are two linguistic discourse semantic systems that are involved. Semovergent paralanguage support these resources with pointing gestures, whole-body positioning and movement while hand beats that converge with giving textual prominence are affordances of sonovergent paralanguage. The framework is explained with a range of live lectures in various fields of natural science, social science and language classes. These studies specifically highlight the value of intermodality in educational settings.

**Chapter 7 "Afterword: Modelling paralanguage"** offers a brief reflection on the model of paralanguage presented in the book, taking into account its significance for non-verbal communication research. This chapter stresses on the authors' purpose to demonstrate how semiotics and SFL may be utilized to understand paralanguage while taking gesture, body language, face expression, and voice quality into consideration. This chapter also mentions mime as an exception to the principle of the proposed model with instances from the vlog in Chapter 4. The authors consider mime as semovergent paralanguage that does not accompany language. In the meantime, emblems are treated as part of the expression form of language and not as paralanguage. Other notes on interdisciplinary, intermodality, altermodality and register variation are presented in the final sections of the chapter.

The value of the book lies in the subsequent points. Initially, this book has successfully brought together many specialist disciplines to fit into the approach of SFL, inventing a comprehensive framework for paralinguistic research. The authors adapt different concepts and models, ranging from prosodic phonology, language development to discourse semantics and paralinguistic system. Secondly, having combined a number of frameworks/models, the authors provide logical and coherent explanations to the paralinguistic adaptation of the linguistic system. This can be evidently shown in the description of interpersonal semovergence in Chapter 5 and that of identification in language in chapter 6, as the authors briefly review the system in language prior to explicating and mapping it with the paralanguage model. Thirdly, the framework is visualized and accompanied with examples, which is very reader-friendly. This is especially beneficial to early-careered researchers wishing to delve into the realm of social semiotic approach. With all the figures and networks distinctly depicted, readers are able to recognize the relationships among all the parameters, realizing them in such complex data that videos have to offer. Last but not least, as the first-ever comprehensive framework for paralinguistic studies, the model has been illustrated via various types of data namely, a vlog, an animation and live lecturers. This proves the wide-range applicability and flexibility of the proposed model and also motivates academics to conduct more alike research in different semiotic modes.

However, the authors might consider some weaknesses as follows. First, a number of examples in the book show paralanguage is independent of language, which is contradictory to their definition that paralanguage is “semiosis dependent on language” (p. 3). For example, in chapter 5 (p. 127 and 128), instances (7) and (8) demonstrating Facial Affect contain no verbal language; yet, they are still considered as paralinguistic affect. In addition, the system of Paralinguistic Proximity experiences the same issue. As in instance 25 in page 148, although the two characters move closer to each other without saying anything – meaning there is no phonological analysis, Paralinguistic Proximity is still deemed as Personal. Therefore, reasonable explanations should be provided for such cases. Moreover, the distribution of information into tone groups in chapter 3 is relatively inconsistent. One piece of information can be divided into one or two tone groups, depending on Tonality and Tonicity to make it either a marked or unmarked choice. The authors claim that “it is evident that there are potentially many choices afforded by intonation and rhythm systems, however short is the text” (p. 80). Nevertheless, some choices might not be in parallel with their Praat visualization – a software that the authors employ to show all features of phonology analysis. In such situations where a number of choices are available regarding the division of tone groups, the Praat visualization may be of no contribution. Lastly, there is a minor shortcoming which is chapter 6 does not have a conclusion, unlike others. This leads to chapter 6 being possibly incapable of exerting the same influence as other chapters do.

In summary, the book “Modelling Paralanguage Using Systemic Functional Semiotics: Theory and Application” is worth all the efforts and expertise that the authors have put in. It not only provides an original comprehensive framework to study paralanguage from SFL approach but also proves that SFL can be successfully applied in many aspects of language.

## References

Martin, J. R., & White, P. (2005). *The language of evaluation: Appraisal in English*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Painter, C., Martin, J. R., & Unsworth, L. (2013). *Reading visual narratives: Image analysis of children's picture books.* London: Equinox.

Zappavigna, M., & Martin, J. R. (2018). *Discourse and diversionary justice: An analysis of Youth Justice Conferencing*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

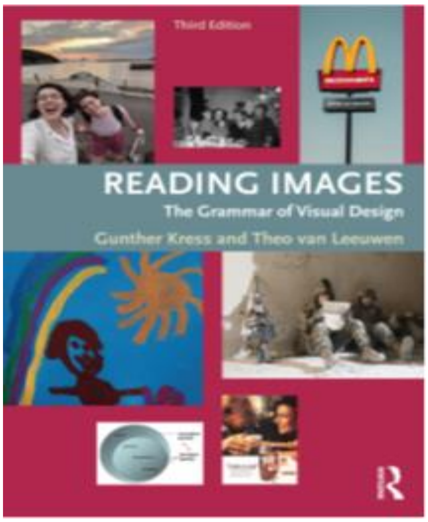
# READING IMAGES - THE GRAMMAR OF VISUAL DESIGN *(THIRD EDITION)*

Authors: Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen
Publisher: Routledge, 2021

Nguyen Thi Thuy Linh*

*VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

Received 22 February 2023
Revised 2 August 2023; Accepted 30 August 2023




Since the first edition was published in 1996, Gunter Kress and Theo van Leeuwen's *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* has received wide acknowledgment from the research community with over 18,000 citations on Google Scholar. The book has offered readers a systematic toolkit for the analysis of visual images from a social semiotic perspective. After nearly 30 years, the development of technologies has changed the ways of visual social practice, particularly in production and distribution of digital images. These deep changes in the social, the technological and hence the semiotic world led to the question whether the Visual Grammar framework is still applicable to the new semiotic resources of digital media. The third edition seeks answer to this question and indicates that with some refinements, the framework proposed in earlier versions remains valid and stands the test of time. Therefore, the major contributions of this new edition lie in the authors' expansion of the framework and its application to various contemporary images. This review will highlight these two issues by comparing the updated version with the previous ones and also discuss how the current edition deals with the critiques of previous editions. The information of the previous editions could be found in previous reviews like Forceville (1999) for the first edition and Thuy (2017) for the second edition, thus it is not within the scope of this present review.

## 1. A Comparison With the Old Editions

The third edition of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* still keeps the original multidisciplinary principle with the "use of the *semiotic foundation* of a specific linguistic theory and aspects of its descriptions" (p. 41). It takes Halliday's social semiotic approach to language, with its three metafunctions as a starting point for the interpretation of visual images. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, similar to verbal language, visual texts

* Corresponding author.
Email address: linhnguyen804@gmail.com

also fulfil three communicative functions, including representational, interpersonal and compositional ones.

Therefore, the structure of the book remains the same with eight chapters, following the three SFL metafunctions. The first chapter sets the theoretical background with the semiotic landscape. Chapters 2 and 3 deal with ideational meaning in the images by discussing visual resources for the representation of narrative and conceptual relations. Chapters 4 and 5 provide tools for designing the viewer's positioning and models of reality through a set of interpersonal design choices and validity markers. The last metafunction of compositional meaning is discussed in chapter 6, which examines how different resources are combined into coherent wholes and encodes intended reading paths. The last two chapters expand the framework to other modes like materiality, colors or dimensionality.

Although the original principle is still maintained, three major adjustments have been made, which shows the development of the theory over the time. Regarding the representational meaning, while the realization of processes and participants is still the same, a change can be found in the analysis of Circumstances. Earlier versions of the book strictly drew on Halliday's system with three equivalent subcategories of Settings, Means and Accompaniment. Meanwhile, in this third edition, no further classification is provided. Circumstances are simply defined as "participants that could be left out without affecting the basic proposition realized by the narrative structure" with the typical example of Setting (p. 70). Kress and van Leeuwen admitted the 'foreignness' of visual representation, and thus the irrelevance of linguistic framework in this case. The original Accompaniment and Means can either be "fused" into the main participants or classified as "Symbolic Attribute" to build up the identity of the participants (p. 70). This is not only a change in the analysis of Circumstances but also reflects the flexibility in the analysis of processes, which is further highlighted in the later section of Complexity in page 105. Different processes, which may include both narrative and conceptual processes, can be found in a single visual image and their relation is similar to that of clauses with coordination and subordination (p. 107).

Another important modification can be found in chapter 5 with the employment of the new term Validity instead of Modality in the previous editions. Modality was proposed by Halliday to refer to "the truth value or credibility of linguistically realized statements about the world" (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2021, p. 150). This idea can be applied to visual images. However, while linguistic truth is based on probability and frequency, visual truth is decided by the idea of realism. The new term of Validity is used to highlight the different realizations of the truth in different semiotic modes. This subtle but important shift distinguishes Validity from Modality, which, in the social semiotic core idea, is based on "the values, beliefs and social needs of social group" (p. 154). The chapter then goes on with the discussion of eight validity markers, which, in fact, are similar to eight modality markers in the second edition. Therefore, this shift of terms mainly reflects the refinement of theoretical concepts rather than the actual analytical framework.

The meaning of composition also sees some adjustments in the subcategories, although the three elements of Information Value, Framing and Salience remain the same. Particularly in the last element of salience, a new issue of Reading path, which is designed by salience hierarchies, is introduced and discussed in detail.

In addition to the refinement of the framework, the accommodation to the changing visual landscape is another plus point of the third edition. The two previous versions were widely recognized for the variety of visual samples including photographs, paintings, cartoons, charts and scientific diagrams, films, television, folk art, and even children's scrawlings. While many of these examples are still used to illustrate the theory, there is a shift to digital media with many updated images like websites, social media instances, cellphone user interfaces, and gaming platforms. This change is also reflected in the theory with its application to digital media data like the additional discussion on the validity in the digital age in chapter 5 or the analysis of visual composition of interfaces in chapter 6. These examples, interspersed with more traditional ones taken from the previous editions, show the practicality of Kress and van Leeuwen's social-semiotic theory in analyzing a range of both material and digital objects.

## 2. Critical Responses

The problem of categorization, one of the main critiques of the previous editions, has been addressed in this updated version. According to Forceville (1999), this framework provides readers with a practical toolkit for the analysis of visual images with hierarchical categories, which is useful to chart a new field, but at the same time, may also lead to the problem of categorization. "Categories are seldom clear-cut; many categories are fuzzy, and describe a continuum between extremes rather than a binary opposition with an either/or structure" (Forceville, 1999, p. 168); therefore, Kress and van Leeuwen was suggested to adopt a different view of categorization. Hence, the new edition has shown more flexible application of many categories in all three metafunctions. Many categories are analyzed according to the degree (more or less) of the feature, e.g. salience or subjectivity in attitude. Moreover, different categories or subcategories can exist in the same visual image. For example, one image can include both narrative and conceptual processes or can be designed in both left-right and center-margin in terms of information value. This flexibility may increase the accuracy of the interpretation of images.

However, this flexibility, in turn, may lead to the second problem of being "discursive" and "difficult to verify or disprove" (Bateman, 2008, p.46). Symbolic attribute can be a good example. Although the features of Symbolic Attributes are stated clearly in page 102, analysts may still feel confused in distinguishing Symbolic attributes from Circumstances. The question is how salient is enough to make a participant a symbolic attribute and separate it from the surrounding circumstance? For example, in Figure 3.27, the apple is interpreted as a symbol due to its "unnaturally large" size and "the Christ child holds it in a way that does not suggest he is about to eat it" (p. 103). However, with the given religious background knowledge, can analysts realize the symbolic meaning of the apple even without its unnaturally large size (i.e., the salience). This decision, in many cases, is subjective and bases on many socio-cultural and contextual factors.

Figure 3.27 (p.103)

Another evidence of this ambiguity can be found in the interpretation of representational meaning of, for example, a movie poster with the image of a couple hugging or kissing each other. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, advertising images (including movie posters) make frequent use of Symbolic attributive structures, in which human participants "usually pose in meaningful ways, rather than being shown as involved in some action" (p. 104). This explanation is reasonable as it interprets the image as posing in front of the camera and thus regards this as a conceptual structure. However, the movie poster can also be a snapshot of a scene in the movie, thus, it can represent an action at that time and belongs to narrative structure. In this case, both interpretations seem acceptable and both are difficult to verify or disprove. The important point here is there is no specific system of indications stated in the book to help analysists make the right decision in such ambiguous cases. In this specific example of a movie poster, the context of production may account for the interpretation but unfortunately this information is unknown to ordinary analysts.

Furthermore, flexibility may also cause another problem of generalization, particularly in dealing with a larger corpus. The analysis, then, seems too complex to make a comparison among a larger number of samples and find prominent patterns in the corpus. This explains why the framework is often applied to reach the thorough and detailed description of a small group of visual images while research with corpus approach tends to seek for alternative or adapted version of framework (e.g. Bateman (2008)).

The last problem is the overgeneralization of visual resource choices in different genres. There is a good attempt throughout the book to cover many different genres with a wide choice of visual images as samples for analysis. However, some statements are made from the authors' observation without support from the literature. For example, they claim that the layout of textbooks increasingly employs the Center - Margin structure (p. 201) without any evidence from the analysis of any textbook or previous studies. This may lead to the similar problems of the previous versions when they claimed the rare use of Center - Margin structure and then have to correct the information in this third edition: "In earlier editions of this book, we wrote that centre–margin compositions are relatively uncommon. However, many of the examples we have shown, especially in Chapter 3, show that this may have changed, and that centred composition is, once more, becoming increasingly common" (p. 200). Given that multimodality is a new area of research, this problem is quite understandable, but it indicates the needs for more empirical studies to validate the features of multimodal genres.

In short, the book provides a systematic approach to analysis of visual elements with well-grounded theory, a practical toolkit with hierarchical categories and fruitful discussion of various samples from both material and digital objects. Despite the refined theory, the actual application of the framework to the diverse and complex structure of visual images may encounter difficulties in terms of categorization, thus becoming subjective and interpretative. Furthermore, the framework is particularly challenging in applying to a large corpus while there is an urgent need for further studies on multimodal genres.

## Acknowledgement

I'd like to express my gratitude to Gunther Rolf Kress and Theo van Leeuwen for their wonderful work in all three editions of this book, particularly to Kress, who sadly passed away in 2019. Their pioneering book has inspired and shaped my ideas on my PhD in the field.

## References

Bateman, J.A. (2008). *Multimodality and Genre: A Foundation for the Systematic Analysis of Multimodal Documents.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230582323

Forceville, C. (1999). Educating the eye? Kress and Van Leeuwen's Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design (1996). *Language and Literature, 8*(2), 163-78.

Thuy, T. T. (2017). Reading images - the grammar of visual design. *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies, 33*(6), 164-168. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4217. https://doi.org/10.25073/2525-2445/vnufs.4217

# THỂ LỆ GỬI BÀI

1. **Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài** là ấn phẩm khoa học chính thức của Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội, kế thừa và phát triển *Chuyên san Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài* của Tạp chí Khoa học, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Tạp chí xuất bản định kỳ 06 số/năm (02 số tiếng Việt/năm và 04 số tiếng Anh/năm từ năm 2019 trở đi), công bố các công trình nghiên cứu có nội dung khoa học mới, chưa đăng và chưa được gửi đăng ở bất kỳ tạp chí nào, thuộc các lĩnh vực: *ngôn ngữ học, giáo dục ngoại ngữ/ngôn ngữ, quốc tế học hoặc các ngành khoa học xã hội và nhân văn có liên quan.*

2. Bài gửi đăng cần trích dẫn ÍT NHẤT 01 bài đã đăng trên Tạp chí Nghiên cứu Nước ngoài.

3. Bài báo sẽ được gửi tới phản biện kín, vì vậy tác giả cần tránh tiết lộ danh tính trong nội dung bài một cách không cần thiết.

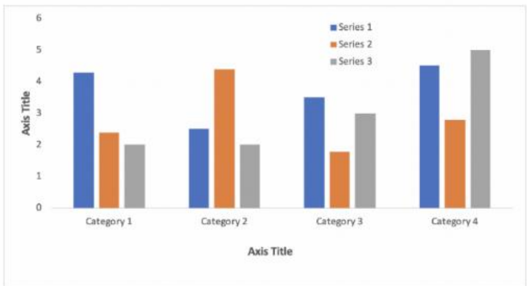
4. Bài báo có thể viết bằng tiếng Việt hoặc tiếng Anh (*tối thiểu* 10 trang/khoảng 4.000 từ đối với bài nghiên cứu và 5 trang/khoảng 2.000 từ đối với bài thông tin-trao đổi) được soạn trên máy vi tính, khổ giấy A4, cách lề trái 2,5cm, lề phải 2,5cm, trên 3,5cm, dưới 3cm, font chữ Times New Roman, cỡ chữ 12, cách dòng Single.

5. Hình ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ trong bài viết phải đảm bảo rõ nét và được đánh số thứ tự theo trình tự xuất hiện trong bài viết. Nguồn của các hình ảnh, sơ đồ trong bài viết cũng phải được chỉ rõ. Tên ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ trong bài viết phải được cung cấp trên ảnh, sơ đồ, biểu đồ.

*Ví dụ:*

**Figure 1**

*Sample Figure Title*




*Note.* A note describing content in the figure would appear here.

6. Bảng biểu trong bài viết được đánh số thứ tự theo trình tự xuất hiện trong bài viết. Tên bảng trong bài phải được cung cấp trên bảng. Yêu cầu bảng không có đường kẻ sọc.

*Ví dụ:*

**Table 3**

*Sample Table Showing Decked Heads and P Value Note*

| Variable | Visual | | Infrared | | *F* | η |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | | |
| Row 1 | 3.6 | .49 | 9.2 | 1.02 | 69.9*** | .12 |
| Row 2 | 2.4 | .67 | 10.1 | .08 | 42.7*** | .23 |
| Row 3 | 1.2 | .78 | 3.6 | .46 | 53.9*** | .34 |
| Row 4 | 0.8 | .93 | 4.7 | .71 | 21.1*** | .45 |

***p < .01.

**7. Quy cách trích dẫn:** Các tài liệu, nội dung được trích dẫn trong bài báo và phần tài liệu tham khảo cần phải được **trình bày theo APA7** (vui lòng tham khảo trang web: https://apastyle.apa.org/style-grammar-guidelines hoặc hướng dẫn của Tạp chí trên trang web https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/index.php/fs/about/submissions )

8. Bản thảo xin gửi đến website của Tạp chí tại https://jfs.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/. Tòa soạn không trả lại bản thảo nếu bài không được đăng. Tác giả chịu hoàn toàn trách nhiệm trước pháp luật về nội dung bài viết và xuất xứ tài liệu trích dẫn.

# MẪU TRÌNH BÀY BỐ CỤC CỦA MỘT BÀI VIẾT

# TIÊU ĐỀ BÀI BÁO

(bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, in hoa, cỡ chữ: 16,
giãn dòng: single, căn lề: giữa)

Tên tác giả (cỡ 13)*

*Tên cơ quan / trường đại học (cỡ 10, in nghiêng)*
*Địa chỉ cơ quan / trường đại học (cỡ 10, in nghiêng)*

**Tóm tắt:** Tóm tắt bằng tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt, không quá 250 từ, cỡ chữ: 11

*Từ khóa:* Không quá 5 từ, cỡ chữ: 11

Phần nội dung chính của bài báo thường bao gồm các phần sau:

**1. Đặt vấn đề**

**2. Mục tiêu**

**3. Cơ sở lý thuyết**

**3.1. …**

**3.2. ….**

**4. Phương pháp nghiên cứu**

**4.1. …**

**4.2. …**

**5. Kết quả nghiên cứu**

**6. Thảo luận**

**7. Kết luận và khuyến nghị**

**Lời cảm ơn (nếu có)**

**Tài liệu tham khảo**

**Phụ lục (nếu có)**

* ĐT.: (Sđt của tác giả liên hệ)
Email: (Email của tác giả liên hệ)