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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/>

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RESEARCH

INTERPRETING MOET'S 2018 GENERAL EDUCATION ENGLISH CURRICULUM

Hoang Van Van*

*Center of Foreign Language Education Research, Linguistics and International Studies,
VNU University of Languages and International Studies, Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam*

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Abstract: In this paper as the chief developer of the document, I will attempt to interpret and clarify some essential points of the General Education English Curriculum (GEEC) promulgated by the Vietnamese Ministry of Education and Training (MoET) on December 26, 2018. Three questions raised for exploration are: (1) “What are the backgrounds to the development and promulgation of MoET’s 2018 GEEC?”, (2) “What are the prominent characteristics of MoET’s 2018 GEEC?”, and (3) “How is MoET’s 2018 GEEC structured and why is it structured in the way it is?” These questions will be addressed in detail throughout the paper.

Keywords: MoET’s 2018 General Education English Curriculum

1. Introduction

The General Education English Curriculum (hereafter referred to as the GEEC) is a national-level curriculum designed for three levels of the Vietnamese general education: primary, lower secondary, and upper secondary. It was promulgated on December 26, 2018 by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam (MoET). The GEEC is the first curriculum which exercises MoET’s policy “one curriculum, multiple textbooks”. Since the promulgation of the GEEC, many implementation activities have been carried out such as training and retraining teachers to meet new required English language proficiency standards, training teachers in new teaching methodology and techniques,

writing new textbooks and supplementary materials, renovating schools’ physical facilities, improving teaching and learning equipment, and introducing new modes of testing and examination. In the process of implementation, however, a number of problems have occurred partly due to administrative deficiencies, partly due to the negligence and misunderstandings of the contents of the curriculum document by educational administrators, English teachers, textbook writers, and test and examination makers. It is precisely the second reason that constitutes the focus of this paper: interpreting and clarifying some essential points of the GEEC so as to minimise misunderstandings and to better implement the goals of the curriculum at present and in the years to come. The paper

* Corresponding author.

Email address: vanhv.sdh@gmail.com

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is organized around four main parts. Part one introduces the rationale of the study. Part two provides the contexts leading to the development and promulgation of MoET's 2018 GEEC. Part three – the focus of the paper – presents and interprets some essential points that lay theoretical and practical bases for the development of the GEEC. And Part four gives a résumé of the paper, sensitising readers to the complexity in the implementation of MoET's (2018b) GEEC – a national-level and long-term foreign language curriculum in MoET's (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum.

2. Backgrounds to the Development and Promulgation of the GEEC

Since the last quarter of the twentieth century, English language teaching and learning has been increasingly given special status in Vietnam (Viện Khoa học Giáo dục Việt Nam [VNIES], 1989; Hoang, 2010, 2016, 2020a, 2020b). This can be seen in the ever increasing amount of time allocated for the teaching and learning of the language over different periods of time. In the period of 1982–2006, English was introduced nationally as a compulsory subject at upper secondary level (from Grade 10 to Grade 12), 3 teaching periods per week, making up the total of about 300 teaching periods. The period of 1982–2006 witnessed two noticeable events. First, in 1986 Vietnam launched an overall economic reform known as *Đổi mới* (Renovation), opening its door onto the world. Secondly, in 1994 the US lifted trade embargo against Vietnam and normalized relation with the country. These important events generated a strong boost for the country's economic development in general and the teaching and learning of English in particular, making English the most needed foreign language to be taught and learnt, particularly in the general education of Vietnam.

To promote the teaching and learning of English, on May 5, 2006, MoET issued

the English language curriculum entitled *Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông: Chương trình môn tiếng Anh* (General Education English Curriculum) (hereafter referred to as the 2006 GEEC). According to the 2006 GEEC, English was taught nationally as a compulsory subject for seven years from lower secondary school to upper secondary school level (from Grade 6 to Grade 12) with a total number of 700 teaching periods (455 periods more than it was allocated for in the period of 1982–2006).

In a world in which integration and globalization are becoming an inevitable trend, the need for high-skilled and highly qualified people who can communicate confidently in foreign languages, especially in English has almost become a must for Vietnam. This urgent requirement has made it difficult for the country to maintain the current standards of teaching, learning and use of foreign languages. Increasingly, decision-making bodies (the Government and MoET) were becoming aware that without a radical change in foreign language policy, curriculum design, textbook development, teaching methodology and testing and assessment, Vietnam's standards of performance in foreign languages in general and in English in particular would be left behind. Being aware of the importance of improving the quality of teaching and learning foreign languages, on September 30, 2008, the Prime Minister of the Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam signed Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg to promulgate the national foreign language project entitled *Quyết định về việc phê duyệt Đề án “Dạy và học ngoại ngữ trong hệ thống giáo dục quốc dân giai đoạn 2008-2020”* (Decision on the Approval of the Project “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the Period 2008–2020”) – commonly known as “Decision 1400” or “National Foreign Languages Project 2020” (Thủ tướng Chính phủ [The Prime Minister], 2008).

In 2017, recognizing that some problems incurring in the process of implementing the National Foreign Languages Project 2020 might hinder the goal of Decision 1400, the Vietnamese Government had the National Foreign Languages Project 2020 reviewed and adjusted for the period of 2017–2025. The result of this review was that the adjusted and extended foreign languages project was promulgated by the Prime Minister’s Decision 2080/QĐ-TTg entitled Quyết định phê duyệt, điều chỉnh, bổ sung Đề án dạy và học ngoại ngữ trong hệ thống giáo dục quốc dân giai đoạn 2017–2025 (Decision on the Approval, Adjustment and Supplementation of the Project “Teaching and Learning Foreign Languages in the National Education System for the Period of 2017–2025”) – commonly known as “Decision 2080” (Thủ tướng Chính phủ [The Prime Minister], 2017).

According to Decisions 1400 and 2080, English is introduced nationally as a compulsory subject for ten years running from primary to upper secondary school level (from Grade 3 to Grade 12) with the total number of 1155 teaching periods (455 periods more than it was allocated for in the 2006 GEEC and 855 periods more than it was allocated for in the 1982–2006 period).

To implement the Prime Minister’s Decisions 1400 and 2080, MoET designed and promulgated three pilot English language curricula for the general school education of Vietnam known respectively as (1) Chương trình tiếng Anh thí điểm tiểu học (Pilot English Curriculum for Primary Schools in Vietnam), (2) Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học cơ sở (Pilot English Curriculum for Lower Secondary Schools in Vietnam), and (3) Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông

môn tiếng Anh thí điểm cấp trung học phổ thông (Pilot English Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools in Vietnam). (For details of these pilot English language curricula, see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2010, 2012a, 2012b; see also Hoang, 2018). Each of these curricula was piloted in 300 selected schools throughout Vietnam from 2011 to 2017 with both successes and problems that remained to be solved (see Hoang, 2018).

The history of modern Vietnamese general education has undergone five main educational reforms. The first educational reform was initiated in 1950; the second in 1956; the third in 1981; the fourth in 2006; and the fifth in 2018. In the 2018 educational reform, MoET developed an overall curriculum known as Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông tổng thể (Total General Education Curriculum) covering 27 subject curricula, of which the GEEC is just one (for detail about the history of educational reforms in Vietnam, see Viện Khoa học Giáo dục [VNIES], 2012; see also Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2018a).

It can be seen from the above details that the five educational reforms in Vietnam, the Prime Minister’s Decisions 1400 and 2080, MoET’s (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum, and MoET’s (2010, 2012a, 2012b) three pilot English language curricula for schools in Vietnam have constituted the traditional, legal and scientific bases for the development and promulgation of the GEEC, some essential details of which will be examined and clarified in Part 3 below.

3. The GEEC¹

What should a curriculum look like? What kinds of elements should serve satisfactorily as organizing elements of a viable curriculum? How many elements

¹ The original document of the GEEC was written and promulgated in Vietnamese. Unless otherwise stated, I am responsible for all Vietnamese-English translation of the GEEC in this study.

should be included in the design of a viable curriculum and what are they?" The literature of curriculum development studies in the world has shown that there is no consensus about the answers to these questions. Tyler (1949, p. 1), for example, who is sometimes referred to as the "father" of curriculum development suggested four elements expressed in the form of four fundamental questions that must be answered by any curriculum designer(s): (1) What educational purposes should a school seek to attain? (2) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain those purposes? (3) How can the educational experiences be effectively organized? (4) How can we determine whether those purposes have been attained?

In her influential book *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*, Taber (1962, p. 12) modified Tyler's model to become more representative of curriculum development in American schools. Following a scientific method and developing a rational design, Taber (1962, p. 12) proposed a curriculum model which consists of seven orderly elements (she called "steps"): (1) diagnosis of needs, (2) formulation of objectives, (3) selection of content, (4) organization of content, (5) selection of learning experiences, (6) organization of learning experiences, and (7) determination of what to evaluate and ways and means of doing it.

In second and/or foreign language teaching, Richards (2001, p. 41), who sees curriculum development as a process and curriculum development is mainly the task of the language teacher, proposed a curriculum development process of seven elements: (1) needs analysis, (2) situational analysis, (3) planning learning outcomes, (4) course organization, (5) selecting and preparing teaching materials, (6) providing for effective teaching, and (7) evaluation.

Based on its nature and characteristics (which will be presented below), the GEEC is developed around eight elements, all of which are central to the discussion of this study: (1) subject characteristics, (2) views of curriculum design, (3) curriculum objectives, (4) requirements to be met, (5) educational contents, (6) educational methodology, (7) assessment of learning, and (8) explanations for and guidance on curriculum implementation.

3.1. Characteristics of the GEEC

The GEEC is characterized by the following characteristics:

1. It is designed to be delivered as one of 27 subject curricula of MoET's (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum.
2. It is a national-level subject curriculum: unlike many other curricula developed by an individual teacher or an institution (school) as commonly discussed by some second and/or foreign language scholars of curriculum development (e.g. Nunan, 1987, 1991; Graves, 2000, 2005; Richards & Rodgers, 2014), the GEEC is developed and promulgated by the Ministry of Education and Training of Vietnam – the highest tier in the three-tier administrative structure of the educational system of Vietnam: central, provincial, and district.
3. It is a compulsory and multi-grade curriculum, by which is meant students must learn English as a compulsory subject from Grade 3 through to Grade 12.
4. It is a long-term curriculum; and it serves a huge body of students and teachers throughout Vietnam: every year about twenty million students and a hundred thousand teachers of English from Grade 3 through to Grade 12 are the consumers of the curriculum.
5. It is a foreign language curriculum. As a foreign language curriculum, it does not attempt to serve as a medium of instruction.

What it aims to do is to provide students with an important tool for international communication, enabling them to exchange information, scientific and technical knowledge and to learn about other cultures, thereby contributing to understanding between peoples, forming in students a sense of global citizenship, contributing to the development of their personal qualities and capacities. Through learning English and learning about different world cultures, students can better understand and love the language and culture of Vietnam.

6. As part of MoET's Total General Education Curriculum, the goal of the GEEC is not only to help students develop their communicative competences in English but also to contribute to the formation and development of their general competences such as living and working more effectively, learning other subjects better, and sustaining life-long learning.

7. As a compulsory subject which is placed within the framework of MoET's Total General Education Curriculum, English is directly inter-related with other subjects such as Vietnamese Language and Literature, Natural and Social Sciences, History and Geography, Arts, Physical Education, Computing, Experiential Education. This suggests that some components of CLIL (content and language integrated learning) should be incorporated into the GEEC to broaden students' cross-curricular vision and understanding.

8. The main objective of the GEEC is to develop students' communicative competence in English which consists of linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 2013; see also Stern, 1993; Tarone & Yule, 1999). These aspects of communicative competence are built on the basis of a system of themes broken down into topics relevant to the learning needs, the

language abilities, and the age of students, and are achieved through using correctly linguistic knowledge (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) to communicate appropriately in the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. The final goal is to help students achieve the required standards as specified in the 6-Level Foreign Language Proficiency Framework of Vietnam (hereafter referred to as the VNFLPF) (see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2014). Specifically, students who finish primary school will have mastered Level 1 (equivalent to CEFR Level A1), students who finish lower secondary school will have mastered Level 2 (equivalent to CEFR Level A2), and students who finish upper secondary school will have mastered Level 3 (equivalent to CEFR Level B1). (For detail of CEFR standards, see Council of Europe, 2001)

3.2. Views of Curriculum Design

The GEEC has been designed to emphasize communicative competences and therefore seeks to promote more communicative teaching methods. The views of developing the GEEC are therefore:

1. To ensure that the GEEC complies with the provisions set out in MoET's (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum.
2. To ensure that communicative competences are the target of teaching; linguistic knowledge is the means to be provided to help students develop communicative competences through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing; at primary level, priority is given to developing students' listening and speaking skills; at lower secondary level, listening and speaking skills continue to be developed progressively with reading and writing skills so that at upper secondary level equal attention is paid to all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
3. To ensure that the GEEC is delivered

through coherent and interrelated themes and topics which are meaningful and relevant to the students' worlds in terms of content and culture. These themes and topics will be revisited throughout the ten grades to enable learning to be consolidated and to ensure the spiral nature of the curriculum. Through the selection of these themes and topics, students can be equipped with contents of other subjects at an appropriate and learnable level.

4. To ensure that the teaching methods are learning-centred. Students' communicative competences are developed through creative and active communicative activities. The teacher organizes and facilitates the learning process, encourages students to engage maximally in communicative activities, and step by step helps them to take increasing responsibility for their own learning.

5. To ensure that there is continuity and connectivity of English language knowledge and skills from primary to lower secondary and to upper secondary level so that after finishing each level students' learning outcomes will be aligned with Level 1 at primary, Level 2 at lower secondary, and Level 3 at upper secondary school as specified in the VNFLPF.

6. To ensure that the GEEC is open and flexible enough to meet the local concerns, needs and capacities across a wide range of contexts in Vietnam.

3.3. Curriculum Objectives

Formulation of clear and comprehensive objectives provides essential platform for any curriculum. It helps determine what contents are important, how they should be organized (i.e. how they should be graded and sequenced), how they should be delivered, and how the learning of those contents should be assessed (Taber, 1962; Nunan, 1991; Stern, 1993).

In any national-level curriculum like the GEEC which covers a number of levels

of education, each of which covers a number of grades, there is danger that the learning contents could be broken, fragmented, discontinued and inconsistent. To overcome this problem and to systematically move students along the path towards the level of proficiency required for each level and each grade, the overall perspective of the development path from Grade 3 to Grade 12 should be carefully handled and specified in the GEEC. The view of language proficiency as a progression of stages on a continuum, which is explicit in the distribution of classes into relevant levels is extremely important for the policy of the GEEC as it helps not only textbook writers but also teachers and test/examination makers to follow exactly the same guidelines. Accordingly, the objectives of the GEEC are classified into two broad categories: general objectives and specific objectives.

The general objectives section comprises two aspects. The first aspect is linguistic and communicative in nature. It states the English language proficiency level related to what students are supposed to be able to do at the end of the general education: upon successful completion of upper secondary level, students will have mastered Level 3 as specified in the VNFLPF. This lays a foundation for what has been referred to as "transfer objective" (Stern, 1993, p. 93): English is taught in such a way that students not only acquire proficiency in the language but can generalize appropriate learning strategies and study techniques to learn other foreign languages. The second aspect is cognitive and affective. It states that the GEEC enables students (1) to acquire some general understanding of the land, people and culture of some English-speaking countries as well as of other countries in the world; (2) to have positive attitudes towards the English language, the land, people, and culture of some English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; and (3) to form and develop

students' general qualities and competencies needed for future employment such as sense of and responsibility for labor, orientation and choice of careers appropriate to students' abilities, interests, and adaptability in the context of Industry 4.0.

The specific objectives section is related to what students can do in terms of the abilities they are supposed to be able to do with English in four communicative skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, the linguistic and cultural knowledge they are required to acquire; their attitudes towards English language learning, and the ability to become autonomous foreign language learners; for example, in tackling other foreign languages efficiently if they are called upon to do so, in taking responsibility for their learning outcomes, and in forming life-long learning habits. Accordingly,

Upon successful completion of the primary level, students will be able to:

- communicate in simple English through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing, among which listening and speaking are given priority.

- acquire basic knowledge of English language including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar; and through learning English, acquire some preliminary understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world.

- develop positive attitudes towards English language learning; and through learning English, have pride in and appreciation of the language and culture of Vietnam.

- develop effective learning strategies, which will support students' ability to transfer eventually to learning other foreign languages.

Upon successful completion of the lower secondary level, students will be able to:

- use English as a means of communication through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to meet basic and direct communication needs in familiar and everyday situations.

- acquire basic knowledge of English language including pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar; and through learning English, have some general understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; and also through learning English, have some better understanding of and pride in the values of the language and culture of Vietnam.

- develop positive attitudes towards the subject English, initially know how to use English to learn other subjects.

- use different learning methods and strategies to develop communicative competences in English both inside and outside the classroom, form skills to manage study time, and develop self-learning habits.

Upon successful completion of the upper secondary level, students will be able to:

- use English as a means of communication through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing to meet basic and practical communication needs on familiar topics related to school, recreational activities, career, etc.

- (continue to) acquire basic knowledge of English language including pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar; and through learning English, have a deeper understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; and also through learning English, understand and respect cultural diversity, and, initially know how to express in English the cultural values of Vietnam.

- use English to improve learning quality of other subjects.

- use English for future employment

and/or further education upon completion of upper secondary level.

- use a variety of learning strategies to manage learning time, apply IT in learning and self-learning, consolidate self-learning and self-assessment methodology, take responsibility for learning outcomes, and form life-long learning habits.

3.4. Requirements to be Met

The requirements that students are supposed to meet are stated in terms of general qualities and competences and in terms of specific competences.

In terms of general qualities and competences, the GEEC places its responsibility as a subject curriculum within the framework of MoET's (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum, stating that English language learning has to contribute to the total general educational development of students and promote good moral values appropriate to participation in Vietnamese society such as patriotism, compassion, diligence, honesty, accountability, and general competences such as autonomy and self-learning, communication and collaboration, problem-solving and creativity.

Specific competences are expressed in performance terms in each of the three levels of the Vietnamese general education which can be represented below.

Primary level

Upon successful completion of the primary level, students will have mastered Level 1 of the VNFLPF. Specifically, [students] “can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce himself/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, acquaintances and friends. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help”.

Through learning English, students will acquire some basic understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; have positive attitudes towards English language learning; have pride in and appreciation of Vietnamese language and culture; develop good qualities including affection, self-respect, respect for friends, family, environment, diligence and honesty.

Lower secondary level

Upon successful completion of the lower secondary level, students will have mastered Level 2 of the VNFLPF. Specifically, they “can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need”.

Through learning English, students will acquire some general understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; have positive attitudes towards English language learning; have some knowledge of and pride in the values of Vietnamese culture; develop good qualities including compassion, love for family, pride in their homeland, protection of the environment, sense of self-training, and responsibility for themselves and their families.

Upper secondary level

Upon successful completion of the upper secondary level, students will have mastered Level 3 of the VNFLPF. Specifically, they “can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work,

school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where English is spoken. Can produce simple connected texts on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans”.

Through learning English, students will acquire more extensive understanding of the land, people and culture of English-speaking countries and of other countries in the world; have positive attitudes towards English language learning; understand and respect cultural diversity, and basically can reflect on the values of Vietnamese culture in English; develop good qualities including love for the country and people, honesty, compassion, and responsibility for the environment and community.

3.5. Educational Contents

As with the Requirements to be met section, the Educational contents section is organized into General contents and Specific contents.

3.5.1. General Contents

It should be noted that the term “educational contents” is a translation of the Vietnamese original “nội dung giáo dục”, which sounds a bit too scholastic to many Vietnamese school teachers of English. Two similar terms which are more familiar to them and are commonly used in English language teaching are “syllabus” and “content of teaching”. For the purpose of this discussion and to avoid confusion of terminology, we shall not use the term “educational contents” but, instead, we shall use the terms “syllabus” and “content of teaching” interchangeably.

How many components should the GEEC syllabus consist of? What contents of teaching should be included in the GEEC syllabus? How much English language knowledge and what levels of English

language skills should be incorporated into the GEEC syllabus so that upon successful completion of Grade 12, students will have achieved Level 3 of the VNFLPF?

It should be noted that “... there are many different conceptions of a language syllabus. Different approaches and methods reflect different understandings of the nature of language and different views as to what the essential building blocks of language proficiency are, such as vocabulary, grammar, functions, or text-types” (Richards & Rodgers, 2014, p. 364). It is, therefore, not surprising that language syllabuses are of various types. Scholars such as Corder (1977), Wilkins (1983), Strevens (1985), Nunan (1988), Munby (1997), and many others categorise language syllabuses into grammatical or structural syllabus, situational syllabus, notional syllabus, notional-functional syllabus, communicative syllabus, and so on. In actual practice, however, there is hardly any language syllabus which focuses exclusively on one single aspect of language or communication as such. Unlike these types of syllabuses, the GEEC has taken an integrated approach, organizing the syllabus into experiential content consisting of “chủ điểm (themes) and chủ đề (topics)”, “năng lực giao tiếp (communicative competences/functions)”, and “kiến thức ngôn ngữ (linguistic knowledge)”. In the conception of the GEEC, “theme” is a superordinate unit and thus is general, and “topic” is a subordinate one and thus is specific; and the delineated sequence of themes – topics – communicative competences/ functions – linguistic knowledge can be roughly explained as follows: the contents of teaching consist of themes each of which is realized in a number of topics each of which is expressed in a number of communicative competences/ functions each of which is expressed in pronunciation (sounds), vocabulary (words), and grammar (structures). It can be noted here that cultural

contents are not explicit in the design of the GEEC syllabus with the implication that they are not taught systematically. They appear in actual topics realized in texts. Which topic/text is selected is the task of the textbook writers. Students can acquire or learn the cultural contents when they are tackling these selected topics/texts (see Hoang, 2015). These elements of themes – topics – communicative competences/

functions – linguistic knowledge are thought to be adequate for the purpose of the GEEC syllabus. Below are some details of each of these elements.

Themes. Based on the requirements to be met and on students’ age, experiences, needs, abilities, the GEEC syllabus has selected twelve themes, four for each level of education which can be presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Themes Selected for the GEEC Syllabus

Primary level (Cấp tiểu học)	1. Me and my friends (Em và những người bạn của em) 2. Me and my school (Em và trường học của em) 3. Me and my family (Em và gia đình em) 4. Me and the world around (Em và thế giới quanh em)
Lower secondary level (Cấp trung học cơ sở)	1. Our communities (Cộng đồng của chúng ta) 2. Our heritage (Di sản của chúng ta) 3. Our world (Thế giới của chúng ta) 4. Visions of the future (Tầm nhìn tương lai)
Upper secondary level (Cấp trung học phổ thông)	1. Our lives (Cuộc sống của chúng ta) 2. Our society (Xã hội của chúng ta) 3. Our environment (Môi trường của chúng ta) 4. Our future (Tương lai của chúng ta)

Topics. Once a theme has been selected, it can be broken down into several related topics. Table 2 provides a fragment

of themes and their derived topics selected for the primary level. (For more detail, see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2018b, pp. 11-16)

Table 2

A Fragment of Themes and Their Derived Topics Selected for the Primary Level

Themes	Topics
Me and my friends (Em và những người bạn của em)	Myself (Bản thân)
	My friends (Những người bạn của em)
	Things I can do (Những việc có thể làm)
	Daily activities (Hoạt động hằng ngày)
	Where I live (Nơi em sinh sống)
	My hobbies, dreams (Sở thích, ước mơ)
	... ²

² The three dots (...) put at the end of each list of topics are intended to show the flexibility and openness of the GEEC. It means that apart from the topics suggested by the curriculum developers, textbook writers and teachers can select other topics to meet the needs of their students and to suit the diverse teaching and learning conditions of their localities.

	My school (Trường học của em)
	My classroom (Lớp học của em)
	School objects (Đồ dùng, phương tiện học tập)
Me and my school	School learning activities (Hoạt động học tập ở trường)
(Em và trường học của em)	My favourite subject(s) and school activities (Môn học và hoạt động yêu thích ở trường)
	Jobs (Nghề nghiệp)
	...

Communicative competences. Since Dell Hymes's (1972) seminal study "On Communicative Competence", a number of definitions of communicative competences have been offered in foreign and/or second language teaching. In the GEEC, communicative competences are defined generally as the abilities to communicate appropriately and successfully using phonological, lexical and grammatical systems of language in meaningful contexts. Communicative competences are demonstrated

through communicative functions and tasks and are developed through integrated practice of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. In addition, the GEEC states that communicative competences are selected on an open-manner basis and are closely related to themes and topics. Table 3 presents an example of communicative competences selected in relation to Themes for the lower secondary level. (For more detail, see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2018b, pp. 19-21)

Table 3

Themes and Their Related Communicative Competences Selected for the Lower Secondary Level

Themes	Communicative Competences
Our communities (Cộng đồng của chúng ta)	Describe favourite school activities (Miêu tả hoạt động yêu thích ở trường) Describe a person (appearance, personalities, etc.) (Miêu tả một người cụ thể: ngoại hình, tính cách, ...) Describe a simple experience (Miêu tả trải nghiệm đơn giản) Ask about and describe famous places (Hỏi và miêu tả những địa danh nổi tiếng) Talk about leisure activities (Nói về hoạt động những thời gian rảnh rỗi) Talk about types of community services (Nói về các loại dịch vụ cộng đồng) Write simple texts (messages, notes, invitation cards) (Viết các văn bản đơn giản: lời nhắn, ghi chép, thiệp mời, ...) ...
Our heritage (Di sản của chúng ta)	Express agreement/disagreement and give reasons (Diễn đạt sự đồng ý/không đồng ý và giải thích lí do) Give simple pieces of advice (Đưa ra lời khuyên đơn giản) Describe and compare famous natural wonders, discuss ways to protect and preserve natural wonders (Miêu tả và so sánh một kì quan, thảo luận cách thức bảo vệ, bảo tồn các kì quan) Describe a traditional family (Miêu tả gia đình truyền thống) Describe festivals (Miêu tả các lễ hội)

Describe food and drinks of a locality (Miêu tả thức ăn và đồ uống của một địa phương)

Discuss family customs and traditions (Thảo luận về phong tục và truyền thống gia đình)

...

Linguistic knowledge

Linguistic knowledge includes three elements: pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. These linguistic knowledge elements act as a means to enable students to form and develop their communicative competences through the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. They are introduced sequentially and can be recycled and expanded over the three levels of education in concentric spiral direction. The elements of linguistic knowledge are stated generally in the GEEC as follows.

Pronunciation

Primary level. The phonological contents introduced at the primary level fall into two domains: oral domain and written domain. The contents selected in the oral domain include vowels, consonants, some consonant clusters, word stress, sentence stress, basic rhythm and intonation. The content selected in the written domain concerns the letter-sound correspondence to enable students to correctly spell, pronounce, read and write the words and phrases introduced.

Lower secondary level. The phonological contents introduced at the lower secondary level include monophthongs and diphthongs, semivowels, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, sentence stress, rhythm and intonation.

Upper secondary level. The phonological contents introduced at the upper secondary level include diphthongs, consonants, consonant clusters, word stress, strong forms, weak forms, elision, assimilation, linking, sentence stress, rhythm and intonation.

Vocabulary

Primary level. The vocabulary introduced at the primary level includes common and simple words at the VNFLPF Level 1 related to the themes and topics. The number of vocabulary items to be learnt suggested for the primary level is around 600-700.

Lower secondary level. The vocabulary introduced at the lower secondary school level includes common words in spoken and written English at the VNFLPF Level 2 related to the themes and topics. The number of vocabulary items to be learnt suggested for the lower secondary level is around 800-1000 (excluding the vocabulary already introduced at the primary level).

Upper secondary level. The vocabulary introduced at the upper secondary level includes common words used in spoken and written English at the VNFLPF Level 3 related to the themes and topics. The number of vocabulary items to be learnt suggested for the upper secondary level is around 600-800 (excluding the vocabulary already introduced in the primary and lower secondary levels).

Altogether, upon successful completion of the GEEC, students will have acquired around 2,500 vocabulary items.

Grammar

Primary level. The grammar introduced at the primary level includes items and structures which serve to develop students' communicative competences at the VNFLPF Level 1 such as statements, questions, imperatives, affirmatives, negatives, simple sentences, simple present tense, present continuous tense, past simple tense,

future simple tense, modal verbs, singular and plural nouns, countable and uncountable nouns, possessives, comparatives, pronouns, cardinal numbers, ordinal numbers, common prepositions, conjunctions, articles, etc.

Lower secondary level. The grammar introduced at the lower secondary level consolidates and extends the grammatical items and structures already introduced at the primary level. They include items and structures which serve to develop students' communicative competences at the VNFLPF Level 2 such as reported speech, questions, imperative sentences, exclamatory sentences, affirmative sentences, negative sentences, simple sentence, compound sentences, conditional sentences (Type 1), relative clauses, present simple tense, present continuous tense, past simple tense, past continuous tense, future simple tense, immediate future, modal verbs, infinitive, gerund, countable and uncountable nouns, possessive case, cardinal numbers, ordinal numbers, comparative adjectives, demonstrative pronouns, interrogative pronouns, relative pronouns, reflexive pronouns, possessive pronouns, adverbs, prepositions, conjunctions, definite and indefinite articles, etc.

Upper secondary level. The grammar introduced at the upper secondary level consolidates and extends the grammatical items and structures already introduced at the primary and lower secondary levels. They include items and structures which serve to develop students' communicative competences at the VNFLPF Level 3 such as relative clauses,

Table 4

Alignment of Themes, Topics, Communicative Competences Stated in Terms of Language Skills and Elements of Linguistic Knowledge

Themes	Topics	Communicative competences	Linguistic knowledge
		Listening - Understand the main points of dialogues, monologues of 200-230 words on the topics of	Pronunciation Strong and weak forms of words, contracted forms, link-ups, stress, rhythm, elision.

conditional sentences (Type 1), conditional sentences (Type 2), active voice, passive voices, direct speech, indirect speech, compound sentences, complex sentences, present simple tense, present continuous tense, present perfect tense, past simple tense, past continuous tense, past perfect tense, future simple tense, future continuous tense, immediate future, conjunctions, modal verbs, phrasal verbs, etc.

3.5.2. Specific Contents

Specific contents take up the largest textual space in the GEEC. They are designed horizontally and vertically. Horizontally, specific contents are organized around themes, topics, communicative competences/functions stated in terms of language skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and linguistic knowledge elements of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Vertically, these four aspects of content are delivered in a way that learning is stimulating, consolidated and expanded to affirm the spiral nature of the curriculum. The purpose of the horizontal and vertical design is to enable textbook writers to see more clearly the body of linguistic knowledge and the levels of language skills needed to develop in their textbooks for each grade and each level of education. Below is an example of the alignment of themes, topics, communicative competences stated in terms of language skills and linguistic knowledge elements designed for Grade 11 (For details of the Vietnamese original, see Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2018b, pp. 43-44).

<p>Our lives (Cuộc sống của chúng ta)</p>	<p>- Healthy lifestyles</p>	<p>personal interest specified in the curriculum. - Follow the main points of discussion, provided speech is clearly articulated. - Understand short narratives and form hypotheses about what will happen next.</p>	<p>Rising intonation, falling intonation, intonations of Yes/No questions, Wh-questions, alternative questions, tag questions, offer questions, suggestion questions ...</p>
<p>Our society (Xã hội của chúng ta)</p>	<p>- Generation gap - Becoming independent - Current social issues</p>	<p>Speaking - Pronounce clearly and relatively accurately the stress, link-ups, intonation and rhythm of different types of sentences. - Start, maintain and close a conversation, discussion of the topics specified in the curriculum. - Give detailed instructions. - Present preparedly projects on the topics specified in the curriculum.</p>	<p>Vocabulary Words related to themes and topics of Grade 11 Grammar Past simple tense and present perfect tense Modal verbs: <i>must vs. have to</i> Linking verbs: <i>be, seem</i>, etc. Stative verbs in progressive tense Gerunds (used as subject, object, etc.)</p>
<p>Our environment (Môi trường của chúng ta)</p>	<p>- Preserving world heritage</p>	<p>Reading - Read and comprehend the main points, specific contents of texts of 250-280 words on current and familiar topics. - Read and comprehend the main points, specific contents of news and articles on a current topic or event and understand the overall meaning of the text. - Skim short texts to find relevant facts and information.</p>	<p>Participles and clauses with <i>to</i> infinitive Perfect gerund and perfect participle Connectors Word formation: compound nouns Cleft sentences: <i>It is/was ... that</i> clause ...</p>
<p>Our future (Tương lai của chúng ta)</p>	<p>- Health and longevity</p>	<p>Writing - Write texts (with opening, development and conclusion) of 150-180 words on familiar topics. - Write personal letters asking for complete and detailed information about products or services. - Write to convey short and simple factual information to friends or acquaintances.</p>	<p>...</p>

3.6. Educational Methodology

The history of second and/or foreign language teaching in the world has witnessed the prevalence and decline of quite a number of methods and approaches: Grammar Translation Method, Direct Method, Structural Method, Reading Method, Audiolingual Method, Silent Way, Suggestopedia, Total Physical Response, Situational Method, Communicative Language Teaching, and many others (see Rivers, 1970; Larsen-Freeman, 2003; Brown, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2015; Richards, 2017; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). It has been observed that although there has been a preference for particular methods at different times, these methods often continue in some form long after they have fallen out of favour with the grammar translation method still alive and well in several parts of the world including Vietnam.

Today, foreign language teaching is not easily categorised into methods and trends. Instead, each teacher is called on to develop a sound approach to various English classrooms he or she is teaching. It is for this reason that the general approach to English language teaching in Vietnamese schools suggested in the GEEC is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). There are a number of reasons to adopt CLT, but two seem to stand out. First, CLT is an approach (see Widdowson, 1978; Nunan, 1991; Brown, 2014; Harmer, 2007; Brown & Lee, 2015). As an approach, it can accommodate different methods and techniques of teaching, focusing not only on the formation and development of students' communicative competences but also on their ability to use linguistic knowledge (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar) to produce correct and appropriate utterances through the four communicative skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. And secondly, CLT has many points in common with the learner-centered approach (Nunan,

1991; Hoang, 2007) which has been recognized worldwide.

Two things should be noted here. First, although CLT is adopted in the GEEC, it is advisable that teaching English in general education schools should be based on a locally appropriate application of CLT and an understanding of the psychological characteristics of students who are moving from childhood (primary level) to adolescence (lower secondary) and to young adulthood (upper secondary). Secondly, although the learner-centred approach to foreign language teaching has been recognized worldwide, in actual classroom practice both the learner-centred and the teacher-centred approaches can co-exist; neither of them can monopolise over the other. The dominance of one approach over the other depends on a number of factors, but in Vietnamese general education context, age and the level of language proficiency that the students have reached seem to be the main ones.

Primary school children (aged 6-10) start learning English from the beginning. At these ages, they are still developing their cognitive skills. They are concrete in their thinking and need a curriculum which arises from their own personal experiences. They can learn best when they are actively engaged both physically and mentally. They have the capacity to learn a new language, but this is best achieved when their language learning arises from themes and topics which interest them, and which start from their own personal experiences. At this stage, young children do not have the capacity to analyse English formally or abstractly. They learn by doing, which means they must have many opportunities to practise their developing skills in familiar settings and when talking about topics they know and are interested in (Stern, 1967; Rivers, 1970; Cameron, 2011; Scott & Ytreberg, 2011; Rixon & Papp, 2018; Hoang, 2020b). In the classroom, primary

school children are still strongly dependent on the teacher. They understand English only in bits, guided from smaller bits to larger ones by the teacher, until the mysterious moment which children can understand and produce the whole meaningful utterance for themselves. While children are at the beginning stage of English language learning, the teacher should first draw them along through a series of prepared learning activities. The predominant teaching method in these ages is naturally more teacher-centred. It is characterized by the facts that students produce and create utterances in English not perfectly and with many errors and mistakes, and the teacher's task is to encourage students to communicate, to steer them away from errors and misleading, to provide them with many opportunities to practice their language skills in meaningful contexts so that gradually they can infer for themselves the rules for constructing sentences, using new vocabulary, and raise awareness of usage, acceptability and appropriateness.

Lower secondary school students (aged 11-14) have reached Level 1 of the VNFLPF. They are in the stage of transitioning from childhood to adolescence. They are developing rapidly, both emotionally and physically, and are able to accomplish more complex cognitive functions. They are developing the capacity for logical thinking – to analyse English in ways that they could not do as primary-age students – and the ability to think in more abstract ways. At the same time, they are becoming more independent in their social worlds. While the teacher needs to take account of these changes, he or she should also recognise that students at these ages still need considerable guidance and structure in their lives and in their learning. In terms of English language knowledge and skills, lower secondary school students can understand and produce rather correctly and appropriately some connected sentences for

themselves. It is time the teaching approach should be changed: the teacher can exercise both teacher-centred and learner-centred approaches alternatively depending on the particular activity he or she is teaching.

Upper secondary school students (aged 15-17) have reached Level 2 of the VNFLPF. They are in the stage of transitioning from adolescence to young adults (late teens). They are increasingly developing in terms of mentality, intelligence and complex cognitive functions. At these ages, upper secondary school students can develop empathy, see others' viewpoints and put themselves in others' perspectives. Logical thinking and the ability to solve theoretical issues are also increased. Moreover, students are also becoming more dependent in social settings. The teacher needs to consider these changes, to help them become more confident in their abilities, as well as help them improve their skills to take responsibilities of themselves and their studies. Also at these ages, upper secondary school students' English language knowledge and skills have considerably improved and expanded compared to the knowledge and skills of English language attained in primary and lower secondary schools: they can understand and make themselves understood rather easily and freely in English. The teaching approach should, therefore, be more learner-centred. The teacher's task is to supply students with great quantities of reading and listening materials, to facilitate and monitor their practice in speaking and writing, to plug gaps in their learning, to stretch their capacity for learning, and to lead them towards that state in which they can come to think in English – to depend less and less on the mediation of Vietnamese (see MoET, 2018b; see also Strevens, 1985; Breen & Candlin, 2001). In other words, young adult school students should be given maximum opportunity to increase the language fluency and accuracy to attain Level 3 of the

VNFLPF. This process must be maintained consistently to encourage students to gain skills in life-long learning, nurture positive moral values and global citizens' awareness to participate in social and cultural activities.

It can be seen that both learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches have their part to play in successful learning-centred lessons. However, teachers must remember that if their students are going to acquire the ability to communicate in English they must have sufficient opportunity to use the language in the classroom. Lessons which are predominantly teacher-centred will not provide students with sufficient opportunity to use the language in meaningful contexts. Meaningful use of language is essential for achieving any degree of communicative competence. This meaningful use of language requires students' interaction with all the resources available to them, the teacher, other students, the textbook and, wherever available, electronic resources. The curriculum shall be implemented in the classroom through tasks and activities for all the four skills which require students to engage in meaningful interaction using the language.

The adoption of CLT and the learner-centred approach redefines the role of the teacher and student. The CLT teacher assumes many roles, among which four are considered prominent: an instructor and educator, a mentor, a participant in the teaching-learning process, and a learner and a researcher. Similarly, the CLT student assumes a variety of roles, among which three are considered important: an active and effective negotiator with himself/herself in the learning process, an active and effective negotiator with peers in groups and in the class, and an active and effective participant in a collaborative teaching-learning environment (Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo [MoET], 2018b, pp. 48-50; see also Breen & Candlin, 2001; Hoang, 2007).

3.7. *Assessment of Learning*

Teaching without assessment of learning is not teaching at all. Assessment of learning provides feedback on the communicative competences acquired by students during and by the end of a learning stage. This contributes to encouraging and guiding students in the learning process, enabling teachers and schools to assess students' performance, thereby adjusting the teaching methodology of the subject to suit specific teaching and learning context. The principles, methods, and formats of assessing students' learning are explicitly stated in the GEEC as follows:

Assessment of students' learning must adhere to the teaching objectives and contents of the curriculum, must be based on the requirements for communication skills at each grade, and must aim at enabling students to achieve respective levels of communicative competences at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels.

Assessment of students' learning suggested in MoET's (2018b) GEEC includes formative assessment and summative assessment. Formative assessment is carried out continuously through teaching activities in the classroom. In the teaching process, priority should be given to formative assessment as it enables both students and teachers to see students' progress towards achieving the objectives of the curriculum. At designated points throughout the school year, such as at the end of each term and each school-year, summative assessment will be used to gauge students' achievement of the objectives. The assessment at the end of primary, lower secondary and upper secondary levels should be based on the language proficiency requirements specified in the VNFLPF: Level 1 for the primary, Level 2 for the lower secondary, and Level 3 for the upper secondary.

Throughout the teaching process, assessment of students’ learning must include a combination of quantitative assessment and qualitative assessment which consists of teachers’ assessment, students’ peer assessment, and students’ self-assessment. Formats of assessment should be consistent with the teaching methodology used in the classroom, including speaking test (in the form of dialogue or monologue) and written test in the form of integrated language skills (listening, reading, and writing) and linguistic knowledge (pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar), combining both objective (multiple-choice questions) and subjective (sentence, paragraph, and essay writing) modes. The national examination at the end of Grade 12 must conform to the objectives of the GEEC and must resonate with the teaching methodology suggested in the GEEC.

3.8. Explanations for and Guidance on Curriculum Implementation

A national-level curriculum such as the GEEC will be incomplete or even incomprehensive without providing conditions for successful implementation since it would be hard for institutions and people in the lower tiers (provincial departments of education, teachers, teacher-training institutions) to exercise the curriculum successfully. Below are MoET’s (2018b) GEEC guiding details.

3.8.1. Allocation of Teaching Time

English as a subject in the GEEC is taught from Grade 3 to Grade 12 and complies with the provisions defined in MoET’s (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum regarding the allocation of time for teaching the subject, specifically:

Primary (4 periods/week)			Lower secondary (3 periods/week)				Upper secondary (3 periods/week)			Total
Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12	
140	140	140	105	105	105	105	105	105	105	1155
420 periods			420 periods				315 periods			

3.8.2. Conditions for Successful Curriculum Implementation

Teachers

- There should be sufficient number of teachers to cover sufficient periods according to teaching plans in school. Teachers must have minimum English language qualification and pedagogical competency relevant to their educational level as prescribed by the MoET.

- Teachers should receive adequate training to be able to deliver the teaching contents of the GEEC. For teachers who are qualified, in-service training should be provided on a regular basis to enable them to

implement successfully the objectives, teaching contents and teaching methodology specified in the GEEC. Teachers should also receive training on testing and assessment and using modern teaching equipment.

- The capacity to evaluate textbooks and teaching materials of teachers should be strengthened to meet the learning outcomes prescribed for each educational level.

Teacher-training institutions

- In-service English teacher training institutions should refer to the GEEC to ensure their training programs are in line with actual requirements.

- In-service English teacher training

institutions should provide teachers with opportunities to strengthen their capacity to design appropriate formative and summative tests and examinations, and support students to develop their communicative competences equivalent to the designated levels of proficiency specified in the GEEC.

Facilities

- Minimum conditions for textbooks, infrastructure and equipment must comply with the regulations of the MoET.

- Schools with available resources should connect to the Internet, equipped with computers, screens and projectors, and English teaching software; encourage the use of information technology equipment to support English language teaching and learning.

- The class size must not exceed what is prescribed by the MoET.

3.8.3. Direction for Development of General Competences

Learning methodology

Good learning methodology will enable students to effectively develop their communicative competences in English. Students need to formulate some basic learning methods such as how to define learning objectives and plans, how to practice communication skills and learn linguistic knowledge, how to use learning materials and electronic resources, how to actively engage in interactive learning activities, self-assess and adjust their own learning activities and plans.

Students should choose learning methods that are suited to their personal capacities, characteristics and learning conditions. Appropriate learning methods enable students to learn actively and effectively, thereby becoming learners capable of learning independently in the future.

Life-long learning

The world is in a strong process of

globalization. Globalization creates both opportunities and challenges for each nation and each individual. To be able to compete on a global scale, students need to constantly develop the ability to update their knowledge and skills. Learning does not stop once students finish upper secondary school, even if they do not progress to further education. Therefore, as a part of MoET's (2018a) Total General Education Curriculum, the GEEC should contribute to providing students with appropriate learning methods, step by step orienting them to form life-long learning habits.

The GEEC aims to develop in students the skills and capacities to become independent learners, taking advantage of both formal and informal learning opportunities as appropriate to their individual needs. Together with enabling students to develop their capacity for self-assessing their existing knowledge and skills to identify areas for future development, students should be provided with a strong foundation of independent learning and life-long learning habits, thereby identifying their future careers so as to contribute their part to the development of Vietnam throughout their lives.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have made an attempt to present and interpret some of the most essential points of MoET's 2018 General Education English Curriculum. To achieve the goal of the study, we raised three questions for exploration: (1) "What are the backgrounds to the development and promulgation of MoET's 2018 GEEC?", (2) "What are the prominent characteristics of MoET's 2018 GEEC?", and (3) "How is MoET's 2018 GEEC structured and why is it structured in the way it is?". In addressing the first question, we tried to show that the promulgation of the GEEC is the result of successive periods of educational reforms in

Vietnam since the 1950s, and the development of the GEEC is based on sound legal, scientific and practical foundations: The Prime Minister's Decisions 1400 and 2080 issued in 2008 and 2017, MoET's 2018 Total General Education Curriculum, MoET's three pilot English language curricula promulgated in 2010, 2012a, and 2012b respectively, and the strong needs to improve the level of English language proficiency for young Vietnamese people in the context of integration and globalisation. To answer the second question, our study indicated clearly that the GEEC is a subject, national-level, compulsory, long-term, and multi-grade foreign language curriculum. And in addressing the third question, we observed that different from other foreign language curricula, the GEEC is organized around eight elements: (1) subject characteristics, (2) views of curriculum design, (3) curriculum objectives, (4) requirements to be met, (5) educational contents, (6) educational methodology, (7) assessment of learning, and (8) explanations for and guidance on curriculum implementation. We examined in some depth all these eight organizing elements of the GEEC, highlighting a number of the important points that characterize the curriculum.

A curriculum which is designed and implemented by an individual teacher or an individual institution (school) is extremely complex. A curriculum which is of national level and implemented nationwide for a number of years, covering quite a number of dimensions, and involving the participation of a huge body of people as the GEEC is surely much and much more so. Misunderstandings of the curriculum document and encountering problems in the process of implementation are inevitable. Hopefully, this study will be of benefit to Vietnamese school teachers of English, English textbook writers, English test and examination makers, and educational administrators – those people who are

directly involved in the implementation of the GEEC and contribute their parts to the success of the curriculum at present and in the years to come.

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GIẢI THÍCH CHƯƠNG TRÌNH GIÁO DỤC PHỔ THÔNG MÔN TIẾNG ANH NĂM 2018 CỦA BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO

Hoàng Văn Vân

*Trung tâm Nghiên cứu giáo dục ngoại ngữ, ngôn ngữ và quốc tế học,
Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, ĐHQGHN, Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

Tóm tắt: Trong bài viết này với tư cách là người phát triển chính tài liệu, tôi sẽ cố gắng giải thích và làm rõ một số nội dung cơ bản của Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông tiếng Anh được Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo ban hành ngày 26 tháng 12 năm 2018. Ba câu hỏi được nêu ra để nghiên cứu là: (1) “Cơ sở của việc phát triển và ban hành Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh năm 2018 của Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo là gì?”, (2) “Các đặc điểm nổi bật của Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh năm 2018 của Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo là gì?”, (3) “Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh năm 2018 của Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo được cấu trúc như thế nào và tại sao nó được cấu trúc như vậy?” Những câu hỏi này sẽ được giải quyết chi tiết trong suốt bài viết.

Từ khóa: Chương trình giáo dục phổ thông môn tiếng Anh năm 2018 của Bộ Giáo dục và Đào tạo

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY - CONCEPTS AND IDENTIFICATION OF VOCABULARY IN THE DOMAIN*

Lam Thi Hoa Binh**

VNU University of Languages and International Studies,
Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Ha Noi, Vietnam

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Abstract: The term *educational technology* (ET) has been mentioned in recent decades, but its concepts are many and keep changing over time. Pedagogic improvements to meet the needs of theoretical and practical knowledge in new professions and the ever-evolving technology of information and computer have made educational technology incredibly dynamic. On analyzing a number of notable concepts of educational technology having been used in Vietnam and in the world, the article specifies the widely accepted definition of educational technology in the 21st century, clarifies its typical features as a foundation to identify the scope of specialized vocabulary which can be used to compile handbooks and dictionaries to fill the gap of ET specialized lexicography in Vietnam.

Key words: educational technology, concepts, specialized vocabulary, lexical units

1. Introduction

The 21st century witnesses the expansion of technology with vigorous impacts on the economy as well as many aspects of socio-political life around the world. Craig Rock (2018) wrote “*when it comes to technology, one thing you can count on is that nothing is going to stay the same*”. Technology does not only change people’s habits, activities but also their mindset. In industries, rapid development of technology requires thorough understanding and practical application of huge amount of knowledge. The shift from mass production to knowledge economies (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2013) puts constant pressure on education in changing its concepts, forms and even contents.

Meanwhile, in education, the

presence of technology gives way to a revolution in teaching and learning methods, teaching information exploiting techniques, learning assessment, and creates significant changes in educational concepts. High integration of information technology in teaching tools, methods and techniques combined with teaching contents formed in a multi-dimensional interaction space between learners and teachers in diverse academic environments is gradually replacing the conventional methods and contents. Moreover, the limitless resources from unceasingly connected multimedia media keep changing instructors’ and learners’ perception and approach to knowledge. All the theoretical and practical changes in education are reflected in educational technology. Therefore, learning about educational technology is indispensable for education growth in the digital age.

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** Corresponding author.

Email address: binhlth1973@vnu.edu.vn
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In Vietnam, the Government's Resolution 29-NQ/TW dated 4 November 2013 brings out a fundamental solution in higher education reform to the year of 2020 emphasizing the renewal of contents, methods, training procedures, educational management, and enhancing scientific and technological activities. On 25 January 2017, the Prime Minister's Decision N^o. 117/QĐ-TTg approved the Project of *"Strengthening the application of information technology in managing and supporting the activities of teaching, learning and scientific research to improve the quality of education and training in the periods of 2016-2020 and up to 2025"*. On 15 January 2019 the Prime Minister approved the Project of *"Improving the quality of higher education in the period of 2019-2025"* emphasizing the enhancement of scientific and technological activities to support innovation in teaching, training management and technology transfer. These legal documents reinforce the importance of technology in education, as well as the need to access new knowledge in research and education management.

The term of *educational technology* (ET) has been known for decades but occasionally defined in Vietnam. Since it was first introduced as instructional techniques in elementary education, there have been few other definitions whereas the international efforts of giving a complete definition of ET still continue. In fact, inconsistent viewpoints of ET make it complicated to identify the scope of the study and the specific vocabulary used in the field. On analyzing common ET concepts and its scope of study, the article singles out a widely accepted concept of ET and defines the range of vocabulary in the domain for lexical compilation in handbooks and dictionaries.

2. Educational Technology Concepts and Definitions

2.1. Technology and Educational Technology

The early concepts of ET and its application was first introduced in the early 20th century in Western Europe, the United States, and Russia to fix the weaknesses in traditional teaching, develop learner-centred techniques and methods for more effective teaching process (Pham, 2012). Until recently, ET has at times been referred to as teaching tools, namely projectors, TV screens, interactive whiteboards, etc. However, the word "technology" brings more senses than such tangible objects. Various viewpoints of technology can be seen through definitions in such dictionaries as Oxford, Webster's, Collins, etc. The Oxford English Dictionary (online) (n.d.) defines "technology" as *"the application of scientific knowledge for practical purposes, especially in industry"*. Several other dictionaries, such as The American Heritage Dictionary (2009), Collins Dictionary (2003), Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary (2010), refer to technology as *"applications, methods, theories and practices used to achieve desired results, especially in industry and commerce"*. From social research perspective, Luppacini (2005) defines "technology" as *"the organization of knowledge to achieve practical goals and also the tools and techniques to do so"* (p. 104). The above concepts synthesize the concepts of technology in many aspects of scientific knowledge, methods, theories, practices, and even the organization of knowledge to achieve certain goals.

In Vietnam, the term "technology" was considered coming from the field of industry and defined as *"general methods to produce, create, change the condition, character or form of materials or semi-product in manufacturing process for the finished"* in Vietnamese Dictionary written

by Hoang (1992, p. 218). The concept of technology was marginally changed in 1999 when it was described as “*the common names of manufacturing methods...*” (N. Y. Nguyen, 1999, p. 456). Though there’s little change in definitions of technology in printed Vietnamese dictionaries, some Vietnamese online dictionaries have caught up with the up-dated notion of technology. However, the term of ET has not yet been defined in printed editions.

The difference in the concepts of technology and the expansion of such viewpoints in various fields undoubtedly result in the diversity of ET concepts over the decades. According to ET researchers and practitioners, giving an official definition of educational technology is not simple for three main reasons. Firstly, it (ET) is developed from the field of application. Therefore, unlike most sciences which base on one defined theoretical foundation, educational technology adopts theories from more than one profession and field. In the process of merging, these theories and their significance are probably reshaped. Secondly, rapid development of scientific majors that constitute ET entails a series of intellectual and conceptual changes. It is a great challenge to form an updated definition covering all the new features. Thirdly, the definition of educational technology must reconcile the tangible and abstract conceptions of ET as modern tools as well as advanced processes. Broadly speaking, the ET concept should be approached from both material and conceptual perspective. Contradiction of the two distinct components may lead to confusion in definition or dealing with concepts that go beyond the domain.

2.2. Prominent Concepts and Definitions of Educational Technology

One of the popular concepts in educational technology is associated with the success of the audio-visual revolution in

education and training programs starting from the First World War with the development of mastery learning and programmed instruction in the 1950s pioneered by Skinner and James Finn (Robey et al., 1978; Reiser & Dempsey, 1987). The first concept of ET was closely linked with audio-visual communication. Ely (1963, pp. 18-19) stated “*audiovisual communication is the branch of educational theory and practice concerned with the design and use of messages which control the learning process*”. This definition merges the fields of communication and education in a way that their messages, theories and application were used to support the learning process. The term of ET is not apparently demonstrated but hidden in educational theory and practice, and considered a branch of the industry.

Early attempts to clearly define ET are AECT’s (Association of Educational Communications and Technology). The expansion of ET activities in the 1970s brought more evidence for the judgement that ET was no longer recognized as a branch but a field of study: “*Educational technology is a field involved in the facilitation of human learning through systematic identification, development, organization and utilization of a full-range of learning resources and through the management of these processes*” (AECT, 1972, p. 36). Similarly, Mitchell (1972) described ET as a field of study and practice connected to all aspects of an educational organization, system and process in which the resources allocated for certain educational outcomes could be widened.

From system perspective, ET is assumed to expand beyond specific teaching objectives. In 1977, ET’s definition was restated as “*a complex, integrated process involving people, procedures, ideas, devices and organization for analyzing problems and devising, implementing, evaluating and managing solutions to those problems*

involved in all aspects of human learning" (AECT, 1977, p. 1). In conformity with this conception, there are definitions describing the process of learning development and management using instructional designs and assessment (Banathy, 1996; Michell, 1972; Plomp & Pals, 1989). Plomp and Pals (1989) specify ET on three mutual interactive aspects including: i) technical facilities developed to support teaching and learning process; ii) processes used for instructional development, design, and assessment; iii) synthetic theories to analyze and solve problems in specific contexts from different perspectives and correlations.

Other studies on ET take into account the entire research, teaching and learning activities both in theory and practice on the basis of technological resources (Richey, Silber & Ely, 2008). In 2007, the nature of ET practice was noticed in the definition by AECT. *"Educational technology is the study and ethical practice of facilitating learning and improving performance by creating, using, and managing appropriate technological processes and resources"* (Januszewski & Molenda, 2008). Moreover, approaching ET for specific fields of study namely teaching methodology, educational psychology, communication technology, computer technology, etc. also draws considerable attention (Dusek, 2006; Hickman, 2001; Hlynka & Jacobsen, 2009; Lakhana, 2014). Researchers at the University of New Delhi (India) refer to educational technology in a broader sense that it *"includes the development, application and evaluation of systems, techniques and aids in the field of teaching and learning. The shape of the future education system is associated with drastic changes under the influence of technology"* (Indira Gandhi National Open University, 2009, p. 5).

The frequent changes in ET concepts show the gradually broadened perception of the field for more complete in scope and

more detailed in its approach. The ET concepts are not only specified from the concrete technology of realia, equipment, media, software but also from abstract notion of knowledge, methods and creative thinking within the field to maintain, develop and improve educational activities. The concept of Brückner (2015) generalizes most characteristics of ET in a definition that *"educational technology refers to all valid and reliable educational science such as equipment, as well as processes and procedures, that are derived from scientific research, and in given context may refer to theoretical, algorithmic or heuristic processes. Educational technology does not necessarily imply physical technology"* (p. 1).

Meanwhile, in Vietnam, the early ET conception was initiated by Ho (1994) as instructional techniques in *"organizing and controlling the teaching process by a technical procedure handled by professional solutions or pedagogical skills"*. Though it has been applied successfully for decades in a number of primary schools in Vietnam and realizing psychological and educational theories in teaching and learning, the ET merely shows processes and techniques to teach two particular subjects (maths and Vietnamese) for first grade learners. Therefore, it deals with only part of a broader phenomenon called educational technology in the 21st century.

Similarly, recent research in Vietnam carried out by C. T. Nguyen (2002), Pham (2008, 2012), Ngo (2012) and some other educators, notifies the existence of up-to-date concepts of ET yet mainly focuses on instructional techniques. In the book of *Instructional Technology*, Ngo (2012) affirms that the definition of educational technology has much broader meaning than instructional technology but does not mention what ET is. Four out of six chapters in the book concentrate on the process of instructional design, using multimedia technology in teaching, and designing

electronic lectures employing teaching software. According to Pham (2012), learning technology should be designed to control the learning process to change the learning procedures from “Teacher lectures – learner remembers” to “Teacher designs – Learner applies” and that the teacher’s design should be applied by any learner to make a desired product even with or without teacher’s presence.

2.3. Characteristics of Educational Technology

The prominent ET concepts and definitions show that ET covers a vast scientific area not only within education but also other fields related to it. From technological perspective, technology either comes from a separate science applied in education to support teaching activities known as technology in education or from education itself to change educational theories and practice known as technology of education.

Technology in education specifies its application in research, manufacture and production that affects many aspects of the teaching process especially in instructional activities. It can be specialized as:

- Hardware like machines, tools and equipment for teaching and learning, such as computers, tablets, projectors, realia, connection devices, terminals, etc.

- Software such as computer programs, computer-based or online teaching-learning management systems, digital resource management systems, educational administration systems, etc.

- Instructions, guidelines, training notes supporting educational activities, manipulation and management that go along with the above-mentioned tools and systems.

Technology of education is not an external factor. It is a system of approaches to educational issues and stays in learning designs, assessment and management. It

contains knowledge and understanding of teaching and learning methods, assessment, educational psychology, communication and information theory which are used as basis in teaching practice, utilizing equipment and forms to exploit different skills effectively and applying them to impart and acquire knowledge.

The interaction between the external and internal technology in education results in higher integration between them. The concept of technology integration in education and the application of TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) at schools worldwide is an example showing the unification of technology in education. Then, there would be changes in educational theories, methods and even philosophies to meet the needs of various scientific fields in the education system. In fact, ET is becoming a systemic entity dealing with management, operation, improvement and development of education and represents itself in:

- + *Supporting educational activities* by providing means and types of communication as well as educational methods in different learning contexts. In every teaching-learning environment, regardless of face-to-face, online or out-of-school environment, a discipline develops its own instructional methods supported by equivalent technological tools and equipment. Online interactive facilities, virtual classrooms, learning management systems (LMS) ensure effective performance of teaching and learning in all conditions.

- + *Synthesizing multidisciplinary theories* on education, psychology, philosophy, technology, communication and related fields of study. On integrating technology with other disciplines, teaching and learning theories in the area may be adapted to fit the requirement of the new environment.

+ *Having high applicability* for always being adjusted to the growth of science and technology through application, development and improvement of instructional methods, techniques and theories to obtain best efficiency. The most obvious example is the development of interactive technology from the beginning of the century. Applications such as virtual classrooms, online forums, synchronous and asynchronous interactive technique, etc., break most of the principles in a traditional classroom, establish new activities, approaches to knowledge and equivalent form of management and evaluation.

+ *Improving education* in a comprehensive way, for it is located in the correlation between many fields of research and application. The development of one field may bring about systemic changes and improvements to the whole industry.

+ *Keeping on changing* with the development of science, technology and their components. At that time, not only the teaching content needs to change, but also the teaching methods, manipulation techniques or applications. The continuous development of science and technology will result in corresponding effects on education, especially specialized education.

The ET concepts, its definitions and characteristics are crucial information to help define ET and its scope of study. The information is also used as background to identify ET in term of language in general and specialized vocabulary in particular.

3. Lexical Studies and Vocabulary Identification in Educational Technology

3.1. Lexical Studies in Educational Technology

In lexicography, a small amount of ET specialized vocabulary has been included in education dictionaries in recent decades, such as *Dictionary of Education* (Wallace,

2015); *Family dictionary of Education Terms* (The Office of the Education Ombudsman, 2011); *Greenwood dictionary of Education* (Collins & O'Brien, 2003); *Education Dictionary* (Georgia School Boards Association - GSBA, 2012); *Encyclopedia of Educational Theory and Philosophy* (Phillips, 2014),... However, meanings of most ET keywords can only be found in monolingual or bilingual computer technology dictionaries such as *Dictionary of Computer and Internet Terms* (Rigdon, 2016), *Information technology dictionary – English - Vietnamese* (Dong & Luong, 2015), *French dictionary of Information Technology* (Pyper, 1989), *Elsevier's dictionary of Industrial Technology* (Philipsborn, 1994),... or online technology dictionaries such as *TechTerms computer dictionary*, *IT dictionary for Computer Terms and Technology*, *IT terminology*, *Dictionary Plus Science and Technology* (Oxford University, 2016),... The number of lexicographic materials on ET vocabulary is limited, including printed dictionaries, online glossaries, dictionaries, handbooks, and encyclopedias, such as *Dictionary of Library and Educational Technology* (Rosenburg & Elsbree, 1989), *Interactive techniques* (Yee, 2020), *Essentials of Instructional Technology* (Malik & Pandith, 2011; Rather, 2004), *Edshelf* (n.d.). Notable publications focusing on ET concepts and terms are several, comprising *A Handbook of Educational Technology* (Ellington, Percival & Race, 1993 & 2005), *The Educational Technology Handbook: A comprehensive Guide. Process and Products for Learning* (Hackbarth, 1996); *The K-12 Educational Technology Handbook* (Ottenbreit-Leftwich & Kimmons, 2020), *Encyclopedia of Educational Technology* (Kovalchick & Dawson, 2004; Spector, 2015).

In ET lexical publications, linguistic contents are categorized in two main areas of education and technology. The knowledge is allocated in chapters and sections showing

minor lexical arrays of educational activities, pedagogical theories, technological pedagogical content knowledge (TPACK), educational and technological management, legal and ethical issues in online education. In each section or chapter, there are headwords or entries with full explanation, meanings and information of the words' origin and usage, etc. The books demonstrate all facets in education as well as educational components and participants. It also shows the interdisciplinary nature of ET in combining all educational activities (not just instructional activities), specific knowledge and theories, research activities with technology.

It is worth noticing that the current ET dictionaries and encyclopedias do not comprise a big sum of entries, and the entries of education outnumber those of technology. Moreover, the entries of technology focus more on the techniques applied in educational management than in techniques and technological procedures used in the field. Regardless of how large the volumes are, the number of entries in most lexical publications is limited (about 300-400 entries), and barely adequate to meet the current needs.

In Vietnam, though the term of educational technology was known in late 1970s, modern theoretical researches on ET are occasionally made. Therefore, ET materials such as books, dictionaries and handbooks are almost vacant. The *Dictionary of Education* compiled by V. G. Nguyễn (2001) is one rare publication on education collecting vocabulary in the domain. However, lexical units on ET can hardly be found in the dictionary.

Generally speaking, the current ET researches show more ET lexical studies abroad than in Vietnam. This causes a shortage of information as backbone knowledge for further studies in terms of

concepts and lexicography. Nevertheless, despite the large number of ET publications, most foreign materials do not meet the needs of the majority of Vietnamese people in consulting new terms and concepts in native language. Monolingual ET handbooks and dictionaries in English focus on complicated terms and concepts which are considered up-to-date in developed societies while most Vietnamese readers are in need of basic ET words, terms and usage for immediate understanding. Another factor that makes foreign ET materials hard for Vietnamese readers is the affluence of information provided in each entry. Filtering long passages for a small piece of concept or information takes time and effort and sometimes is irrelevant to common readers. Therefore, it is significant to promote basic research and lexical studies to help educators and researchers in Vietnam acquire ET knowledge comprehensively and effectively.

3.2. ET Vocabulary Identification

From the lexical studies which have been carried out so far, it is worth noticing that the scope of specialized vocabulary in a certain major is generally determined by the scientific areas it focuses on. These areas are defined in concepts, definitions and basic theories of the major. On compiling a lexicon, based on typical resources of the field such as specialized documents, materials of different forms, the vocabulary will be gathered. However, this does not mean that every single word appearing in the field is recorded in the edition. Each edition has its own system of entries with a particular classification depending on the size of research, the purpose of usage, specific lexical units selected, and relevant information provided in each entry.

Similarly, selected lexical units in ET should reflect the main aspects of education and technology. From the recent concepts and definitions specified by AECT,

Brückner (2015), we limit the fields related to ET and decide materials for vocabulary collection. In our small-scale research, we confine the number of documents and materials to a practicable level. All the words in the 12 materials comprising glossaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias and handbooks on education, technology and educational technology are analyzed by the concordance AntConc 3.5.9 to get 368,397 tokens¹ shown in 14,616 word types². Among the high frequency word forms, we exclude functional units which have no lexical meaning but most commonly used in all types of text. The hapax legomena are also counted out. Those remains are content words that denote objects, titles, names of units or organization in the education management, characterizing concepts, methods, techniques of teaching, assessment and other educational activities. In this study, we do not tend to separate technical terms or semi-technical units but the lexical units of high frequency in the targeted population (for many of them are used inter-disciplinarily and may not possess unique meaning as technical terms do (Chung & Nation, 2003; Lãm, 2014). Therefore, the selected units can be nouns, nominal phrases and adjective phrases. In technology, names of software, programs, their functions and operation are essential because they show important knowledge recently used in education and how the applications function to realize educational activities. After all, the ET vocabulary can be defined in a lexical system as follows:

1- Lexical units related to education, educational activities and technology of education

- Lexical units describing techniques and methods of teaching.

- Lexical units indicating tools, visual aids, machines, teaching and learning materials.
- Lexical units referred to products of learning, research, recording and evaluating achievements in learning activities.
- Lexical units referred to entities participating in the teaching-learning process, learning management supporting teaching and research activities.
- Lexical units referred to the space and environment where teaching-learning activities take place.
- Names of theories often used in research, analysis, synthesis, and application for changes in teaching methods. They are not pure educational but philosophical, psychological, cultural,...

2- Lexical units related to technology in education

- Names of software, processing programs, technological applications in education.
- Lexical units describing technical parts or structure, operation, manipulation and operation of computer programs.
- Lexical units of information and communication technology.

The combination of education and the technology built in education or simulated educational activities may result in certain overlapping of words and definitions in the two arrays. This makes it difficult to distinguish which words belong entirely to technology from those used only in education. However, the hierarchic classification of ET specific vocabulary in topics and subtopics will provide readers a

¹ Token: the appearance of one word form or a lexical unit in a reading text, a data bundle or a piece of conversation (Gardner, 2013).

² Wordtype: one or more letters clustered to make a unique word form (Gardner, 2013).

broad comprehension of the research system, educational activities and theories, corresponding technologies and the merging tendency of technology in education.

4. Conclusion

In short, theoretical research on educational technology is very necessary in Vietnam in the current time. It helps to define the scope of research and determines the linguistic content for specialized dictionaries. The system of basic concepts and specialized vocabulary in educational technology helps learners grasp essential knowledge in ET and serves as background in research and teaching on digital platforms of the 21st century. It helps boost educational activities to catch up with the progress of digital technology. ET vocabulary identification is the initial step in building bilingual ET dictionaries to support language research, education research, foreign language teaching, and multidisciplinary education in Vietnam.

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CÔNG NGHỆ GIÁO DỤC – QUAN NIỆM VÀ VIỆC NHẬN DIỆN PHẠM VI TỪ VỰNG

Lâm Thị Hòa Bình

*Khoa Tiếng Anh, Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, ĐHQGHN,
Số 2 Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

Tóm tắt: Thuật ngữ Công nghệ giáo dục (CNGD) đã được đề cập trong nhiều thập kỷ, nhưng đến nay vẫn còn nhiều quan niệm khác nhau về CNGD và các quan niệm này luôn thay đổi. Những cải tiến trong phương pháp giảng dạy đáp ứng nhu cầu tri thức trong các ngành nghề mới kết hợp với một lĩnh vực luôn không ngừng phát triển và biến đổi như công nghệ thông tin và công nghệ máy tính đã biến công nghệ giáo dục trở nên vô cùng năng động. Thông qua phân tích một số quan niệm đáng chú ý về CNGD ở Việt Nam và trên thế giới, bài viết xác định khái niệm được chấp nhận rộng rãi ở thế kỷ 21, những đặc điểm nổi bật của CNGD, làm cơ sở cho việc nhận diện phạm vi từ vựng chuyên ngành trong việc biên soạn sổ tay và từ điển, góp phần lấp dần khoảng trống trong nghiên cứu từ vựng chuyên ngành CNGD ở Việt Nam.

Từ khóa: công nghệ giáo dục, quan niệm, từ vựng chuyên ngành, đơn vị từ vựng

CHALLENGES FOR COLLEGE ENGLISH TEACHERS AS ASSESSORS*

Nguyen Thi Chi**

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

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Abstract: The present case study aims to explore the challenges that the teachers in a Vietnamese university have faced with in the role of language assessors in their outcome-based English courses. In order to fulfil this aim, the study employs Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015) as the theoretical framework and narratives as a data collection tool. It is revealed from the three selected teachers' narratives about their personal and professional background, the experienced reality in their assessment work that their challenges are related to inadequate assessment literacy, lack of shared knowledge and unclear assessment identity, inadequate professional training and discussions. In light of the theoretical framework (i.e., Activity Theory), these challenges result from the tensions between the subject and the rules, between the mediating artifacts and the rules, and within the division of labor. With such findings, the study is expected to raise the teachers' and the educational managers' awareness of the contextual conditions for better teacher assessment competence and the assessment quality in the current education reform context. Accordingly, the study proposes a framework of college English teacher professional development.

Key words: teachers as assessors, challenges, teacher professional development

1. Introduction

There has been an increasing concern about teachers' roles as well as teacher identity in recent years (Beijaard, Merjer & Verloop, 2003; Day, Kington, Stobart & Sammons, 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2010). Besides the teaching and facilitating role, teachers have been attached to other certain roles such as developing courses (Shawer, Gilmore & Banks-Joseph, 2009; Shawer, 2010a; Shawer, 2010b; Shawer, 2017; Zeegers, 2012) and assessing learners (Adie, Stobart & Cumming, 2013; Looney, Cumming, Kleij & Harris, 2017; Mogashoa, 2013). Moreover, many of the authors and

scholars focus on defining the role of teachers as assessors or teacher assessment identity and examining the factors affecting teacher assessment identity (e.g., Beijaard et al., 2003; Day et al., 2006; Pryor & Crossouard, 2010; Xu & Brown, 2016) while the challenges teachers face with in such a role and the resolutions to those challenges have not been received much attention.

In Vietnam, testing and assessment, especially assessment as part of outcome-based courses, has addressed more concern. Simultaneously, research in testing and assessment has been increased. However,

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** Corresponding author.

Email address: chinguyen@vnu.edu.vn

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much of the research has been on standardized tests (Bui, Nguyen, & Nguyen, 2021; Carr, Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Thai & Nguyen, 2016; Dunlea, Spiby, Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Thai & Bui, 2018; Nguyen, Nguyen, Tran, Nguyen, Bui, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2020), assessment tools with an aim of improving learners' competence (Hoang, Nguyen & Duong, 2016; Ngo, 2019; Nguyen, 2019), or challenges for language assessors in standardized tests (Nguyen, Tran, Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen, Nguyen & Bui, 2019; Thai, 2019). Some other studies have focused on developing teacher-trainees' assessment competence before they start their teaching career (Duong, Nguyen & Pham, 2017a; Duong, Nguyen & Pham, 2017b) or developing in-service school teachers (Nguyen, 2020). It can be seen that little research has been conducted on teachers as language assessors in classroom as well as the challenges they may face with while performing that role.

Therefore, this study aims to explore what challenges teachers as classroom assessors face with and how they overcome the challenges in the hope for a better understanding of the teachers' situations. In order to fulfil these aims, the study focuses on the following questions:

- 1.1. What do the targeted teachers in this study do in the role of English language assessors?
- 1.2. What challenges do the teachers encounter in the role of English language assessors?
- 1.3. What do the teachers as English language assessors do to overcome the challenges?

It is noted that the focus of the study was on English language teachers' challenges in the role of assessor in the outcome-based English courses. The challenges other than those related to assessment in such courses can be

mentioned but not concentrated as the findings of the studies. Moreover, research question 1 aims to investigate the activities or tasks the teachers fulfil as well as the actions the teachers may take to facilitate their role of English language assessors. Research question 3 does not aim to get the teachers' recommendations for solving teachers-as-assessors' difficulties but explores what they themselves do to tackle their challenges. All in all, answers to the three research questions are expected to reveal the landscape of teachers working in the role of assessor, thereby proposing recommendations relevant to their current situations.

2. Literature Review

2.1. *The role of Assessor in a Teacher's Job*

As aforementioned, a teacher's roles other than teaching and facilitating students have drawn more attention from the scholars and researchers, especially the role of assessor. Assessment is understood as "the process of collecting information that is used to make decisions" (Bachman & Palmer, 2010, p. 2). Sharing the same view with these authors, McMillan (2014) emphasizes it is "the reason for the assessment" (i.e., to diagnose students' strengths and weaknesses, to monitor students' progress toward achieving objectives, to assign grades, to determine instructional effectiveness, to provide students feedback, to prepare students for high-stakes tests, or to motivate students) that determines "what the assessment should look like". In other words, assessment can be conducted in various forms, including tests, to collect information for a specific purpose. Accordingly, playing the role of an assessor, teachers are expected to fulfil any activity or task during this process, such as designing assessment tools, marking, interpreting the results, and giving feedback (Zhang & Burry-Stock, 2003).

Importantly, effective teachers-as-

assessors are those who are well aware of what, how, and why they are making use of assessment practices (Stanford & Reeves, 2005). It is necessary to note that teachers' assessment competence is significant to ensure the quality of the assessment practice (Looney et al., 2017, p. 1), hence quality of the instruction and learning (Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019, p. 374). Therefore, it is recommended that the role of assessor go beyond what has been established. That is the reason why many authors have recently put more emphasis on clarifying assessment literacy as an influencing factor that possibly determines teachers' assessment decisions. A study conducted by Ölmezer-Öztürk and Aydın (2019) in Turkey to explore voices from English language teachers related to their assessment work reveals that a number of teachers felt they could not assess students' ability efficiently because they lacked essential knowledge (p. 381). Such a difficulty is also witnessed by teachers in Korean schools which experienced an innovation in assessment practices. It is reviewed by Namgung, Moate, and Ruohotie-Lyhty (2021) that "the

Table 1

Assessment Literacy (Nguyen, 2021)

Dimension	Components
Conceptual knowledge dimension	knowledge of what assessment is, why assessment is conducted, and what needs to be assessed
Praxeological dimension	knowledge and skills of assessing tools, assessment quality assurance, assessment result analysis and interpretation, assessment-based feedback
Socio-emotional dimension	awareness of the role as an assessor, effective cooperation with colleagues as assessors, awareness of ethical aspects and impacts of assessment work
Contextual dimension	awareness of norms, institutional regulations, national policies, and classroom-based contexts

Noteworthy, although assessment literacy is significant, it is not the only factor that exerts an impact on teachers' assessment decisions or assessment quality. It is how they feel or how confident they are in the role of assessor that also leads them to

discrepancy between the assessment orientation directed by the new national curriculum and conventional assessment characterized by standardization and performativity appears to confuse Korean secondary English teachers when implementing actual classroom-based assessment" (p. 50). To put it differently, the differences between the required knowledge of assessment and teachers' regular practices challenged them in their work.

This view is in line with that of many other authors (e.g., Adie et al., 2013; Mogashoa, 2013; Nguyen, 2020; Stiggins, 1999); however, the authors do not only stress on the need of assessment knowledge but any element of assessment literacy. As reviewed by Nguyen (2021), definitions of assessment literacy vary, but it is agreed to be a multiple-dimensional concept, involving both knowledge and skills that facilitate the assessment work in a specific context. Particularly, assessment literacy has four interrelated dimensions shown in Table 1.

a satisfying or unsatisfying decision (Looney et al., 2017). The authors propose all of these dimensions build up a teacher's assessment identity which interacts with the broader social conditions in which they are situated. In other words, a teacher's assessment

identity can influence how they perceive the given knowledge and practices, and in turn, it can be affected by what they experience in specific contexts.

It is evident from this view that whether teachers can clearly define their assessment identity may result in difficulties in performing their assessment work. Such difficulties are proved through a qualitative case study by Nguyen (2020) in which the teacher participants majorly defined them as teachers who attempted to finish the task of developing a new course. Even though assessment was part of their task, they did not strive to resolve the related problems; instead, they resorted to an easier way of assessing students to reduce the burden to the teachers (pp. 520-524). Pryor and Crossouard (2008, as cited in Looney et al., 2017) postulate that:

The different identities of the educator as assessor, teacher, subject expert and learner all involve different divisions of labor and rules shaping their interaction with students. The educator, therefore, teaches different definitions of themselves to the students and develops different relations with the students through them... (p. 4)

These interwoven versions of

teachers may cause them to face “significant dilemmas in their assessment practices, sometimes torn between their role as facilitator and monitor of language development and that of assessor and judge of language performance and achievement” (Looney et al., 2017, p. 4). Xu and Brown (2016) share the same view with these authors; they even add:

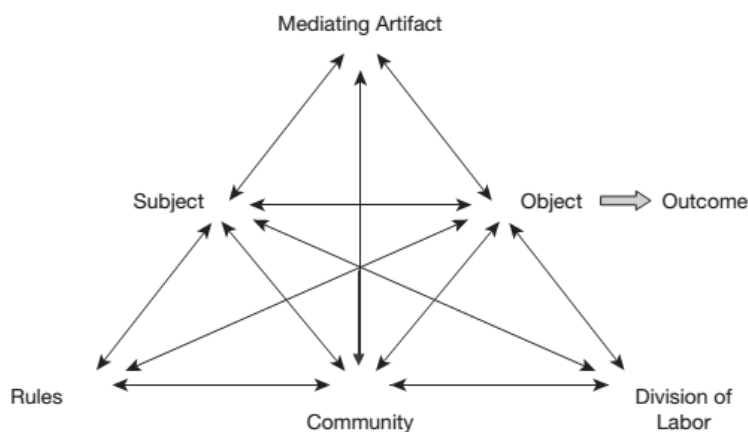
Identity construction can play a powerful role in provoking teachers’ thinking, promoting dialogues and shared meaning, and shaping their professional judgments. (p. 158)

2.2. Activity Theory

Activity theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), an extension of Vygotsky’s framework, has been employed in a large number of studies that seek to investigate the participants’ activities in a relationship with their social resources, involving their historical background, existing experiences, surrounding communities, and the tools they use to interact with the outside world (e.g., Dang, 2013; Hashim & Hoover, 2017; Hashim & Jones, 2007; Tsui & Law, 2007; Yamagata-Lynch & Haudenschild, 2009). Figure 1 portrays the six components of Activity Theory and the relationship among the components.

Figure 1

Human Activity System (Engeström, 1987, 2015)



In the upper triangle, “subject” refers to an individual or a group that carries out an activity which is driven by the “object” with the help of “mediating artifact”. The base area represents the social and cultural context that is likely to facilitate or inhibit the activity. Specifically, a community indicates one or more groups who share the same object and possibly regulate the subject’s performance. Division of labor refers to the roles of the subject as well as the subject’s relationship with the other stakeholders. Rules are defined as the explicit and implicit regulations, norms, and conventions that have controlling influences on the activity system. The highlighted feature of Activity Theory is its components do not bear a linear relationship but interact with each other during the course of transforming the raw object into a culturally more advanced object, in other words, the expected outcome of the activity. In this sense, contradictions or tensions within and between the components of the activity system are significant as sources of changes and development. Engeström (2001) explains:

As the contradictions of an activity system are aggravated, some individual participants begin to question and deviate from its established norms. In some cases, this escalates into collaborative envisioning and a deliberate collective change effort. (p.137)

It is indicated from the quote that when the contradictions or tensions are recognized, there is a likelihood of them being resolved. Equally importantly, when there is an appropriate and timely response to the contradictions or tensions, there is a likelihood that the subject of the activity system (that is the teachers in this study) is transformed into a higher developmental level.

Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), therefore, fits the purpose of the

present study, which examines the challenges teachers as assessors encounter in their assessment work. Moreover, it is likely to help conceptualize a professional development framework that involves both personal and sociocultural contexts. How this framework is used for the present study will be presented in the section of data collection and analysis method.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. The Cases

The present study adopted a qualitative case study approach in which three cases were selected from two different English faculties. Although these teachers come from different faculties, they are all in charge of teaching students in outcome-based courses in which students are required to reach a certain level before they graduate from their program. Students are required to take periodical tests organized by the teachers in their divisions and an English proficiency test delivered by a specialized within-university institution as an outcome requirement of their program. Periodical tests refer to online progress tests (in Faculty A), mid-term tests and end-of-term tests (in both Faculty A and Faculty B). Specifically, non-major English students are required to reach level 3 (B1) or level 4 (B2) of English proficiency according to their learning programs while major English students are required to reach level 5 (C1) when finishing their academic years. Besides the outcome of English proficiency, students are required to master a number of soft skills (e.g., teamwork skills, time management skills, and presentation skills) for future study and work.

Teacher 1 has been working in the faculty in charge of teaching non-major English students (Faculty A) of the university for eighteen years. She holds a master degree in English teaching pedagogy, and little training on testing and assessment was provided during her teacher education

program. During the time as an in-service teacher, she has attended several training sessions on testing and assessment organized by the faculty and the university. Teacher 1 is married with two children, one in secondary school and the other in primary school. Apart from the period of an official leave for health improvement, she has participated enthusiastically in the tasks she has been assigned in Faculty A and in the university.

Teacher 2 has been working in the same faculty with Teacher 1 for thirteen years, and she is an academic administrator of a division in the faculty. She holds a master's degree in English teaching pedagogy, and little training on testing and assessment was provided during her teacher education program. Apart from teaching English to non-major students, Teacher 2 has also been in charge of a course of study skills which prepares soft skills for students to learn successfully in the university. Moreover, she worked as an examiner for young English learners and has been a part-time academic officer in an educational joint stock company. Teacher 2 is also married with two children, one in primary school and one in kindergarten. Although she is busy with her family, she has not let family-related matters interfere her work.

Teacher 3 has been working in the faculty in charge of teaching major English students (Faculty B) for six years. He is a single male teacher who holds a master's degree in English education. His master's program included introductory modules on testing and assessment. He has also attended several training sessions in this field in the university where he has been working. He is a devoted teacher who has participated in a variety of workshops in which he has trained secondary and high school teachers how to use new textbooks and how to apply new teaching techniques.

According to Engeström (1987,

2015), the author of Activity Theory used in the present study, the relationship between individuals' development and their social resources, involving their historical background, existing experiences, surrounding communities, and the tools they use to interact with the outside world possibly exerts an influence on their learning, development, and resolutions to the challenges they have to face with. Moreover, this is an exploratory case study which aims to examine the challenges of the teachers in a variety of contexts. It is agreed that years of teaching experience or the academic year that a teacher is in charge of is part of a context, but other contextual factors can also be taken into consideration. Those were the reasons why three cases with different backgrounds (i.e., male versus female, married versus single, staff versus division's leader, programs for non-major English students versus for major English students, more experienced versus less experienced) were selected for the study.

This idea of selecting cases follows Stake (1995) who emphasizes the importance of "balance", "variety", and "opportunities to learn" about the cases. He states:

It may be useful to try to select cases which are typical or representative of other cases, but a sample of one or a sample of just a few is unlikely to be a strong representation of others... Even for collective case studies, selection by sampling of attributes should not be the highest priority. Balance and variety are important; opportunities to learn are of primary importance (pp. 4-5).

3.2. Data Collection and Analysis Method

The data consisted of written narratives and oral narratives (either in English or Vietnamese) as introduced by Barkhuizen, Benson, and Chik (2014). The selected teachers were informed that their

narratives about their background, interests, conditions, and assessment experiences would be used as the research data. In order to keep them focused on the objectives of the study, a set of guiding questions for both of their written and oral narratives was provided (Barkhuizen et al., 2014, p. 44). Importantly, Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015) was adopted as the framework for data collection and analysis, so the guiding questions were built upon the six components of Activity Theory (i.e., subject,

object, mediating artifacts, community, division of labor, and rules). Moreover, so as to keep the teachers staying away from answering the guiding questions one by one, the teachers were noticed that they did not need to provide the answer to a question at a time and that they could tell a story about the given topics in the time order or upon their feelings for the relevant events. Table 2 briefly summarizes the data collection procedure in the present study.

Table 2

Data Collection Procedure

Method	Aim & Guiding questions	Time
Written narrative – part 1	To get to know about teachers’ personal life, academic background and interests, as well as personal and institutional conditions.	The teachers were provided with a set of guiding questions and wrote their narratives within two months. It was known that the teachers were quite busy with various tasks, and two months was expected to be enough for them to provide stories as detailed as possible.
Written narrative – part 2	To investigate what teachers knew or believed about assessment and where that knowledge or belief came from, what they experienced in the role of assessor, their challenges and what they did to overcome the challenges.	
Oral narrative	To collect further information for interpretation about the teachers’ challenges and the related issues. Some guiding questions for written narratives were repeated for oral narratives in case the teachers’ written narratives were unclear. Other guiding questions for oral narratives were generated based on the contents of written narratives.	The teachers were contacted for interview arrangements at least two weeks after they sent the written narratives back. An initial analysis of teachers’ written narratives was made before the oral narratives. The oral narrative was conducted once for more than 90 minutes with each teacher. Further questions were sent afterwards via email or Zalo for information to be added or clarified.

The data analysis and interpretation went through a number of steps: (1) transcribing the oral narratives; (2) coding (both written and oral narratives); (3) inducing themes (pre-determined and emerged themes) as postulated by Duff (2008).

As the data analysis and

interpretation were guided by Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), the data of this study were coded on the basis of the activity components (i.e., subject, object, mediating artifacts, community, division of labor, and rules). Specifically, the coding categories were generated as in Table 3, with reference to the categories presented in Nguyen (2020).

Table 3

Coding Categories (Adapted From Nguyen, 2020)

Components of an activity	Definition from an activity theory perspective	Categories from the data set of the present study
Subject	Refers to persons or a group with agency, acting toward the object	The teachers undertaking the assessment work: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - their language assessment literacy - their experiences as assessors for multiple purposes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - major(s) in their career path
Object	Drives the subject’s activity, derived from the motive to achieve an outcome	Raw object: the finished assessment work
Mediating artifacts	Refers to the tools that mediate the subject’s actions towards the object	The tools and artifacts the teacher could use, including reference materials, language assessment literacy, experiences in assessment work, collegial talks, and trainings
Community	Refers to the communities in which the subject is involved and which may regulate the subject’s performance	The community includes their students, colleagues, trainers, and managers
Division of labor	Refers to the role the subject takes within the activity as well as the work relationships	Their roles as teachers and assessors
Rules	Refers to the explicit and implicit rules that regulate the activity	Within this context, rules include professional rules (expectations for the teachers in their roles), organizational rules (the regulations and incentives given by the faculty/ university), collaborative rules (the ways the teachers cooperate with each other/ their colleagues), the nature of the assessment work

Table 4 presents an example of coding results on the basis of the coding

categories mentioned above.

Table 4

Coding Example 1

Excerpt	Keyword/ phrase	Category	Activity component
We have been assigned to write test items, but we lack essential knowledge and skills to actually write good	assigned to write test items	organizational rules (i.e., what the teacher needs to do in their role)	rules
	lack essential	language assessment	subject

test items. How can we really compose a completely new text? What we have done is to compile what is available here and there as long as students cannot find the sources. (Excerpt 4)	knowledge and skills to actually write good test items	literacy (i.e., praxeological dimension)
	compile what is available ... as long as students cannot find the sources	reference materials (i.e., mediating artifacts used in the test papers) finished assessment work raw object

After the data were coded following the activity components and the categories presented in Table 3, the contradictions

within and between the components were identified, as an example in Table 5.

Table 5

Coding Example 2

Contradiction	Definition	Evidence	Resolution
subject – rules	lack of language assessment literacy vs. fulfilment of a task under organizational rules	We have been assigned to write test items, but we lack essential knowledge and skills to actually write good test items. How can we really compose a completely new text? What we have done is to compile what is available here and there as long as students cannot find the sources. (Excerpt 4)	<i>mediating artifacts</i> were involved in the resolution to the contradiction between <i>subject</i> and <i>rules</i> , but it just resulted in <i>the raw object</i> (i.e., the assigned assessment work was finished) instead of improving language assessment literacy for the assessor’s role fulfilment. In other words, <i>the challenge was not resolved by means of mediating artifacts</i> .

4. Research Findings and Discussion

4.1. Teachers as English Language Assessors

Three teacher participants have been working in a Vietnamese university and assigned to do the tasks for assessment since they started working in their faculties. These teachers have been arranged to rate the students’ speaking performances and writing papers. Except for Teacher 1, Teachers 2 and

3 are to mark the assignments or projects that students work on during the courses. Besides rating various classroom performances and test papers, the teacher participants have been assigned to write items for certain tests as well as review the items written by the other teachers.

Table 6 summarizes the tasks that the teacher participants have experienced in the role of English language assessors.

Table 6

Teachers’ Tasks in the Role of Assessor

Tasks	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
Marking online progress tests	✓	✓	
Marking speaking tests (end-of-term tests)	✓	✓	✓
Marking writing tests (both mid-term and end-of-term tests)	✓	✓	✓

Marking assignments/ projects		✓	✓
Giving feedback to students (on progress tests)	✓	✓	✓
Giving feedback to students (on writing portfolios, presentations, project-based assignments)		✓	✓
Writing/ Compiling test items	✓	✓	✓ (seldomly)
Reviewing test items	✓	✓	✓ (seldomly)

The findings are in line with the idea of expected activities for an assessor, which is pointed out by Zhang and Burry-Stock (2003). The findings are not new but confirm an expectation for teachers in this role. The noted thing is that the tasks (Table 6) are compulsory for all teachers working in any faculty of the university even at the very early stage of their career. Teacher 1, the oldest among the teacher participants, said:

... I started working in the role of assessor in 2003, but I had no basic knowledge about testing and assessment then... What I did then to accomplish the role was to imitate what other teachers were doing... (Excerpt 1)

Teacher 3, the youngest among the teacher participants, also said:

I started performing the tasks for assessment when I started my teaching career... and there were a variety of tasks to fulfil. (Excerpt 2)

Meanwhile, as reviewed in the literature, assessment competence is indispensable and it goes beyond conceptual knowledge in the field (Looney et al., 2017; Namgung et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2021; Ölmezer-Öztürk & Aydın, 2019). This scenario poses a question whether teacher participants have adequate expertise to fulfil the tasks.

Another noted thing is that since they started taking the role of assessor, the teacher participants did not initiatively take any actions to better their performance in

that role except for the shared experience or the given training. This leads to another question whether they are well aware of what they need to do for such a role. Further information and discussion relating to these emerging questions will be presented in the next sections.

4.2. Challenges in the Role of English Language Assessor

4.2.1. Inadequate Assessment Literacy

Two out of three teacher participants, Teachers 1 and 2, admitted that they had no official background knowledge of testing and assessment when they started their teaching career. They explained that their teacher education program mainly focused on teaching pedagogy; testing and assessment was just a short module within a course. This was the reason why they always found tasks for assessment challenging. Even though they followed the practices of the teachers with more years of teaching experience they still felt unconfident in accomplishing these tasks. Unlike the other two teachers, Teacher 3, the youngest one, was offered an official course on this field in his teacher education program. However, he was officially taught about basic concepts, and for him, although these concepts facilitated him to work in the role of assessor, they are not enough to help him be confident in the role. He said:

Most of the content about testing and assessment in my undergraduate and

graduate programs seemed to be superficial, which did not much impress me... It was until I was officially trained by the specialized within-university institution, it was clearer to me as an assessor. (Excerpt 3)

Actually, the teachers were required to take the role of assessors as part of their teaching job, and they performed to the best of their knowledge and practical experience shared by their colleagues. Being put into the framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), this scenario revealed a conflict between the teachers' language assessment literacy (Nguyen, 2021) and the institutional expectations for teachers in the role of assessor (i.e., professional rules). To be specific, while the teachers' language assessment literacy was limited, they were expected to do different tasks for assessment such as rating students' productive skills, writing and/ or reviewing the periodical tests. This conflict undoubtedly resulted in challenges for teachers as assessors.

Although these teachers received certain on-job training in the field, they still found it hard to accomplish the tasks owing to inadequate assessment literacy. Teacher 1 admitted:

We have been assigned to write test items, but we lack essential knowledge and skills to actually write good test items. How can we really compose a completely new text? What we have done is to compile what is available here and there as long as students cannot find the sources. (Excerpt 4)

She added that even though she learned certain knowledge and skills after attending some training courses as well as working with the colleagues specialized in the field, she did not have the capacity to perform the task of test item writing in an expected way. Teachers 2 and 3, in contrast, seemed to be more confident in applying

what they learned; however, Teacher 2 expressed her dissatisfaction with her colleagues' performance. She said:

... The test quality is not very high. It is somehow tiring to review and revise such tests... I am responsible for the final stage before the tests are delivered; I have no choice but stand the current situation. (Excerpt 5)

The study findings are consistent with those of the previous scholars and researchers (e.g., Adie et al., 2013; Mogashoa, 2013; Namgung et al., 2021; Nguyen, 2020; Stiggins, 1999) that the lack of assessment literacy is likely to challenge teachers in the role of assessor. Although the present study does not feature all four dimensions of assessment literacy (i.e., conceptual knowledge dimension, praxeological dimension, socio-emotional dimension, and contextual dimension) as mentioned by these authors, it indicates that even the inadequacy of one dimension of language assessment literacy is likely to cause challenges.

4.2.2. Lack of Shared Knowledge and Unclear Assessment Identity

All of the teacher participants were aware of the necessity of being fair when rating students' performances. They claimed that assessors need "to ensure to give fair judgement to students, but it is a complex story" (Teacher 1), "to be trained to rate consistently and fairly (Teacher 2), and "to be aware of how subjective we [assessors] might be in giving marks" (Teacher 3). However, they found rating a challenging task due to the inconsistent interpretation of the rating scales, which was visible to both faculties. Teacher 1 revealed:

Before 2015, we did holistic ratings based on our own judgement... We did not have any competence framework to base on... Then although we utilized analytical rating

scales, we still resorted to our holistic judgement to make the final decisions... We were not quite confident because the rating scales had not been explicitly explained... (Excerpt 6)

Teacher 2 shared the same idea, saying: "Periodical tests were not properly and professionally administrated." The situation was quite the same in Teacher 3's faculty where its divisions built up different rating scales to assess their students' speaking and writing performances. Teacher 3 said:

... In the rating scales used for the English test of proficiency [as an outcome requirement], there is a criterion that is different from that in the rating scales used in the faculty... This difference confuses me as a rater... Or specifically in speaking rating scales appears a phrase "attempt to use academic words and phrases". This is for assessing the speaking competence of first-year students who aim at B1 level, but it requires students to have competence in using academic words. Such a phrase in rating scales also confuses me. (Excerpt 7)

He added even though the raters had a certain discussion on giving marks to difficultly-marked cases, the marks were sometimes given just as a compromise between the raters. In other words, the raters might not be quite sure whether they really shared the same understanding of the rating scales or whether the marks really reflected the students' competence.

This scenario might be due to the fact that the teachers put more focus on their teaching role, considering the role of the assessor as a supplement to the teaching work. Evidently, the teachers explained how both classroom and standardized assessment assisted them in teaching and giving

feedback to students. To put it differently, the more focus the teachers put on their role of teacher, the more quickly they might make decisions in the role of assessor. The role of the teacher might cause a challenge to the role of the assessor in another sense that the teachers' assessing decisions could be affected in the periodical tests of competence owing to their previous knowledge about the students. Teacher 3 said:

The tests administered for classes I am teaching are on a small scale. I mean I already know the students who take the tests... The majority of students in one class are somewhat at the same proficiency level... This leads me to giving a restricted range of scores to the students. (Excerpt 8)

The present findings are in line with the view by Looney et al., (2017) and Xu and Brown (2016) that different roles of a teacher may be interwoven at a time, which may lead the teacher to facing difficulties in making decisions on judgement as well as assessment-related learning. For the teachers in the present study, it is evident that they encountered difficulties in understanding the rating scales constructed and used in their faculty as well as in making assessment decisions in reference to their knowledge of the students' abilities in class. Being put in the framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), these challenges resulted from the contradictions within the division of labor.

4.2.3. Inadequate Professional Training and Discussions

The teachers revealed that some training courses on English language raters were officially organized by an institution specialized in the field. What they practiced in and after the courses built up their conceptual knowledge as well as skills of assessing students and using the assessment results for teaching and consulting purposes.

For instance, Teacher 1 repeatedly shared how beneficial the training was to her:

At the beginning of innovation in testing and assessment, I met difficulties in following the new approach as the training was so short and segmented... It was until I attended the training by the specialized within-university institution and officially approached the academic knowledge in the field, I could reflect what I had experienced as an assessor and had a clearer mind about what I needed to do... When I practice rating frequently, I can be consistent in my ratings. (Excerpt 9)

In other words, the conceptual knowledge dimension and the praxeological dimension of their assessment literacy, according to Nguyen's (2021) categories, were enhanced while they were taking the role of raters. However, not all of the training was effective; one example of ineffective one was given by Faculty A on how to review and revise test items. Teacher 1 revealed:

... The training was too short, just one day. It was not enough to address all of the problems that we had faced... Another training by one so-called expert did not give us any benefits as whatever we asked, she could not give any clear suggestions but asked us to carry out a piloting... It was not practical in our context. (Excerpt 10)

It is shown from the excerpt that teachers wished to have more practical training which should have been long enough to help them tackle the problems. Teacher 1 also admitted that there were no further discussions on what they were trained and that the teachers' practices in Faculty A were unchanged after the training. This scenario indicated a shortage of

professional follow-ups after the training in Faculty A, which was apparently similar in Faculty B where Teacher 3 worked. He said:

When rating students' performances, I met difficulties in giving marks to the students who do not show the competence completely at one level... However, because of the time limit, I could not have a chance to share and consult my colleagues about those cases. (Excerpt 11)

It is indicated from the case of Teacher 3 that if the university or the faculties does not initially plan professional discussions, the teachers could hardly find an opportunity to share their observations and the ways to address the problems emerging from their assessment practices. In this case, the organizational rules both facilitated and inhibited the resolution to the teachers' challenges. Additionally, the teachers did not seem to actively seek help from their colleagues. They talked to their colleagues about the problems as a means of sharing without a desire to address the challenges. This revealed unclear collaborative rules among the teachers as assessors; they mostly performed their tasks for assessment individually rather than form a close-knit community to deal with them.

Similarly, Teacher 2 shared her experiences with two communities of practice in the field, both of which were out of her faculty. She was dissatisfied with the community of young learner assessors on account that no professional discussions were arranged among the assessors; all of them worked individually to assess the learners based on the given guidelines.

I was not very satisfied... Even though we needed to go through a regular assessment by senior assessors to ensure that we had the capacity to rate young learners, the raters worked individually all the time without any interaction... No

feedback was given... I felt alone in the community. (Excerpt 12)

Meanwhile, Teacher 2 was quite happy to work with the community of adult learner assessors in which she could regularly discuss with the other assessors about her views as well as her products. Those discussions were so meaningful to her as she could learn from the working community. She added:

... The discussions occur regularly, which prevents me from forgetting professional knowledge in the field... The training I attended was conducted long ago; the information given in the training was so general and the training was so short... So up to now, I have been learning continuously through those discussions... Unfortunately, I do not have such a community within my faculty. Meanwhile, I need to make important decisions as an academic administrator. (Excerpt 13)

As shown from the cases of Teachers 2 and 3, professional discussions are likely to facilitate the teachers' work and learning; in other words, lacking those discussions might lead to certain challenges while they perform the tasks for assessment. Being put into the framework of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), this scenario revealed a conflict between the mediating tools the teachers could use (i.e., mediating artifacts) and the regulations given by the faculty/ university (i.e., organizational rules). Specifically, even though the faculty or the university provided training opportunities for the teachers, what they really needed to facilitate their work might still be missed.

4.3. Resolutions to Teachers-As-Assessors' Challenges

It is revealed from the teachers' narratives that they considered professional

training and discussions as well as regular practices in the field to be resolutions to their challenges in the role of assessor (Excerpts 9, 10, 11 and 13). However, none of them read extra materials in the field of testing and assessment. It cannot be said for sure whether or not they were really aware of what they needed to do to overcome the challenges, but it seemed that they relied on the external tools more than doing something about it by themselves.

As mentioned in Section 4.2.1., the teacher participants met the challenges caused by the conflict between teachers' assessment literacy and the institutional expectations for teachers in the role of assessor. By attending the training given by their institution (i.e., their faculty and the university – Excerpt 9), the challenges were partially resolved. However, the challenges were not completely resolved because the training, to a certain extent, did not meet the teachers' needs (Excerpts 10, 13) and there seemed to be a shortage of professional follow-ups after the training (Excerpts 11, 12). To put it differently, even though the teachers were experiencing favorable organizational rules (i.e., the provided training opportunities or the faculty managers' attempt to address the teachers' needs) the needs were not critically analyzed to be satisfied. In this case, the contradiction between the teachers' language assessment literacy and the organizational rules was not resolved. It is indicated that even the teachers sought help, their challenges might not be resolved when their needs were not well communicated with the managers. This finding would expectedly raise the awareness of both teachers and managers about what and how they should discuss the unresolved issues.

Regarding other challenges mentioned in Section 4.2.2., even though the teacher participants clearly recognized them, they were also not resolved as the teachers did not seek help from any resources, either

the field experts or the professional materials. Instead, they “did as the colleagues who had more frequent practices had done” despite knowing that “they might not professionally learn or understand about testing and assessment” (Teacher 1). Teacher 3, the youngest teacher participant, confessed that he “knew something should be done about that” but he “had not done anything specifically to solve the problem”. In other words, external mediating tools could only be part of the resolution, and it is the teachers themselves who were expected to pro-actively address their own challenges.

Additionally, these challenges could hardly be resolved when the teachers did not clearly separate these two roles in different assessment events. It seemed that they just really played the role of assessor when they acted as the raters in the standardized tests in which they “did not know or did not need to care where the test takers came from or what program they had finished” (Teacher 3). However, in an outcome-based English program, the periodical tests were also considered as tools to assess students’ competence at different periods of time. That the teachers could not do as professionally as in the standardized tests, the assessment results could be affected to a certain extent.

It is shown in Figure 1 that the components (i.e., personal factors – the subject, mediating tools, social-material factors – the communities and the rules that govern them) of an activity system dynamically interact with each other (Engeström, 1987, 2015). It is believed that the way these components interact can cause tensions and can also resolve the tensions. The present study reveals the interaction of different components in the activity of assessing learners and developing assessment tools, which resulted in the challenges for teachers in the role of assessor (Section 4.2). Even though certain components (i.e., organizational rules, training courses as a mediating means, a

community of teachers working in the field of testing and assessment) of the activity involved in resolving these challenges, the resolution was not much effective, possibly because of lacking the interaction between the internal factors (i.e., actions taken by the teacher participants themselves) and the external factors (i.e., conditions or opportunities given by the faculty or the institution).

5. Implication and Conclusion

The present paper reports the tasks the teacher participants do as assessors within the outcome-based English courses they are in charge of, the challenges they encounter when doing those tasks, and what they do to resolve the challenges. It is shown in the data that the challenges are more related to the rating task and that they do not seem to actively take action to overcome their challenges.

In light of Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015), these challenges result from the conflict between the different roles the teachers take (i.e., conflict within the division of labor), between the tools teachers could use and how the tools were provided by the institution (i.e., the conflict between mediating artifacts and rules) between teachers’ language assessment literacy and different aspects of rules (i.e., the conflict between the subject and the rules). The analysis of these conflicts reveals the relational aspects that help resolve the teachers’ challenges.

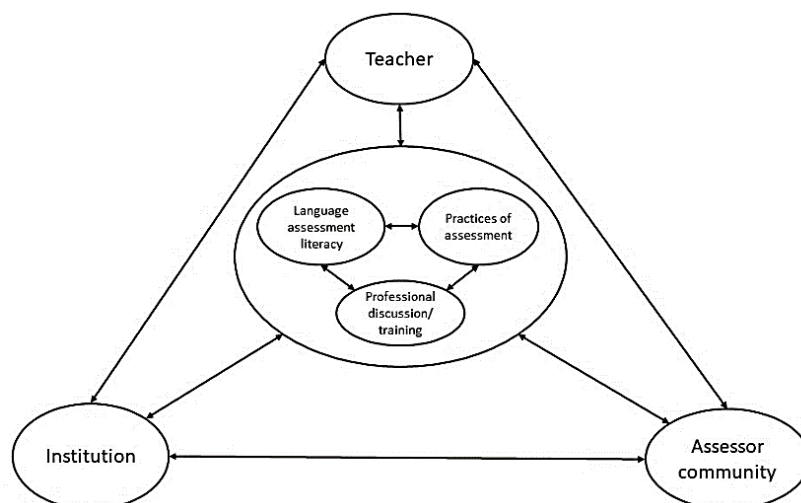
Specifically, the study findings indicate that one activity component (i.e., subject, mediating artifacts, community, division of labor, or rules) sometimes cannot help to resolve teachers’ challenges, but the interaction within or between the components works. It is also revealed from the findings that individual teachers, their institution, and the available assessor community are likely to exert an influence on each other and that all of these

stakeholders have a role to play for the improvement of language assessment literacy, practices of assessment, and professional discussions or training. As a result, a professional framework for teachers as assessors involving these aspects (i.e.,

teacher, institution, assessor community, language assessment literacy, practices of assessment, and professional discussion/training) is proposed and illustrated in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Proposed Professional Framework for Teachers as Assessors



The framework suggests that the individual teacher, the assessor community, and the institution have a role to play in the process of developing teacher assessment competence and that these stakeholders exert reciprocal influences. Particularly, when the teacher's competence develops, he is likely to make a positive contribution to the assessor community and his institution. In turn, when the institution refines the rules that possibly facilitate teacher professional development, both the individual teacher and the assessor community take the advantages. Also, the more professionally developed the assessor community become, the more it facilitates the development of the individual teacher and ensures the assessment quality in the institution. Additionally, the findings of the present study reveal the necessities that foster teacher professional development of assessment competence, including language assessment literacy, practices of assessment, and professional discussions or training. The

relationship among these components should not be linear, but in a cycle in which one can promote the other. To be more specific, without knowledge of testing and assessment and an understanding of the social context in which the language assessment is implemented (i.e., language assessment literacy), teachers may not have proper practices. Nonetheless, without practical experiences, teachers may encounter difficulties in comprehending the conceptual knowledge, hence difficulties in applying the knowledge in different situations. Professional discussions and/ or training can serve as a mediating tool in case the individual teacher cannot figure out the emerging problems on his own, but how this tool is effective also depends on what knowledge the teacher possesses, how he interprets the knowledge as well as how much he practices assessing students.

On the one hand, the proposed framework resembles Activity Theory (Engeström, 1987, 2015) in that it illustrates

the reciprocal relationship among the elements and that it involves all six components of Activity Theory. Rules and division of labor are incorporated both in the elements of institution and assessor community in the proposed framework. On the other hand, the proposed framework is valuable in that it illustrates the relationship among a number of essential mediating tools for teacher professional development (i.e., the inner circle). The quality of teacher professional development is believed to improve once that relationship is promoted.

In conclusion, the study presents the challenges of teachers as language assessors, thereby proposing a framework for teacher-as-assessor professional development. It is expected to provide both theoretical and practical contributions to teacher professional development generally in the context of educational reform and specifically in the university where the study was conducted.

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THÁCH THỨC ĐỐI VỚI GIÁO VIÊN TIẾNG ANH BẬC ĐẠI HỌC VỚI VAI TRÒ LÀ NGƯỜI ĐÁNH GIÁ*

Nguyễn Thị Chi

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

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu những thách thức hay vướng mắc của giáo viên tiếng Anh đang công tác tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam với vai trò là người đánh giá trong khóa học tiếng Anh hướng theo chuẩn năng lực đầu ra. Để thực hiện mục đích này, nghiên cứu sử dụng thuyết hoạt động (Activity Theory, Engeström, 1987, 2015) làm khung lý thuyết và câu chuyện của giáo viên làm dữ liệu nghiên cứu. Dữ liệu từ câu chuyện của ba giáo viên được lựa chọn về cuộc sống cá nhân và công việc cũng như những trải nghiệm thực tế của họ trong công tác đánh giá cho thấy những thách thức mà các giáo viên này gặp phải liên quan đến việc thiếu kiến thức kỹ năng trong lĩnh vực kiểm tra đánh giá, thiếu kiến thức chung khi thực hiện các nhiệm vụ kiểm tra đánh giá, và thiếu cơ hội học tập, thảo luận về vấn đề này. Dựa theo khung lý thuyết được lựa chọn cho nghiên cứu này, giáo viên gặp phải các thách thức trên là do sự tương tác giữa chủ thể của hoạt động với các quy tắc, giữa các công cụ hỗ trợ chủ thể hoạt động với các quy tắc, và sự tương tác nội tại trong sự phân công lao động. Hi vọng rằng những kết quả nghiên cứu này sẽ giúp bản thân giáo viên cũng như các nhà quản lý ý thức được các điều kiện đảm bảo năng lực đánh giá của giáo viên và chất lượng đánh giá trong bối cảnh cải cách giáo dục hiện nay. Theo đó, nghiên cứu đề xuất một mô hình về phát triển chuyên môn cho giáo viên tiếng Anh bậc đại học.

Từ khóa: giáo viên với vai trò là người đánh giá, thách thức, phát triển chuyên môn giáo viên

* Nghiên cứu này được hoàn thành với sự hỗ trợ của Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội trong đề tài mã số N.21.03.

EMI FOR ENGINEERING-TECHNOLOGY STUDENTS IN VIETNAM: CHALLENGES & SUGGESTIONS

Lam Quang Dong^{1*}, Phan Thi Ngoc Le¹, Nguyen Thi Tuyet²

¹ VNU University of Languages and International Studies, No. 2 Pham Van Dong, Cau Giay, Hanoi, Vietnam

² Campus of Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment in Thanh Hoa Province,
No. 4 Tran Phu, Ba Dinh Ward, Bim Son Town, Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

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Abstract: The paper aims to shed light on EMI challenges from the perspective of engineering-technology students at various universities in Vietnam where EMI is in current and popular usage. A total of 307 questionnaires were delivered and returned, among which 288 were qualified, and 27 respondents were selected for in-depth interviews. Data from the questionnaires and interviews were analyzed along with information gathered from respondents' journals. The findings indicate that Vietnamese engineering-technology students encountered different EMI-related challenges, typically subject matter content and vocabulary. They suggest several solutions, such as teachers using both Vietnamese and English rather than solely English in EMI classes. It is hoped that learners' perceptions of the difficulties they encountered and their proposed solutions to cope with such difficulties will help relevant stakeholders to make appropriate adjustments to the teaching methods and content accordingly, which is the key message that this study yields.

Keywords: EMI, ESP, engineering, technology, Vietnam

1. Introduction

There is no doubt that teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in particular, and discipline-specific language in general, still faces with many difficulties, including the debate about who is the most suitable ESP teacher, English teacher or content teacher (Stevens, 1988; Anthony, 1997; Larson-Freeman, 2000; William, 2010). For example, ESP for Law students should be taught by an English teacher, or a Law teacher who teaches Law in English. Following the latter trend, English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) was born and developed, complementing the former one. In addition to ESP and EMI, there are many other approaches such as CBI (content-based

instruction), CLIL (content and language integrated learning), and so on. It can be said that no model or approach is superior, but they only complement each other. Unfortunately, this is not entirely understood or agreed upon in our country, which contributes to several problems like those experienced by the participants in the present study.

Using English as a Medium of Instruction is of cultural and political significance in countries where the official language or the first language is not English (Vinke, 1995; Madileng, 2007; Hu, 2008). Being regarded as a medium to modernize and develop their nations, an international language for business, tourism and

* Corresponding author.

Email address: lamquangdong@vnu.edu.vn

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education, and the common language of government, business and society in many countries, English has been used as a teaching-learning language in higher education, which can be seen as an important educational trend (Graddol, 2000, 2006).

In Vietnam, various public and private educational institutions have fast-track or international programs that teach several majors in English. Even high schools have had a number of subjects such as Math and Physics trained in English, which means EMI has been applied widely. In addition to its undeniably positive aspects, EMI poses many challenges and difficulties to students, but EMI has not been studied thoroughly and comprehensively in Vietnam.

The desire to improve the efficiency of EMI in classes for engineering and technology students has inspired the researchers to accomplish a VNU-funded research project entitled *The use of English as a medium of instruction in Vietnam: Engineering - Technology students' perceptions, challenges and coping strategies* (coded as QG.20.42). It is hoped that this study can foster students' progress in their English learning, which ultimately meets the country's requirements in the context of extensive international integration, and this paper presents part of the research results.

2. EMI-Related Research to Date

English has become the global teaching medium of instruction, and it is increasingly used in countries teaching English as a foreign language to provide science and engineering related courses. As regards the issue on whether EMI should be integrated into the curriculum, there exist two conflicting opinions among scholars around the world, especially in Asian countries where English is used as a second or foreign language.

On the one hand, supporters of the

use of English as a medium of instruction claim that it can benefit students by helping them improve their English skills, especially listening skills (Cheng, 2010), and enrich their English knowledge (Byun et al., 2011; Floris, 2014; Belhiah & Elham, 2015). On the other hand, students with limited English proficiency find EMI lessons difficult to cope with, saying the subject content delivered even in their native language is hard to comprehend, and a lack of coping skills to be successful within EMI emerges a dominant challenge (Airey & Linder, 2007; Sert, 2008; Kim & Sohn, 2009; Cheng, 2010). Lau and Yuen (2011) studied the impact of EMI on computer programming students in Hong Kong and discovered that students who were taught in Chinese tend to outperform those taught in English. Besides, EMI has minimized interaction between teachers and students, hindered discussions among students, and decreased graduation rates (Airey & Linder, 2007; Collins, 2010; Byun et al., 2011). Furthermore, the lack of clear guidance on how to teach through EMI, the lack of English proficiency standards for EMI teachers, and the lack of qualified EMI teachers are major concerns when English is used as a medium of instruction in many non-English speaking countries (Dearden, 2014).

In recent years, many Vietnamese pedagogists and linguists began to shed light on EMI in colleges and universities, which is an emerging trend in Asia. Some authors emphasized the importance of adopting EMI at university such as Le Duc Manh (2012) or Dang Thi Kim Anh et al. (2013) while Nguyen Thu Huong et al. (2017) proposed policy recommendations on EMI programs. Also, Do Minh Hung (2017) focused on the challenges faced by teachers when EMI was adopted at a public university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam. An on-going study by Lam and Le (unpublished manuscript) on how pre-service teachers are prepared for EMI at a university in Vietnam reveals that EMI

doubles their work, since they have to read both English and Vietnamese materials so as to ensure accurate understanding, especially if it concerns difficult, abstract concepts. Reading remains the hardest skill for them due to their lack of both specific terminology, or vocabulary, and relevant conceptual knowledge underlying those terms. Even when they understand the terms, the concepts, and their English proficiency may be satisfactory, they still find it hard to explain things in English. It can be concluded that a good command of English, together with a sufficient specific lexicon, may not be enough for them to be good EMI teachers.

In a study on the Vietnamese agenda for adopting EMI, Vu (otherwise known as Nha, Vu Thi Thanh, 2017) identified three levels for such an agenda, namely the national socio-political, the institutional educational, and the personal levels. At the national socio-political level, “Vietnam has undergone significant socio-economic changes in the last few decades, which has influenced the expansion of English and its role as a means of economic and social development” (p. 59). To educational institutions, EMI seems to be a boosting solution, while personal motives for adopting EMI varied; the majority of students in the study merely take it because it is compulsory, but they saw several benefits from EMI, including their improved access to learning materials and up-to-date knowledge in the [English] original, and their increased international mobility upon graduation. It was already pointed out in an earlier study by Hoang (2008, pp. 33-34) that “Experience in some Asian countries such as Singapore, the Philippines, Thailand and Malaysia shows that the most effective way to improve ELT quality in universities is to turn them into bilingual environments in which the mother tongue is the means of general communication and the instructional medium of social science subjects, and

English is the instructional medium of science and technology.”

It can be seen that EMI research has proliferated but has mostly been conducted in the Inner Circle nations where English is regarded as their native language, and the Outer Circle, which uses English as a second language such as Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Nigeria. In the Expanding Circle nations like Vietnam, however, not much has been done. Therefore, by implementing the present study, the researchers hope to contribute more insights of EMI’s positive and negative effects to both learners and teachers at Vietnamese universities. This is also a response to Dearden’s call which include such questions as

- What are the different forms of EMI currently being developed?
- Are there particular language problems associated with particular content areas?
- Is the learning of academic subjects improved by EMI? Does it lead to deep understanding? If so by which groups of students? All students? Only international students? Only home students?
- What strategies are used by students in EMI classrooms in oral and written comprehension tasks which are designed to facilitate their understanding of their academic subjects?
- What are the psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic effects on students’ home language resulting from EMI used in various phases of education? (Dearden, 2014, p. 3).

In fact, the current job market in the world requires graduates to be fluent in English. Furthermore, English is necessary to maintain international dialogues between countries, and to help countries keep up with changing standards of knowledge, technology and business. Communication in

English plays an important role in digital work and industrialization (Kakepoto et al., 2012). Prichard and Nasr (2004) argued that English is the language of science and, therefore, indispensable in modern sciences. Therefore, English is believed to be able to improve the quality of education in engineering and related sciences (Tamtam et al., 2010). In Vietnam, according to the statistics of the National Institute of Information and Communication Strategy, science and technology is the leading industry with the highest demand for human resources (PwC, 2021). The fact that the world is always innovating requires people to respond to keep up with the speed of development. In particular, the Industrial Revolution 4.0 period is the time when technical service jobs require the highest productivity, and wages in this industry are increasing. Undoubtedly, clear and concise communication is fundamental to success in the modern global business environment. Therefore, it is important for engineering-technology graduates to be equipped with writing and communication skills in English, along with other essential skills, to be able to promote the business of the organization in which they work and meet customer's need (Abdel-Jawad & Radwan, 2011).

From that perspective, a good number of studies around the world on using English as a medium of instruction for engineering-technology students have been conducted such as Tamtam et al. (2010), Basibek et al. (2014), Sivaraman et al. (2014). According to these researchers, one aspect of the learning process of engineering-technology students is the use of mother tongue and translanguaging in English classes to communicate with classmates as well as teachers. By definition, translanguaging is “the ability of learners to convert and process diverse languages” (Canagarajah, 2011, p. 401). Furthermore, it refers to “hybrid forms of linguistic use that are systematically involved in the production

of meaning” (García et al., 2011, p. 5). Translanguaging can facilitate communication and interaction between students and teachers, help students express their ideas, and is increasingly used in the academic community as a means of communication and as an approach to teaching science-related courses in bilingual education (García, 2009). As such, translanguaging can be regarded as a scaffolding tool to achieve content learning, aiming to deepen students’ understanding, develop their metacognitive and metalinguistic awareness, develop pluriliteracies and expand their cognitive and linguistic experiences (Canagarajah, 2011; Kano, 2013; Langman, 2014). The idea of bilingual education (translanguaging) was also supported by Barnard (2015) when he found that most EFL/ESL students in Asia lacked the ability to actively participate in academic lectures taught in English. Therefore, he proposed bilingual education because this approach will better prepare students to meet the challenges of today’s globalized world. This study, therefore, sought to find out whether the participants were aware of translanguaging and may propose it as a solution to the problems they encountered in EMI courses.

As part of the afore-mentioned research project QG.20.42, on the basis of the above rationale, this paper deals with the two following research questions:

1. *What challenges did engineering-technology students encounter with EMI?*
2. *What suggestions did engineering-technology students propose to overcome such challenges?*

3. Research Design

In this study, a critical exploratory methodology was adopted with a two-phase sequential mixed methods approach of data

collection and data analysis. The first phase was quantitative and the second was qualitative. The critical exploratory methodology reflects the research agenda of the study that seeks to understand the effects of EMI on the learning experiences of individuals in a certain social and educational context. The view that “we can often learn more about our research topic if we can combine the strength of methods focused on quantitative data with the strength of methods focused on qualitative data, while compensating at the same time for the weaknesses of each method” (Punch & Oancea, 2014, p. 339) constitutes the rationale for the use of a sequential mixed methods approach in this study.

3.1. Sampling

In this study, the researchers employed purposive sampling where the participants were identified according to specific criteria and characteristics (Dörnyei, 2007; Punch & Oancea, 2014; Ritchie et al., 2014). The criteria for sample selection from the target population is to include both male and female students (307 students) enrolled as different engineering and technology majors at various tertiary educational institutions (11 institutions). The rationale for this adoption is to ensure the sample is as diverse as possible so that a full range of perceptions and behaviors related to issues on EMI can be identified. It is hoped that this will provide a comprehensive picture of the issues under investigation and will allow participants from various engineering and technology disciplines to demonstrate their views on and experiences in EMI.

3.2. Research Methods

As regards the quantitative phase, questionnaires were used (see Appendix A). Questionnaires have become one of the most popular research methods applied in social sciences (Dörnyei, 2007). Questionnaires

can be easily constructed and have the advantage of collecting large amounts of information about research subjects through a representative sample. However, they also have limitations because they often provide rather superficial data and are therefore not suitable for in-depth investigation of a phenomenon (Dörnyei, 2007). However, questionnaires are the main data collection method used in EMI studies (Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Belhiah & Elhami, 2014; Chapple, 2015; Kym & Kym, 2014; Sert, 2008). In this study, we designed a closed questionnaire. Quantitative data obtained from statistical analysis of questionnaires were used as a starting point to show the overall trends of participants in courses where EMI was applied. It also provided background information about the study population and those willing to participate in the second phase of the study. Most importantly, it assisted us in preparing for the construction of the in-depth semi-structured interview to be used in the second phase. Besides, in the questionnaire, the 5-point Likert scale was adopted to elicit the participants' attitudes and behaviors. Students were asked to circle a number from 1-5 reflecting how much they agreed with the following variations: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), totally agree (5). The reason for this choice is that the 5-point Likert scale is simple to understand and use for survey administrators and respondents alike. Besides, it takes less time and effort to complete than higher-point scales and gives respondents an option to be neutral (rather than having to choose an alternative that does not reflect their thinking). The participants only had to select the number that was closest to their opinions; therefore, even not very enthusiastic ones could feel comfortable to answer all the questions. To design a closed Likert questionnaire (Appendix A), we followed the guidelines provided by Dörnyei (2007) and Wellington (2015). Questionnaires are

tailored to the research questions, relevant EMI literature, and our own knowledge or our experience teaching students in an EMI applied environment. This helped us establish the content and build the validity of the research tools. In addition, the language used in the questionnaire is Vietnamese to avoid misunderstandings for the participants. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire (Wellington, 2015), we asked three of our colleagues to review it. We also piloted this questionnaire with 25 students who were our acquaintances. From the feedback of these teachers and students, we adjusted the items in the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then delivered in classes that met the above mentioned criteria (consisting of both male and female students enrolled as different engineering and technology majors at various tertiary educational institutions) to ensure that the sample size was large enough. Information on the number of participants at each university is presented in Appendix C. At each university, a class majoring in engineering-technology was selected, and a total of 307 students were given the questionnaires and returned their responses. However, 19 had to be discarded as they were incomplete or unreliable, containing the same answers for almost all items. Eventually, 288 responses qualified, of which male students ($n = 176$) outnumber females ($n = 112$). Most participants were between 18-22 years old, and all were Vietnamese citizens studying at public and private universities in Vietnam. Although this was considered a large number for a purposeful model, not all of these students participated in the later stages of the study. In terms of data analysis, after the data collection process, the information obtained from the questionnaire was classified according to the research questions. Then, for each research question, the participants' responses were calculated and converted into numerical form. The data are then

tabulated and graphed for clearer presentation and comparison.

Turning to the qualitative phase, an in-depth semi-structured interview was adopted (see Appendix B). Interview is the most prominent research method in qualitative research (Dörnyei, 2007; Kvale, 2007; Punch & Oancea, 2014). In EMI studies, interviews are sometimes used in conjunction with questionnaires (Cheng, 2010; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Troudi & Jendli, 2011). In-depth interviews were chosen in this study because they allowed the researcher to explore the participants' perspectives and perceptions (Punch & Oancea, 2014). Furthermore, interviews aim to give participants the opportunity to express their views to others in society (Wellington, 2015). For this study, we found semi-structured in-depth interviews with EMI students to be the most appropriate. An in-depth interview is an interview based on a list of questions or topics that need to be covered. However, the order and manner of asking questions may depend on the context and characteristics of the interviewee. In-depth interviews are used to thoroughly understand a particular topic. In this phase, we also used Vietnamese in order to collect as much information about the topic studied through questionnaires in the earlier stage. On that basis, we would have a comprehensive view and understanding of learners' attitudes, behaviors and feelings. It also revealed to us the reasons behind participants' views and actions, something that previous data collection methods had not uncovered. Most importantly, the interviews not only showed us the general opinion of the majority of the participants, but also revealed information not shared by the majority. The interview data combined with the data collected from the

questionnaire allowed us to get the best answers to the research questions. Of the 288 students who completed the questionnaires, 53 agreed to be interviewed. Through purposeful sampling, 27 students were selected for in-depth semi-structured interviews. The goal was to select the most diverse group that came from the different universities (as listed in Appendix C) to collect a variety of EMI-related information, perspectives and experiences. Therefore, 16 male and 11 female participants from different universities and levels were selected. The background information of the students participating in the qualitative phase is presented in Appendix D. As regards data analysis, the information recorded from the interview was then classified based on the research questions. For a deeper understanding of the information obtained from the participants, we compared and contrasted the responses in each group. All transcripts of the responses of the participants in the interviews were summarized and presented in the form of citations so that, when necessary, more detailed information on the research questions could be provided. Page numbers of citations in the transcript are attached so that we can refer to them as needed.

Furthermore, the method of narrative research (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) was used to gather data in the field of social sciences and humanities with a special focus on stories personally retold (Polkinghorne, 1995). To get more detailed information for the study, we selected 27 students who participated in the semi-structured interview phase to continue asking in-depth interview questions to analyze the information through their narrative. In fact, the participants could not provide all the information on their own without being asked or suggested by the researcher.

In addition, to increase the reliability of the information obtained, we also used the students' journals. Journals are tracked over days, weeks, or possibly years. We developed a guide that participants could use to document their experiences with EMI. The guiding questions are closely related to the main content that the research is aiming to address, including the challenges, and suggestions of students when EMI is implemented in the curriculum. Respondents self-record the data of events about the work or activity taking place. We distributed the journal entry instructions to the respondents via email and collected the journal monthly.

As a translator, translator trainer and translation researcher with over 30 years of experience, the corresponding author of this paper performed the translation of the informants' verbatim data reported herein and had it double-checked by another experienced translation expert to ensure quality and accuracy.

With the application of the research methods above, the study obtained the following main results.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Research Question 1: What Challenges did Engineering-Technology Students Encounter With EMI?

When English was adopted as a medium of instruction, engineering-technology students at Vietnamese universities encountered the main challenges as follows.

4.1.1. Discipline-Specific Content and Vocabulary-Related Challenges

EMI presented many challenges related to discipline-specific content and vocabulary to engineering-technology students as shown in Table 1 below (the numbers move from 1 - strongly disagree to 5 - strongly agree).

Table 1*Discipline-Specific Content and Vocabulary-Related Challenges*

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Disciplinary content is difficult to absorb in Vietnamese, even more difficult when it comes to English.	0% (0)	3.8% (11)	4.9% (14)	29.5% (85)	61.8% (178)
2. Disciplinary terms are difficult to understand.	0% (0)	3.1% (9)	3.5% (10)	36.8% (106)	56.6% (163)

Regarding the content of disciplinary subjects, the majority of students (91.3%, n = 263) admitted that when studying in English, the disciplinary content was harder to absorb than when it was taught in Vietnamese. Similarly, 93.4% of students (n = 269) considered disciplinary terms to be a big challenge when they studied in English. These challenges can be regarded as the most problematic for engineering-technology students. The students' narrative journals reveal that the difficulties in understanding discipline-specific content and vocabulary can lead to other challenges in reading comprehension and academic writing.

Firstly, it seems that all students participating in the qualitative phase had difficulty understanding English documents because of their weak disciplinary lexicon. This finding is consistent with those of other researchers around the world (Cheng, 2010; Evans & Green, 2007; Shen, 2013), in which vocabulary is identified as the leading hindrance to students' comprehension of English texts. It is strongly confirmed in the interview phase. For example, a student shared, "*Sometimes I have a problem while reading a document. I don't understand all the words*" [S16]. Another student explained more specifically, "*I have a lot of difficulties - mostly the vocabulary of the lessons because each lesson has a different topic*" [S2]. It is obvious that most students had problems with technical terms related to their majors. Undoubtedly, knowledge of terminology and familiarity with discipline-

specific conventions are of vital importance for engineering-technology students to address their academic issues (Swales, 1990). A student described his experience with technical terms as follows, "*I have no problem with English except for some new technical terms in computer engineering major. My writing, reading, speaking and listening are good*" [S23]. In their journals, students repeatedly emphasized the importance of teaching academic terms to them in basic and academic English courses so that they could familiarize themselves with discipline-specific terms. This is illustrated in the following journal citation, "*There are difficulties related to textbooks and majors. Technical textbooks are written in a very complex technical language and sometimes I find it difficult to understand them. Moreover, some disciplinary subjects are too complex to understand in English*" [S25].

Another significant difficulty for students is understanding the content of long reading texts. Engineering-technology students are often required to read machine-related instructions, and many interviewees (n = 21) reported that they found it hard to understand the content of long reading texts. A student admitted, "*Sometimes I read materials from the Internet and I find it difficult because it is often too long and not specific*" [S9]. Meanwhile, another student explained in his/her journal:

Honestly, when I search online and I find a long text, I usually don't read

it. I try to find a text written on the main points. When the text is divided into several points, it becomes easier for us. But when it's a long paragraph, I find it hard to read. [S11]

Besides, discipline-specific content and vocabulary-related challenges also lead to students' difficulties in completing writing exercises to meet requirements. Among 27 students interviewed, 21 mentioned that one aspect of academic writing they encountered with EMI is how to express ideas in English. They explained that the reason for this also originated from the lack of disciplinary terms. This finding was partly explained in the interview section as quoted below.

There are many difficult problems that I personally encounter when using English in class, that is: how to write a sentence correctly, how to express it in English ... I feel I have a lot of ideas but how to express them in English is a challenge to me. I also had some difficulties remembering and understanding academic vocabulary related to the subject. [S12]

Other difficulties related to writing skills resulted from their weak knowledge of discipline-specific content. For example, one student pointed out that laboratory reports proved particularly difficult for them.

Table 2

In-Class Speaking and Discussion-Related Challenges

	1	2	3	4	5
3. Having difficulty asking questions and participating in class discussions.	2.1% (6)	17.4% (50)	5.9% (17)	56.6% (163)	18% (52)

As the table shows, 74.6% (n=215) participants reported that they found it hard to raise questions as well as join class

I have problems writing lab reports such as how to create a report outline, how to write an introduction and a conclusion, and how to analyze and synthesize information. Technology is a major that contains both theory and practice. I have no problems with the practical part, only having difficulty with the content of the theory part. [S13]

The stories above show that students encountered challenges in writing lab reports, not just general reports. They often had difficulty understanding the content of the theoretical part, and struggled to structure their reports, especially the introduction and conclusion. Not only did they have problems with writing conventions, but they also found it hard to deal with the cognitive aspects of tasks, the analysis and synthesis of non-textual information for their reports.

In summary, both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed several challenges faced by engineering-technology students, which led to their difficulties in understanding the disciplinary content and technical vocabulary, and ultimately affected their academic writing.

4.1.2. In-Class Speaking and Discussion-Related Challenges

Engineering-technology students in Vietnam suffer from problems communicating in English as seen in Table 2 below.

discussions. This challenge was elaborated in the interview; students rarely participated in class discussions because they were afraid

they might lose face when making awkward oral performances in front of the class:

The most difficult problem I have is speaking English and especially communicating in English with the teacher. In addition, we find that technical words have different meanings depending on the context. I have problems using certain vocabulary in the right context to convey meaning or instructions. I find it difficult to participate in class discussions in English or to argue with a teacher or friends in English. [S22]

It can be seen that communicating with teachers in English is problematic for many students. Again, the lack of disciplinary terms is mentioned as the main reason for students' hesitance in academic discussions with their teachers and friends, and they felt unconfident to speak in front of their class:

There are many problems and difficulties that I personally encountered with English, such as how to express ideas in English ... I feel that I have ideas but how to express them is a great challenge. In addition, I also struggled with pronunciation and understanding of some academic vocabulary related to technology. [S11]

... in general, I have problems communicating with other people in English. I feel that I am not confident enough to speak English in front of others, I feel embarrassed to do so. Secondly, I don't want to make mistakes in front of everyone because I can become a joke for them and a major problem that makes my speaking difficult is the lack of vocabulary. [S27]

Besides, students pointed out the lack of opportunity to practice English, "When I tried to talk to friends in class in

English, they only answered in Vietnamese and this could be one of the difficulties that I personally encountered in class" [S5]. Obviously, the fear of losing face due to possible mistakes led to students' English avoidance as a coping strategy, and Vietnamese was used instead, which is natural as students tend to switch to their mother tongue to express what they cannot say in English.

Asking teachers for more explanation or clarification when they did not understand is another act frequently avoided by Vietnamese students, possibly because they were afraid to interrupt or annoy teachers (who may think, or utter "Oh my God! I have explained so laboriously till my voice gives out, and you still refuse to understand. You're so dumb! [our assumption], and in most cases, they would ask friends in their class first. These students explained, "*We often don't have enough time because then teachers need to take time to explain again*"; "*When teachers ask us if we understand or not, we simply say that we understand because we think that once or twice does not make any difference; if you get it, you get it right the first time*" [S20]; "*We do not have the habit of giving teachers questions, not because it is in English class. Even during lessons in Vietnamese, we never ask questions*" [S19]. Obviously, it will take much longer time for these students to reduce their reluctance, give more questions to teachers, get more engaged in class activities and eventually build up their confidence in communication.

4.1.3. Listening Challenges

Although EMI may be an effective way to improve students' language proficiency through the use of English to gain discipline-specific knowledge (Joe & Lee, 2013), challenges to students in general and to engineering-technology students in particular involves their poor listening skill when lectures are given in English, as seen in Table 3 below.

Table 3*EMI Lecture Comprehension-Related Challenges*

	1	2	3	4	5
4. Inability to understand EMI lectures is due to poor listening skill.	10.4% (30)	29.2% (84)	11.1% (32)	35.1% (101)	14.2% (41)
5. The teacher speaks quickly and uses difficult words.	9.4% (27)	34% (98)	4.9% (14)	38.2% (110)	13.5% (39)

Firstly, the results of the questionnaire showed that 49.3% (n = 142) students agreed with the statement that “Inability to understand EMI lectures is due to poor listening skill”. This was reaffirmed in the qualitative phase; students found it hard to understand lectures at all levels of study (from year 1 to year 4) although this problem is more serious for first-year students than the others due to naturally different levels of their listening skills, as concluded by various authors (e.g., van Wyk, 2014; Kagwesage, 2012 in South Africa; Evans & Morrison, 2011 in China; Cheng, 2010 in Taiwan; Al-Bakri, 2014; Al-Mashikhi et al., 2014; Sivaraman et al., 2014 in Oman). Some interviewees said they could only understand the main parts of a topic, but did not understand the details. Some related the difficulties to their previous learning experience:

English is a big challenge to me because we study all the subjects in Vietnamese in high school. Moreover, the type of English that we learn in high school differs from the kind of English we study at university. English in university is academic and complex. In high schools, we learn general English and the words used are very simple. [S5]

Secondly, most interviewees claimed that besides their own language ability, teacher is also a factor that affects their lecture comprehension. In the survey,

approximately half of the students (51.7%; n = 149) agreed that they did not understand lectures because the teacher spoke quickly and used many difficult words. A computer-engineering student confided, “I have encountered many challenges with academic English and concepts related to computing. Some teachers speak a bit too fast when they teach us, and sometimes it is difficult for us to understand what they are saying” [S14]. Another student described his difficulties in understanding lectures as follows:

I have difficulty understanding the content of the lecture. Sometimes I find it difficult to take notes in class because some teachers use difficult and highly academic language. Sometimes I try to record the lecture to listen to it later. [S6]

In sum, EMI prevents students from understanding discipline-specific lectures. These problems exist for a number of reasons related to the teaching style of the lecturers, such as their speed, voice, etc., as well as the students' poor language ability, including their lack of technical vocabulary and inadequate listening skill.

4.2. Research Question 2: What Suggestions did Engineering-Technology Students Propose to Overcome These Challenges?

Having identified their EMI-related challenges, engineering-technology students proposed several recommendations, such as those in Table 4 below.

Table 4*Suggestions from Engineering-Technology Students*

	1	2	3	4	5
6. Integrating critical thinking, problem solving, and time management skills into language courses.	0%	0%	2.4% (7)	46.5% (134)	51.1% (147)
7. More attention to learning English at high school.	0%	0%	3.8% (11)	41.3% (119)	54.9% (158)
8. Adopting a bilingual technical education system (in Vietnamese and English).	0%	23.6% (68)	13.2% (38)	41.3% (119)	21.9% (63)
9. Disciplinary teachers should have a good command of English.	0%	0%	0%	42% (121)	58% (167)

4.2.1. Blending Higher-Order Thinking Skills Into Language Courses

97.6% (n = 281) students agreed that it is necessary to integrate critical thinking, problem solving, and time management skills into language courses. Higher-order thinking skills have become a major issue in modern education because they contain promising opportunities for individuals and society (Fleming et al., 1995). Higher-order thinking skills play an important role for students, especially students majoring in engineering and technology. Such skills include self-regulating, analyzing, synthesizing, identifying information sources, reflecting, drawing conclusions based on evidence, amongst others (Linn, 2000; Resnick, 1987), which can help them overcome EMI-related challenges, develop and build their intellectual capacity. Moreover, engineering students need higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills to solve technical issues and strengthen their understanding of discipline-specific content. Meanwhile, critical thinking helps them to reflect on the learning process by asking questions, explaining, analyzing and evaluating other people's ideas (Shaheen, 2012), and this awareness was acknowledged by participants in the study, e.g. *“There should be courses to help*

students acquire problem-solving and critical thinking skills” [S27].

4.2.2. More Attention to Learning English at High School

In the interviews and journals, many students shared the same idea that reforms should start from high school so that students can have a solid English background when entering university. For example, one student stated, *“I think that English should be attached more importance in high schools so that students can improve all the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. This will be helpful for students when entering university”* [S2]. Such reforms may include replacing the traditional teaching methods that focus primarily on grammar. From students' suggestions, CLT (communicative language teaching) should be applied instead so as to help students gain sufficient basic English skills before approaching subject matter content and its specific terminology in their undergraduate courses, especially EMI courses.

4.2.3. Adopting a Bilingual Technical Education System (Using Both English and Vietnamese)

In the questionnaires, 63.2% (n = 182) students said that there should be a bilingual technical education system, in both

Vietnamese and English. This statement was confirmed again in the interviews. In students' view, such bilingual instructions may take the following forms:

I recommend having two textbooks for each major subject. One is in Vietnamese and the other is in English. Students who find it difficult to understand knowledge in English can choose the Vietnamese book. This will help us study our major subjects effectively. [S9]

I want my university to teach some subjects in Vietnamese so that teachers can explain knowledge in Vietnamese in case we do not understand some points in English. [S4]

I don't know if this is possible but some subjects should be taught in Vietnamese. [S6]

S13 suggested that universities should establish a center to help students understand the subjects in Vietnamese. Students who have difficulties in learning can go there to ask questions in Vietnamese and teachers can provide them with clear explanations in Vietnamese. If students do not know certain English terms, teachers or the center staff can provide their Vietnamese equivalents. Undoubtedly, apart from English, the use of Vietnamese, which is the students' native language, is believed to help them gain a deeper understanding. In my own teaching experience several years ago, such bilingual instructions were used: I talked to students in English, and stopped after each key point to give them a Vietnamese summary, some further explanation in Vietnamese, and Vietnamese equivalents of key English technical terms. This means EMI courses should not be solely in English; both English and Vietnamese, or students' native language in general, should be used alternately at proper times to ensure understanding. This view

coincides with those expressed by participants in the studies of Ellili-Cherif and Alkhateeb (2015) in Qatar, Ismail (2011) and Al-Mashikhi et al. (2014) in Oman.

There are additional views from participants in the study as well. During the interviews, S19 suggested that English clubs and forums should be set up to help students practice English regularly. English textbooks should be reviewed and updated regularly based on needs analysis to meet the demand of students and the job market. Moreover, students should be encouraged to speak English to each other and to their teachers instead of using Vietnamese. It can be seen that S19 is very critical of the use of Vietnamese in the classroom, probably because of his relatively high level of English proficiency. In another case, S2 is the only participant who believes that universities should invite native English-speaking teachers to teach disciplinary subjects. S2 feels that if teachers are all native English speakers, students will have no choice but to study hard to understand what teachers are teaching. In S2's opinion, the key to improve students' English proficiency is through a monolingual teaching method that uses English only in the classroom. This view has been supported by some researchers such as Ismail (2012), and Al-Bakri (2014). Possibly, this view originated from students' dissatisfaction with Vietnamese disciplinary teachers' English proficiency, as can be inferred from recommendation (9) in Table 4. In both the questionnaires and interviews, all participants agreed that disciplinary teachers need to have adequate English proficiency, and their teaching methods should be improved, e.g. *“Teachers should change their teaching methods. They should be more flexible and make learning less stressful for students”* [S10], *“Discipline-specific teachers should be carefully selected and a high level of English must be one of the requirements for them to become teachers in*

the English curriculum” [S14]. Apparently, the quality of EMI teachers, including their English proficiency, is still below students’ satisfaction while teaching in an EMI program requires high language proficiency to help students overcome language-related challenges. Students also emphasized that disciplinary teachers should be trained on how to teach courses in English, “*Technical teachers need to be trained in technical instruction in English, and they need to help students improve their English skills, not just technical knowledge*” [S15]. Nevertheless, EMI teacher training is only offered at a tiny number of teacher educational institutions in the country, and such training is far from satisfactory as well, as the on-going study by Lam & Le uncovers. Also, it is suggested that technical teachers need to be aware that developing students’ language proficiency and helping students deal with language-related issues must be the responsibility of both language teachers and technical teachers (Airey, 2012; Barnard, 2015; Chapple, 2015).

Thus, it can be seen that the proposal for a bilingual technical education program is still controversial among the participants. While some students believe that English and Vietnamese should be used in parallel, others support the notion that English should be the only medium in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to consider students’ voice in any educational policies because these not only affect what students learn and how they learn, but also have an impact on their future life.

5. Conclusion

This research was conducted with all students majoring in engineering and technology from different universities in Vietnam where English is used as a medium of instruction. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were adopted through questionnaires, in-depth semi-structured

interviews, narratives and journals. These mixed methods allowed the researchers to combine their strengths to improve the reliability and validity of the data. The findings show that major challenges to EMI students include discipline-specific content and vocabulary, in-class speaking and discussion, and EMI lecture comprehension. These challenges are mostly attributed to students’ poor language ability, such as their lack of technical vocabulary and inappropriate listening skill. As the results reveal, Vietnamese students are not much different from others; they all suffer from almost the same difficulties, as shown in the studies by Kim and Sohn (2009), Airey and Linder (2007), Collins (2010), and Byun et al. (2011). Although seven years has elapsed, the situation in Asian countries, including Vietnam, identified by Dearden (2014), has not significantly ameliorated.

To make matters worse, not all the Vietnamese teachers of English and subject matter teachers who taught or are teaching the students in the study have adequate English proficiency or effective pedagogical skills and teaching styles. Their speaking speed, their voice, their communicative competence, amongst others, have not met these students’ expectations. Definitely, improvement on the part of the teachers is imperative. Furthermore, engineering-technology students need higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills to solve technical issues and strengthen their understanding of their disciplinary content, so it is necessary to integrate higher-order thinking skills into language courses. Besides, reforms should start at high school level so that students acquire a solid foundation of English, or reach a threshold level of English proficiency before starting their EMI courses at university. This is also one among the goals that the [Vietnamese] National Foreign Languages (NFL) Project is yet to achieve (The Prime Minister of Vietnam, 2017). Lastly, students believed

that bilingual technical education, or translanguaging, should be applied, such as designing two major textbooks, one in Vietnamese and one in English to facilitate students' understanding.

This study inevitably has certain shortcomings because it merely focuses on students' perspective to their own learning experience when English is used as a medium of instruction. However, it is undeniable that this is a relatively new, practical approach that contributes to raising students' awareness so that the most effective teaching/learning methods to achieve the dual goals of improving both their disciplinary knowledge and their English proficiency can be found. Another limitation is that we have not considered non-language-related challenges that students may face that affect their experience and learning outcomes. Considering such non-language challenges can help us better understand the difficulties and challenges faced by students when English is used as the means of instruction. In this study, we only focus on the engineering-technology sector rather than other subjects taught by English in universities in Vietnam. A study of a more interdisciplinary nature, including disciplines such as business, humanities and so on could provide deeper insights into students' learning experiences while studying in English. This will provide a more comprehensive picture of the learning experience with EMI in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

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Appendix B - Interview

A. Introductory questions

1. Can you introduce yourself, please?
2. What is your major?
3. How long have you studied your majors through English as a medium of instruction?

B. Challenges engineering-technology students encountered with EMI and suggestions

1. What major difficulties have you encountered with EMI? Please specify the challenges you encountered in the following aspects:
 - a. Subject matter content, content acquisition in Vietnamese / English;
 - b. English: disciplinary vocabulary / terms; Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing Skills;
 - c. EMI teachers;
 - d. Other difficulties;
 - e. Which is the biggest difficulty? Why?
2. Your suggestions to overcome difficulties when English is used as a medium of instruction!

Appendix C

Profiles of Participants

University	Faculty/ Major	Level	Number of students
University of Transport and Communications	Faculty of International Education – Construction Economics	Fourth year	23
Military Technical Academy	Control Engineering and Automation – Biomedical engineering	Third year	24
Hanoi Architectural University	Regional and Urban Planning Engineering	Third year	22
FPT University	Graphic Design Engineering	Third year	18
Hanoi University of Science	Land Management Engineering – Natural Resources and Environment	First year	25
Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment	Information Technology	Third year	20
	Environmental Technology Engineering		18
National Economics University	Computer Science	Third year	19
	Mathematical Economics		17
Banking Academy	Management Information System	Second year	18
University of Engineering and Technology, VNU	Computer Science	Second year	41
	Telecommunication – Electronics Engineering Technology		
Academy of Finance	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Second year	25
Vietnam University of Commerce	E-commerce	Third year	18
	Mathematical Economics		19

Appendix D
Profiles of Participants in Qualitative Phase

No	Gender	University	Faculty/ Major	Level
S1	Female	University of Transport and Communications	Faculty of International Education – Construction Economics	Fourth year
S2	Female	University of Transport and Communications	Faculty of International Education – Construction Economics	Fourth year
S3	Male	University of Transport and Communications	Faculty of International Education – Construction Economics	Fourth year
S4	Female	Military Technical Academy	Control Engineering and Automation – Biomedical engineering	Third year
S5	Male	Military Technical Academy	Control Engineering and Automation – Biomedical engineering	Third year
S6	Female	Hanoi Architectural University	Regional and Urban Planning Engineering	Third year
S7	Male	FPT University	Graphic Design Engineering	Third year
S8	Male	FPT University	Graphic Design Engineering	Third year
S9	Male	Hanoi University of Science	Land Management Engineering – Natural Resources and Environment	First year
S10	Male	Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment	Information Technology	Third year
S11	Male	Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment	Environmental Technology Engineering	Third year
S12	Female	National Economics University	Mathematical Economics	Third year
S13	Male	National Economics University	Computer Science	Third year
S14	Male	Banking Academy	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Third year
S15	Female	Banking Academy	CityU Program	Second year
S16	Male	Banking Academy	Management Information System	Third year
S17	Female	Academy of Finance	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Fourth year
S18	Male	Academy of Finance	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Second year
S19	Female	Academy of Finance	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Second year
S20	Female	Academy of Finance	Financial Accounting Information Technology	Second year
S21	Male	Vietnam University of Commerce	E-commerce	Third year

S22	Male	Vietnam University of Commerce	Mathematical Economics	Third year
S23	Male	Vietnam University of Commerce	Mathematical Economics	Third year
S24	Female	University of Engineering and Technology, VNU	Computer Science	Third year
S25	Male	University of Engineering and Technology, VNU	Computer Science	Second year
S26	Female	University of Engineering and Technology, VNU	Telecommunication – Electronics Engineering Technology	Second year
S27	Male	University of Engineering and Technology, VNU	Telecommunication – Electronics Engineering Technology	First year

SỬ DỤNG TIẾNG ANH LÀM NGÔN NGỮ DẠY-HỌC CHO SINH VIÊN KHỐI NGÀNH CÔNG NGHỆ-KỸ THUẬT TẠI VIỆT NAM: THÁCH THỨC & ĐỀ XUẤT

Lâm Quang Đông¹, Phan Thị Ngọc Lê¹, Nguyễn Thị Tuyết²

¹ Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, ĐHQGHN, Số 2 Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

² Phân hiệu Trường Đại học Tài nguyên và Môi trường Hà Nội tại tỉnh Thanh Hóa,
Số 4 Trần Phú, Phường Ba Đình, Thị xã Bỉm Sơn, Thanh Hóa, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Bài viết làm sáng tỏ những thách thức khi tiếng Anh được sử dụng làm ngôn ngữ dạy-học (EMI) theo góc nhìn của sinh viên khối ngành công nghệ-kỹ thuật ở nhiều trường đại học Việt Nam, nơi EMI đang được sử dụng phổ biến. Tổng cộng 307 phiếu câu hỏi đã được gửi đi và phản hồi, trong đó 288 phiếu trả lời hợp lệ và 27 nghiệm viên được lựa chọn để phỏng vấn sâu. Dữ liệu từ phiếu câu hỏi và phỏng vấn được đưa vào phân tích cùng thông tin thu được từ nhật ký của nghiệm viên. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên khối ngành công nghệ-kỹ thuật Việt Nam gặp rất nhiều khó khăn khác nhau do EMI, chủ yếu là về nội dung và từ ngữ chuyên ngành. Những sinh viên này đề xuất nhiều giải pháp, trong đó có việc giảng viên EMI cần sử dụng cả tiếng Việt và tiếng Anh chứ không chỉ dùng hoàn toàn tiếng Anh trong các lớp EMI. Hy vọng nhận thức của người học về những khó khăn họ gặp phải và đề xuất của chính họ để đối phó với những khó khăn đó sẽ giúp các bên liên quan có những điều chỉnh phù hợp trong phương pháp và nội dung giảng dạy. Đó là thông điệp chính mà nghiên cứu của chúng tôi muốn truyền tải.

Từ khóa: sử dụng tiếng Anh làm ngôn ngữ dạy-học (EMI), tiếng Anh chuyên ngành (ESP), kỹ thuật, công nghệ, Việt Nam

USING LISTENING DIARY TO TRACK NON-ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS' ONLINE LEARNING ON LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Ngo Thi Minh Hai* , Nguyen Thi Huyen

School of Languages and Tourism – Hanoi University of Industry, Cau Dien, Bac Tu Liem, Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract: This study was carried out to examine if second-year non-English-majored students' online listening learning in learning management system (LMS) can be improved through using listening diary and to investigate students' attitudes towards this method. The action research used survey questionnaires with 53 students, group interviews with 30 students, an analysis of students' 53 listening diaries in 10 weeks and teachers' diaries at a Vietnamese university. The findings of the study showed that listening diary could be utilized as a pedagogical tool to help teachers understand and control students' online listening activities. Besides, the data revealed that listening diary gave students a chance to identify their problems, encouraged them to be active in finding appropriate strategies for their listening as well as contributed to raising students' interest in learning listening. It is recommended that this method should be widely recognized and applied to non-English-majored students to enhance the effectiveness of online learning.

Keywords: action research, listening diary, listening skill, online learning, learning management system

1. Introduction

The fourth industrial revolution has changed the world for the better. Accordingly, education or the way of teaching and learning need to evolve to keep up with the times as well as meet the demand of the society. Thus, online learning has gained a firm foothold in educational institutions over the years. This approach has become commonplace because of its potential for offering rich educational resources in multiple media and the capability to support both real-time and asynchronous communication between instructors and learners as well as among different learners (Alawamleh et al., 2020).

In particular, it gives learners more flexible access to content and instruction, provides simple and efficient ways for teachers to respond to student needs, thereby putting students at the center of the learning process (Saiyad et al., 2020). Obviously, the online learning environment allows educators and students to exchange ideas and information, work together at any time, from any place. That is the reason why it has been increasingly adopted in various universities inside and outside Vietnam (Tran, 2016). A blended learning model in teaching and learning English has been applied to non-English students at Hanoi University of Industry (HaUI) since 2015. This model

* Corresponding author.

Email address: haintm@hau.edu.vn

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means mixing classroom-based education with online learning on the internal LMS, namely eop.edu.vn. Before class, the students have to do various tasks of vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading and writing involved in each topic with their accounts on the LMS. Then, face-to-face classroom activities are designed to offer more opportunities for interaction among students as well as teachers and students.

Even though online learning breaks down the traditional walls of teaching, assuring quality of online learning is still a matter of concern among educators in general and lecturers in particular. In fact, in the context of the researchers' university, they found that the academic dishonesty of online learners might be the most serious problem. This is because current online reports extracted from eop.edu.vn cannot give detailed information on students' learning process as well as lack interaction between teachers and students. Thus, it is hard for teachers to track the quality of their students' self-study on the LMS or identify students' problems as well as provide any support for them to improve. Besides, among four English skills, listening seems to be the most difficult one for HaUI non-English-majored students. Although most of them have been exposed to English since primary school, they have few chances to practice speaking and listening skills. To ensure the effectiveness of the online learning environment, students' online listening skills are assessed by online unit tests, offline mid-term and end-of-term tests in which the listening section accounts for 20 out of 50 points. To encourage students to learn online, 30% of listening tests are taken from online resources on the LMS. However, it seems that the listening scores are of little importance for non-English majors, some of them are even willing to skip the listening section in the test to spend more time on other skills. Therefore, listening diary was employed on trial with

the hope of quality assurance in online learning on the LMS, especially for listening skill and improving students' ability as well as attitude towards this skill.

In order to achieve the study objectives, the following research questions are raised:

(1) To what extent can listening diary promote HaUI non-English majors' online learning of listening?

(2) What are the learners' attitudes towards using listening diary in online learning?

The article contributes to understanding the benefits of listening diary in terms of assuring and improving online learning quality in Vietnam.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Online Learning

So far there have been a lot of definitions of online learning given, each deals with one aspect; however, they all state that online learning refers to educational environments supported by the Internet. According to Abou El-Seoud et al. (2014), it is "anything delivered, enabled, or mediated by electronic technology for explicit purpose of learning" (p. 20). It is also defined as learning experiences in synchronous or asynchronous environments using smart devices with internet access. In these environments, students can be anywhere to learn and interact with instructors and other students (Dhawan, 2020). Fully online learning must be supported by the existence of a LMS which allows teachers to organize academic materials or activities, processes and evaluation (Giatman et al., 2020). The LMS is also considered as a portal that increases interaction between students and faculty, students and students out of the classroom (Al Rawashdeh et al., 2021).

It can be seen that both teachers and students get benefits from LMSs-based

learning or online learning. A few proponents are in support of online learning. For example, Bakia et al. (2012) stated that online learning has a lot of advantages including broadening access to resources, engaging students in active learning, maximizing teacher and student time, increasing the rate of learning and reducing educational costs. Besides, online learning can also promote students' critical thinking skills, deep learning, collaborative learning and problem-solving skills (Cairns & Castelli, 2017). However, there remain arguments in opposition to online education. Some opponents even questioned the quality of online courses when students do not actually attend classes and have face-to-face interaction with teachers (Chankova, 2021; Fuller & Yu, 2014). They also argued that academic dishonesty has been a rising concern for teachers and institutions of higher education as students work and take learning tasks and tests away from the eyes of instructors.

2.2. Quality Assurance in Online Learning

To ensure quality in an online environment, Cabrera (2013) offered one preventative measure to reduce academic dishonesty in online learning that is mixing objective and subjective questions (as cited in Paullet, 2020, p. 329). The purpose is to determine a student's ability to recall and organize information, to evaluate his or her critical thinking skills, and to make sure that students have to complete tasks themselves. Another way to mitigate students' cheating in online courses is to combine assessment techniques including interactive discussions, writing assignments, quizzes, projects with online exams (Hill, 2016, as cited in Paullet, 2020, p. 329). In addition, using laptops installed cheat-resistant software, a lockdown browser, automated plagiarism checker and never using textbook-derived questions are also methods of preventing cheating given by Paullet et al. (2016) and

Goldberg (2021). It can be seen that a variety of solutions such as employing technological advancements and mixing different assessments have been done to manage and evaluate students' online learning as effectively as possible. However, they are quite general for online learning. Besides, some measures as described above just focus on online tests or exams rather than the process of online learning. Therefore, it is necessary to find out a method to monitor and control students' online learning journeys effectively.

2.3. Listening Diary

Diaries or journals have long been used to record the process of language learning and teaching (Bazir, 2016; Chen, 2016; Nascimento, 2018). There is various research using diaries as an introspective data collection method (Cottingham & Erickson, 2020; Morrell-Scott, 2018; Nicholl, 2010; Thomas, 2015). This reflective practice is defined as an active, action-based and ethical set of skills, implemented in real time and dealing with real, complex and difficult situations (Pavlovich, 2007). The aim of this activity is to intensify learners' understanding of their own experiences and engage themselves actively in learning (Williams & Wessel, 2004). Adding to the point, Nunan and Bailey (2009) affirmed that learning diaries help students to self-evaluate their own thoughts, feelings, motives, reasoning process and mental states. Thus, keeping diaries is actually considered a learning process as it becomes a discipline for capturing personal experiences, a tool of maintaining the relationship with the instructors, a comfortable way out for learners' concerns and frustration (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Besides, Varner and Peck (2003) found that diaries boost students' ability of self-orientation and self-realization on what they want to focus on during the learning process, from that they will be able

to identify their own learning objectives and self-achieve their goals. In line with this finding, Vinjamuri et al. (2017) confirmed that diaries assist students to discover themselves and their learning processes. It enables them to get to know more about what their strengths and weaknesses are, what they could do, what they need to know more and at which level they are.

Thanks to its benefits, diary has been applied widely in the learning process, especially in language learning, which requires learners much effort of active engagement and self-reflection. Some previous studies on listening diary showed its benefits such as developing greater sense of students' responsibility (Goh, 2002); giving students a chance to recognize their needs and problems in their listening skills (Mukminatun et al., 2009); and contributing to the development of future study plans, linguistic knowledge, listening and writing skills, and self-confidence (Chen, 2016). It can be seen that prior researchers just mainly focus on the effectiveness of listening diary on helping students to self-reflect on their listening process, thereby improving their listening skills. This review aims to fill this gap in the literature. Thus, this paper is to investigate whether this method can be used as a pedagogical tool to assist teachers to manage students' self-learning online and to help raise students' autonomy in online learning.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Site

As mentioned earlier, the research was conducted at HaUI, where non-English-majored students had been provided with blended learning courses in English for specific purposes. Accessing the LMS, the students could do online English tasks of vocabulary, grammar, listening, reading and writing skills again and again. Apart from in-class speaking lessons, teachers were in

charge of supporting their students' online learning anytime, but most students just contacted their teacher when they had problems related to technical errors and no questions about online tasks were raised. Teachers only knew the number of online learning tasks students had finished from online reports on the LMS. The reports barely recorded the tasks completed by the students. As a result, teachers could not make sure the students' academic honesty in online learning and understood their difficulties when doing online tasks, particularly listening tasks, so it was difficult to give possible solutions to help students overcome their problems. Although tests such as online unit tests, progress tests and mid-tests were given to control students' academic quality, these tests seemed to focus on the final product rather than the process of online learning. Therefore, the researchers employed listening diary to keep track of students' online learning more effectively. Not only listening tasks, but they had to interact with their teachers to submit their listening diaries in which they noted what they learned from tasks, their troubles and solutions by themselves. Accordingly, teachers gave feedback to them.

3.2. Research Methods

The study was carried out in the form of an action research by two teachers at their English classes. Action research was chosen because it enabled the researchers to investigate problems from their own context by the solutions they believed to be necessary and important at the right moment (Hinchey, 2008). In the research's context, after online learning on the LMS had been applied for years as a part of the blended learning system, there was a problem that the teachers could hardly track the quality of their students' online learning. Besides, the first- and second-year students' listening skill was evaluated as weaker than other language skills because most of them came

from rural areas, in which reading and writing skills were more focused to get good marks at the university entrance exam. Therefore, it was difficult for them to study listening online without further guide from the teachers. After considering the benefits of listening diary, the researchers decided to apply this approach in their listening class with the hope to improve the current situation. Listening diary was implemented in 5 listening lessons, after each time of collecting students' listening diaries, the teachers did observe and reflect the results through the teachers' diaries and students' work which also provided a lot of useful insight data for this research. In the end, together with data from students' questionnaires and interviews, the researchers drew some evaluation of the listening diary application mentioned in the following part.

3.3. Subjects

The subjects of this study included 53 non-English-majored students at the intermediate English level during 10 weeks with 5 listening lessons in the second semester school year 2021-2022. They are second-year students from two different classes; their major is Chinese and they learn English as a second foreign language. The participants are from 18 to 20 years old, including five male and forty-eight female students. The students have two English lessons every week. Each lesson is taught with one language skill among listening, speaking, reading and writing skills for two contact hours.

3.4. Instrumentation

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from Farrah (2012) to get an insight into students' attitudes towards the application of listening diary as well as their recommendations to improve it. The questionnaire consisted of five main parts namely A. Personal

information (Question 1-3), B. The process of doing listening diary (Question 4-10), C. Teacher's support (Question 11-13), D. Students' attitudes towards listening diary (Question 14-16) and E. Recommendations (Question 17-19). Most questions were designed with multiple choice questions and Likert's five-point scale from Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree and Strongly agree. Others were open-ended questions to collect further ideas from the students (Appendix A). The questionnaire was completed by 53 students in class in week 10 through an online Google Form. Because the questions were basically multiple choice and scale rating, they are quite easy to understand, the researchers kept them in English when delivered to the students. The data were then sorted into the same themes namely: the process of doing listening diary, students' opinion about the teacher's support, students' attitudes towards listening diary

Focus group interview

A focus group interview was employed with 30 students to collect data about the students' process of keeping listening diary and their evaluation of this activity. The interview questions were adapted from Shak (2006) with 7 questions (Appendix B). The questions are then translated into Vietnamese and the interviews were carried out in Vietnamese to avoid any misunderstanding and difficulties in expressing themselves from the students. The interview was carried out at the end of the course after the students finished the questionnaire. The participants formed five groups; each group involved six students from two different classes. This enabled the researchers to get a rich source of data from various points of view when the participants were encouraged to share more. The interviews were tape-recorded and then transcribed into the same themes including students' engagement, students' ability of self-learning online and students' ability of

listening comprehension. The students' answers from the interviews were translated into English by the researchers themselves.

Students' diaries

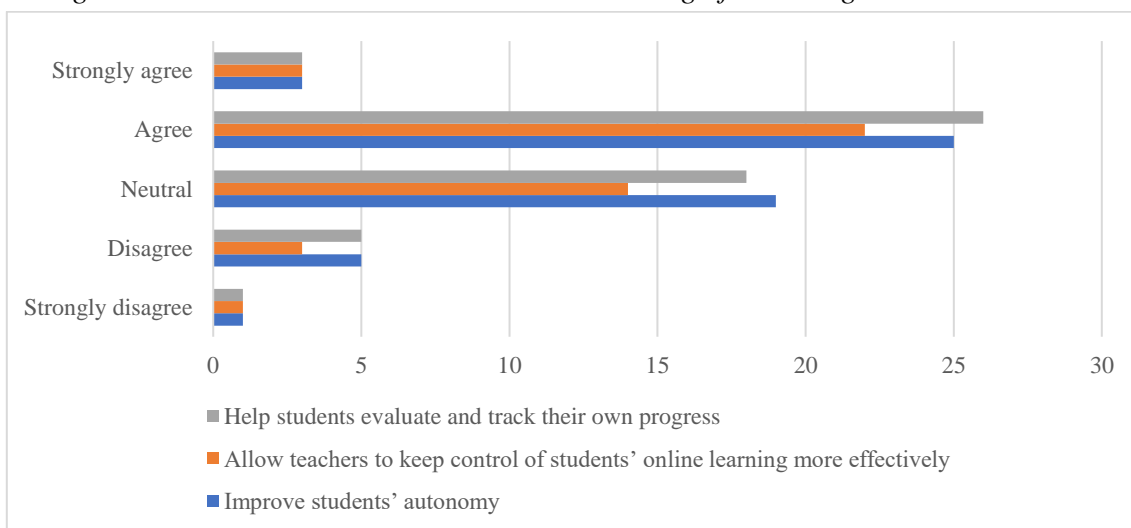
The students' diaries were used in this study to collect data about the participants' ability to self-evaluate their listening, which informed the researchers about their learning progress or any difficulties when they listen. The students' listening diaries were collected every two weeks after they finished their online listening lesson on the LMS.

Teacher's diaries

This method was employed to record the teachers-researchers' insights and reflections during the process listening diary was applied including the ability to keep track of students' online learning, the learners' listening ability, the learners' engagement and any recommendations to make this activity better in the future. Each

Figure 1

Listening Journals as a Tool to Control Online Learning of Listening



It is clear that students who agree and strongly agree with 47-55% outnumber those disagreeing to strongly disagreeing (8-11%) about the statements that listening diaries can help them know more about their learning process, assist them in self-study skills and allow teachers to control their

teacher's diary was written after the teacher collected students' listening entries. The data from this method were put into the same themes, and were also used to triangulate data from students' group interviews, questionnaires and students' diaries.

4. Results

The following section presents the key findings of the study.

4.1. Research Question 1: To What Extent can Listening Diary Promote HaUI Non-English Majors' Online Learning of Listening?

The data show that listening diary can be used as an effective tool to keep track of students' learning of listening in LMS. Figure 1 below illustrated students' opinions from the questionnaire regarding to their evaluation of this activity to self-study online.

online learning. This result is also in line with students' answers in group interviews. One student said in group interview 1: "the thing I like most in keeping listening diary is that it helps me to control my online listening better. Before this activity, I just listen to complete the tasks. I often listen

once only, even when I cannot answer the questions, provided that I cover the exercises. However, now in order to have something to write in the diary, I have to listen more carefully” (Interview 1, Student A). Another student in the same group agreed: “Listening diary is like something that pushes me to study harder. It seems to me that now I study for myself, not for

Table 1

Students' Online Reports in LMS

No.	Students	Latest content	No. items	Last visited on	Total time
1	A	Unit 2: Aging Writing – Task 1	64	14/03/22 15:13	2 hours 36 mins
2	B	Unit 2: Aging Speaking submission	68	11/03/22 16:18	2 hours 20 mins
3	C	Unit 2: Aging Vocabulary – Task 4	41	12/03/22 21:41	1 hour 52 mins
4	D	Unit 2: Aging Reading – Task 6	58	13/03/22 19:15	4 hours 33 mins
5	E	Unit 2: Aging Grammar – Task 1.2	45	14/03/22 14:49	4 hours 43 mins

Besides, in one students’ interview, a student said that thanks to diary, she could keep track of her learning progress more easily. She had a folder to keep diaries and she could realize that through time, there were fewer and fewer problems she could fill in the diaries because after receiving teacher’s feedback every two weeks she could improve herself much (Interview 4, Student A). Sharing the same point, one student commented: “The diaries helped me to self-evaluate my listening skill because I had to identify what I could learn from listening tasks, what problems I had, and how I could overcome those problems. I had to do it all by myself, which made me more active in learning” (Interview 3, Student C).

The result from teachers’ diaries also confirms the fact that listening diary is an effective tool to check the students’ online learning of listening. One teacher wrote through diaries that she could know for sure whether her students did the listening tasks seriously or not; because only when they did, they had something to write on the diaries.

completing a compulsory task” (Interview 1, Student D). This idea was also shared among students in other interviews. Most of them confirmed that they had to be more serious with their online study thanks to listening diary. This can be explained by the fact that with the current online report system, the quality of students’ work is hardly checked, especially in listening skill (Table 1).

There were some students who copied their friends’ diaries, however, because the teacher did read them regularly so she could easily detect and warn students about that (Teacher’s diary 1). The other teacher added that diary was an effective tool to help her track the progress of the students’ learning listening online. After diaries were collected every two weeks, she would give feedback on her students’ work as well as provide some advice on how they could solve their problems. She noticed that right in the following diary, her students could write down more about what they learnt and how they solve the problems rather than what problems they had (Teacher’s diary 2).

The data from students’ diaries also support this idea. In the diaries of Unit 1 topic Celebrations, one of the problems the students had was they could hardly recognize the keywords. After receiving the teacher’s advice on what to prepare before listening such as: making a structure of a talk relating to topic festivals and searching information related to that festival from the

internet, students were prepared with enough background information and they could find the listening easier. In the diaries of Unit 2 topic Celebrities, many students wrote what the teacher advised from Unit 1 in the solution part and they found it really helpful (Students' diaries). Thus, diary is a useful method to help the teachers keep track of what her students could learn and it also enables them to provide the students with prompt feedback or advice. This result is in the same line with the opinion of Spalding and Wilson (2002), Varner and Peck (2003), Chen (2016) that listening journal is a useful tool for teachers and students to better understand the listening process.

Another positive finding through the application of diary is that the students' learning of listening was enhanced thanks to their more serious attitude towards online learning on the LMS, wider and deeper exposure to English, better awareness of their problems and being more proactive in finding solutions. Firstly, regarding students' attitudes towards online learning of listening, as mentioned above, diary is an effective tool for both teachers and students to track their learning progress. Now they know that their work is checked frequently, so they have to be more serious with their learning. Secondly, by writing diaries, students are more exposed to English in

general and to listening skill in particular. Answering the interview about the way to write diaries, most students said that they listened to the audios for about two to three times to do listening tasks as normal but when they wrote diaries in the following days, they would listen again to remind them of some important points. They all agreed that in order to have something in the diaries, they had to listen more carefully than just doing the tasks on LMS. Besides, although it was not compulsory for the students to write diaries in English, all of them did. One student said "Writing down what I could learn makes me remember it much more. Sometimes, my English is not so good, I find it difficult to express myself but then I ask my friends or google translate the ideas. At least, I learn something in English" (Interview 3, Student D). It is obvious that the more they listen, write and even think in English, the better their language proficiency becomes. The result from the questionnaire in Table 1 also confirms this with the majority of students agreeing that listening journals could help them improve motivation towards listening (31/53 students), increase their listening skills (30/53 students), enhance their writing skills (30/53 students), gain new knowledge and learn new words (35/53 students).

Table 2

Benefits of Listening Journals

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

No	Benefits of listening journals	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Improve students' motivation towards listening	1	1	20	28	3
b.	Help students identify their learning problems/ difficulties and give solutions by themselves	1	2	14	31	5
c.	Increase students' listening skills	2	5	17	25	5
d.	Improve students' English writing	0	6	17	27	3
e.	Help students increase opportunities to interact with teachers and get feedback from teachers	2	3	17	27	4
f.	Enable students to gain new knowledge and learn new words	2	1	15	30	5

Last but not least, whether or not the students want to keep diaries, most of them shared the same opinion that this activity was beneficial to their listening skills by making them more aware of their listening problems and strategies and increasing chances to receive feedback from teachers with 36 and 31 students agreeing respectively (N=53). Also, as mentioned above, in response to the interview question about the thing they liked most in this activity, many confirmed that it was the ability to identify problems and know more about strategies in listening. Although they admitted that this was the most difficult part in writing diaries, it did urge them to be more proactive in finding their problems and ways to deal with their own difficulties. One student said: “in listening lessons, we are also provided with strategies or tips, however, it seems to me that they are just the theory, I don’t remember much about them. Then when it comes to the fact that I have to find ways to deal with my problems, I find it more useful, practical and I can remember them better” (Interview 2, Student E). Another student in the same group added: “even if sometimes I cannot find out the solutions, I listen to the teacher’s feedback to my classmates’ diaries, I can learn much from that because most of us come up with similar problems” (Interview 2, Student B). Thus, it is clear that thanks to students’ proactiveness in learning and the teacher’s feedback, students were more aware of their problems and strategies to be able to complete the listening tasks better.

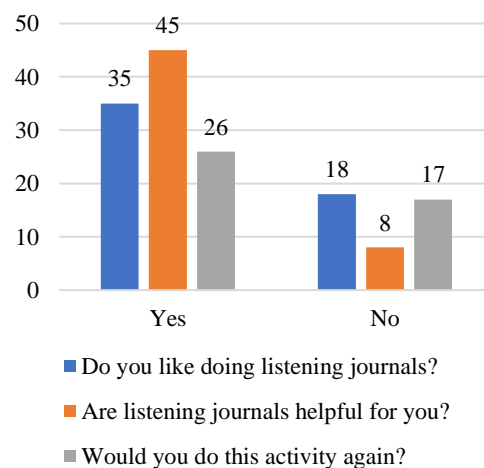
Despite students’ positive comments in the questionnaire and interview, the data from teachers’ diaries and diaries show that many students still struggled with identifying problems and figuring out solutions themselves. Some common problems were stated by students such as the speakers speak too fast, they cannot recognize the keywords, and there are words that they do not know... or common

solutions like listen many times, note down new words, learn more new words... (Students’ diaries). In the teachers’ diaries, both teachers shared that they were aware of the problems, however, they both kept the original way of conducting the activity because only when students did, could they remember. Besides, the teachers both agreed that teachers’ feedback really played an important role in supporting students with this matter. Many students answered that one of the things they liked most about this activity was receiving teachers’ feedback and they found it really helpful. These results related to benefits of listening diary support the findings from Chen (2016), Mukminatun et al. (2009), Williams and Wessel (2004), especially in terms of gaining new knowledge, improving listening skills, self-realizing their problems and solution as well as being proactive in their own learning process.

4.2. Research Question 2: What are the Learners’ Attitudes Towards Using Listening Diary in Online Learning?

Figure 3

Students’ Attitudes Towards Listening Journals



As can be seen from Figure 3, most students like doing listening journals and find it helpful. Although 18 students (N=53) answered that they did not like it, they still found this activity beneficial to their

learning (only 8 students said the activity was not helpful). Besides, as mentioned above, more than half of the students agree and strongly agree with the benefits of listening journals including increasing students' listening skills, students' motivation towards listening, providing students with opportunities to interact with teachers and get feedback from them, identifying their learning difficulties, enabling students to gain new knowledge and learn new words (Table 1). However, as seen in Figure 3, nearly half of the students (17/53) do not want to do this activity again. This might be because students feel overloaded when doing a lot of online learning tasks and listening journals. Another reason might be that students have not prioritized learning English as their major is Chinese, they are not willing to do extra work even when they know it is helpful. Besides, answering the interview, some students also said they felt bored with mistake repetition while they could not find other ways to deal with their problems. Therefore, they expected teachers to provide solutions for them or even recommend omitting the solution part in the diaries.

In addition, results from focus group interviews show what students liked most about listening journals. In specific, students shared that they would be able to monitor their listening ability progress, improve their listening skill, increase their vocabulary as well as motivation towards learning. Besides, listening diary also is a useful tool for themselves to recognize their strengths and weaknesses, then find out strategies to overcome them. More surprisingly, only a half of the student interviewees said that they anticipate that this activity will continue to be applied in next courses. These results completely match the survey ones.

In the teachers' diaries, both teachers shared that most of the students liked to do listening journals. Only a few students were not really enthusiastic about this activity

because there were too many listening tasks. Both teachers had the same opinion that listening journal benefits both students and teachers. For students, "Doing listening journals engages students themselves actively in learning, helps students evaluate and track their own progress, gain new knowledge and learn new words, thereby increasing their listening skills" (Teacher's diary 1). For teachers, they found that it was considered as a good channel for them to control their students' online learning more effectively, understand students' listening problems and abilities, then they could give solutions to support students overcome those weaknesses. However, both teachers also admitted that they felt pressured due to extra work.

It is understandable that the results of the survey questionnaire and students' interviews are highly consistent with those of teacher diaries in terms of students' interest towards listening journals and benefits of this activity. In order to reduce the workload for both teachers and students, it is recommended that teachers should enable students to do listening journals in groups or make oral reports in class (Interview 2, Student C; Interview 3, Student E).

5. Conclusion

The present study is an attempt to investigate whether second-year non-English-majored students' online learning of listening skills on the LMS can be enhanced via the application of listening diary and to examine the students' attitudes towards this activity. The findings showed that listening diary was advantageous to both teachers and students. Clearly, thanks to it, teachers could understand and manage students' online listening activities; students could identify their own problems and be active in seeking effective strategies for their listening. With regard to the listening problems reported by students, teachers can try to address them in

their feedback and monitor students' progress in these problematic areas. All in all, these findings demonstrate the usefulness of using listening diaries to unveil the process of students' self-study listening online and partly ensure the quality of online learning in LMS.

Though the researchers have made efforts towards conducting this study, due to the limitations of knowledge, research skills and time as well, errors and shortcomings are unavoidable. First and foremost, the action research was conducted within a short period of 10 weeks. In addition, the application of listening diary was implemented with only one cohort of students, instead of all HaUI non-English-majored students. Besides, keeping listening diaries in groups or making oral reports could be considered to make it more effective as well as reduce extra work for both teachers and students. Finally, a detailed guideline for listening diary implementation and success criteria of the action was not utilized. These limitations should be addressed in further studies.

The activity was carried out in a short period of time; however, it brought about advantages for the students in listening comprehension, tracking their online learning progress, receiving teachers' feedback and motivating their interest towards learning listening. Because of the above values, the researchers expect to be able to expand this activity widely so that all non-English-majored students at their educational institution can benefit from it. Throughout the process of conducting the study, the researchers have realised the important role of innovation and action research in improving their teaching, which encourages them to learn more and apply more teaching methods to benefit the students.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaires

The survey questionnaire is designed for the research entitled “Using listening diary to track non-English-majored students’ online learning on Learning Management System”. It is highly appreciated if you could spend your time truthfully completing the questions. Please be assured that you will not be identified in any discussions of the data.

Please tick the appropriate answers for the following questions. You may choose more than one option.

A. Personal information

1. Gender: Male Female
 2. How long have you been learning English?
 <1 year 4 years 7 years 10 years >10 years
 3. Do you like learning English online? Yes No
 Reasons (Why/ Why not?)
-
-

B. Doing listening journals

4. How often did you do the listening journals?
 - a) Every week, within the stipulated time
 - b) Most of them were on time, but a few were late
 - c) Every two weeks, within the stipulated time
 - d) I did only a few listening journals during the course
5. How many listening journals did you do during the course?
 - a) 1 to 3 c) 5 to 8
 - b) 3 to 5 d) 8 to 10
6. On average, how much time did you spend to do each listening journal?

a) Less than 5 minutes	e) Between 20 and 25 minutes
b) Between 5 and 10 minutes	f) Between 25 and 30 minutes
c) Between 10 and 15 minutes	g) More than 30 minutes
d) Between 15 and 20 minutes	
7. What listening materials/ resources did you use for your listening journals?
 - a) Listening tasks on eop.edu.vn
 - b) Breaking News English: <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/>
 - c) TED talk: <https://www.ted.com/>
 - d) British Council: <https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/>
 - e) News In Level: <https://www.newsinlevels.com/>
 - f) Elsa speak and Duolingo
 - g) Hana's Lexis, IELTS with Daito
 - h) Youtube

i) Others: _____

8. What criteria did you use to choose the audios/videos to do the activity?

- Duration
- Title
- Availability of subtitles
- Views
- Channel or website
- Country
- Others: _____

9. What motivated you to do listening journal activity?

- It was the assessment tool of the course
- The possibility of keeping in touch with English outside the classroom
- The possibility of developing oral comprehension skills
- The possibility of developing listening comprehension skills
- Others: _____

10. What are the difficulties faced during the activity?

- To have time to do the activity
- To find an audio/video about the subject
- To understand the main idea of an audio/video
- To understand words that I was not familiar with
- To understand different accents
- To write the listening journal in English
- To share information during class
- I had no difficulties
- Others: _____

C. Teachers’ support

11. Before doing listening journals, did you get instructions from your teacher?

No.	Guidelines	Yes	No
a.	Purpose of listening journals		
b.	Requirements for format		
c.	Use of language		
d.	Minimum number of listening journals		
e.	Writing style		
f.	Sample		
g.	Deadline for submission		
h.	Teacher feedback form		
i.	Others: _____		

12. How often did your teacher check your listening journals?

- Usually Sometimes Rarely

13. Did you get teacher’s feedback on your listening journals?

- Usually Sometimes Rarely

Please provide your teacher’s feedback/ comments on your listening journals?

D. Students’ attitudes towards listening journals

14. Do you like doing listening journals?

Yes

No

Please give reasons why (not)?

15. In your opinion, are listening journals helpful for non-English-majored students?

Yes

No

Please give reasons why (not)?

16. Do you agree or disagree with the following benefits of listening journals?

(1) Strongly disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree (5) Strongly agree

No	Benefits of listening journals	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
a.	Improve students’ motivation towards listening					
b.	Help students identify their learning problems/ difficulties and give solutions by themselves					
c.	Improve students’ autonomy					
d.	Increase students’ listening skills					
e.	Improve students’ English writing					
f.	Help students evaluate and track their own progress					
g.	Help students increase opportunities to interact with teachers and get feedback from teachers					
h.	Enable students to gain new knowledge and learn new words					
i.	Enable students to formulate their future study plans					
j.	Allow teachers to keep control of students’ online learning more effectively.					
k.	Others:					

E. Recommendation

17. Do you have any suggestions to improve this activity?

a) Yes

b) No

18. Would you do this activity again?

a) Yes

b) No

Others:

19. If you answered "No" to the previous question, justify why you would not do the activity again.

(Adapted from Farrah, 2012)

Appendix B

Focus Group Interview Questions

1. How do you keep the listening diary?
2. What do you like most about this activity?
3. Tell one thing you do not like most about this activity
4. Do you come up with any difficulties while doing this activity? If yes, what are they?
5. What can you learn from this activity?
6. What can I do to make the activity easier for you?/ Do you have any suggestions to improve this activity?
7. Do you want to do more activities like this? Why?

(Adapted from Shak, 2006)

SỬ DỤNG HOẠT ĐỘNG VIẾT NHẬT KÝ NGHE ĐỂ THEO DÕI VIỆC HỌC TRỰC TUYẾN CỦA SINH VIÊN TRÊN HỆ THỐNG QUẢN LÝ HỌC TẬP

Ngô Thị Minh Hải, Nguyễn Thị Huyền

*Trường Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch – Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội,
Đường Cầu Diễn, Bắc Từ Liêm, Hà Nội, Việt Nam*

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu nhằm đánh giá hiệu quả của việc áp dụng hoạt động viết nhật ký nghe đối với sự cải thiện học kỹ năng nghe của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh năm thứ hai trên hệ thống quản lý học tập (LMS) và tìm hiểu thái độ của sinh viên đối với hoạt động này. Nghiên cứu sử dụng phương pháp nghiên cứu hành động cùng bảng câu hỏi khảo sát với 53 sinh viên, phỏng vấn nhóm với 30 sinh viên, phân tích 53 tập nhật ký nghe của sinh viên trong 10 tuần và nhật ký của giáo viên tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy rằng hoạt động ghi nhật ký nghe có thể được sử dụng như một công cụ sư phạm để giúp giáo viên hiểu và theo sát các hoạt động học kỹ năng nghe trực tuyến của sinh viên. Bên cạnh đó, dữ liệu cho thấy hoạt động viết nhật ký nghe giúp người học có thể thấy được vấn đề còn tồn tại, khuyến khích họ chủ động tìm ra các chiến lược phù hợp để cải thiện kỹ năng nghe đồng thời góp phần cải thiện hứng thú học kỹ năng nghe cho người học. Đề xuất hoạt động này sẽ được nhân rộng và áp dụng cho các sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh để nâng cao hiệu quả của việc học trực tuyến.

Từ khóa: nghiên cứu hành động, hoạt động viết nhật ký nghe, kỹ năng nghe, học trực tuyến, hệ thống LMS

DIFFICULTIES IN LEGAL ENGLISH READING COMPREHENSION TO ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS AT HANOI LAW UNIVERSITY

Nhac Thanh Huong*

Hanoi Law University

87 Nguyen Chi Thanh Street, Dong Da District, Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract: Legal English, a style of ESP (English for Specific Purpose), is an indispensable factor contributing to the development of legal field. It cannot be denied that legal English reading comprehension plays an important role in learning legal English as it sets the basis for other skills. This present research, which makes use of survey questionnaires as the main method, aims to identify difficulties in legal English reading comprehension encountered by English majored students at Hanoi Law University. The results reveal that the majority of the participants have troubles in terms of linguistic aspects of legal English language, background knowledge of law subjects and psychological factors. It is expected that these findings do propose a number of suggestions for teachers in legal English teaching process.

Keywords: difficulties, legal English, reading comprehension, Hanoi Law University

1. Introduction

It has been widely recognized that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has gained great concern in English language teaching and learning in recent years. According to Butler-Pascoe (2009), “today with the emergence of English as the prominent language in an increasingly technological and global society, the study of ESP has assumed a sense of urgency, especially in countries that are attempting to restructure the manner in which students learn and perform English” (p. 1). This statement encourages education program designers to include ESP in teaching syllabus as a useful tool for students. Similarly, Anthony (2007) points out that

English used in academic settings for professional purposes requires learners to deepen the knowledge of specific topics, thus the ESP approach can be useful as a learning methodology. At the same time, Gatehouse (2001) notes that ESP is not only a learning approach but also a means of development as it allows them to gain the broad knowledge of the world.

Legal English, a specific branch of English in legal fields, is basically used by legal professionals such as lawyers, judges, and prosecutors in their work. It is undeniable that in the era of globalization, exposure to different legal systems requires legal practitioners to communicate successfully in English using the appropriate legal language and terminology. At Hanoi

* Corresponding author.

Email address: nhacthanhhuong@gmail.com

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Law University, legal English is the main subject of English majored students' learning program. Legal English is considered to be challenging to acquire, even for native English speakers. Among four skills of legal English, reading has a crucial role in building and developing other legal English skills. Without reading, it is difficult for students to reach a higher level in both legal education and legal practice in the future. However, it is the fact that many students find it hard to comprehend the reading texts due to "incomprehensible verbiage found in legal documents as well as an arcane jargon used among attorneys" (Schane, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, mastering legal English by law graduates whose native language is not English proves to be of great importance in their later professions. During the process of teaching legal English, the writer realizes that learners at Hanoi Law University have faced plenty of difficulties, among which English reading comprehension ones stood on the first rank. Obstacles in reading comprehension negatively affect the enhancement of other legal English skills. For such reasons, this study seeks to clarify difficulties in legal English reading comprehension of English majored students at this higher education context.

2. Literature Review

Comprehending the content of the reading texts plays an essential part in language teaching and learning process. It not only provides important and sufficient language input for the learners, but also is the foundation for further development in listening, speaking and writing. Reading comprehension is, however, not an easy task at all. Van den Broek (2012, p. 315) states that: "reading comprehension is a complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enables the reader to create a mental representation of the text".

According to the language researchers, there are different factors affecting the reading process, i.e., background knowledge of the reader and the context in which the text is to be understood (Anderson et al., 1985).

Regarding ESP, the teaching and learning of English for specific learners and purposes (Widdowson, 1983), it contains both content-based and language-based knowledge, learners are required to be good at both special fields of knowledge and language. In the case of legal English, learners need to have knowledge of both English and law subjects. Notwithstanding, ESP learners in general and legal English learners in particular meet a number of difficulties acquiring the content of the reading texts due to limited knowledge of language, specific fields, and psychology factors (e.g., Pulido, 2004; Rosyidah, 2013). As Tarchi (2010, p. 30) states that "the ability to infer meaning in text is positively influenced by the level of vocabulary and background knowledge the learner has."

2.1. Factors Contributing to the Difficulties in Reading Comprehension

2.1.1. Legal English Terminology

In reading comprehension, vocabulary is one of important indicators to understand the reading texts. Legal English terms have their own distinctive features which makes legal English reading texts challenging for learners to comprehend.

Veretina (2012) views that legal English terminology comprises the use of archaic terms called legalese such as *pursuant to* (under; in accordance with); *prior to* (before); *subsequent to* (after), etc., which makes it hard for laypersons to understand. Moreover, like other types of ESP, technical terms are frequently used in the field of laws. Some of them are familiar to laypersons (e.g., *patent, share, royalty*), while others, are generally only known to lawyers (e.g., *bailment, abatement*), which

usually causes the miscomprehension (Mellinkoff, 2004). In addition, legal practitioners have a tendency to use common words with uncommon meanings in specific legal contexts, e.g., “*attachment, action, consideration, execute, party*” (Rylance, 1994). It is clearly noted that a considerable number of Latin and French words and phrases are found in legal English. Words of Latin origin are: *negligence, inferior, versus, pro se, stare decisis, obiter dictum*, etc. Besides, the influence of French is shown not only in the words of French origin (*appeal, claim, complaint, court, default*), but also in the position of adjectives behind the modified nouns in phrases such as: *attorney general, fee simple absolute, state auditor general*, etc.

Grammatical structures

Grammar is the main component of any languages in the world. Rose (2006, p. 60) states that “grammatical structures become one of the most serious problems in English reading for academic purposes”. In other words, many difficulties in reading arise from the use of complex grammatical structures.

In legal English documents, complex and compound sentences are frequently used instead of simple ones. Specifically, sentences in legal documents include a great deal of information, repetitiveness, noun phrases with plenty of modifications as well as coordinate and subordinate clauses. Such kinds of sentences make it hard for learners to understand. Also, impersonal style is more preferred to use in legal English reading texts. Impersonal style refers to the use of third person (e.g., *everybody, nobody, every person*) and passive voice. The use of impersonal style creates the impression that law is impartial. However, such generalizations are vague and make it obscure to people who do not specialize in law.

2.1.2. Legal Background Knowledge

According to Marzano (2004, p. 1), “what students already know about the content is one of the strongest indicators of how well they will learn new information related to the content”. Similarly, Gurthrie (2000) who considers comprehension impossible without prior knowledge states definitely “all learning involves transfer from previous experience. Even initial learning involves transfer that is based on previous experience and prior knowledge” (p. 26) and “background knowledge, often called prior knowledge, is a collection of “abstracted residue” (p. 33). In other words, background knowledge is an essential element in learning and reading as it helps students understand new ideas and experiences. Clearly, in legal English reading comprehension, background knowledge of law proves to be even more important as law needs to be precise and accurate. Besides, laws in different jurisdictions are distinctive. Therefore, without background knowledge, legal English learners are sure to meet difficulties in reading and acquiring knowledge.

2.1.3. Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are considered to play a crucial role in building and developing reading comprehension skills. As ESL/ EFL reading comprehension, legal English reading requires various strategies or techniques, for example, guessing meaning from text, skimming and scanning for efficient reading. Many linguists emphasize the effectiveness of learning words from the context. Prince (1996, p. 489) indicates the benefits of guessing and learning from context including developing prediction and inference strategies, as well as the use of words for communication purposes.

2.1.4. Psychological Factors

Attitude and motivation are the two factors that affect learners' language learning in general and reading comprehension in particular. Mckenna (2001) indicates that negative attitudes as well as demotivation can interfere learners' reading capacity and language learning achievement. When reading English, if students are motivated, they are sure to be able to overcome difficulties. Qin Xiaoqing (2002) claims that motivation is a significant factor which determines either the success or failure in second language acquisition since motivation can directly affect the learning strategies and persistent learning. In case of legal English learning, it is not an exception.

2.2. *Previous Studies on Legal English Reading Comprehension*

In terms of teaching and learning ESP, learners are required to be good at both content-based knowledge of a specific field and language-based knowledge. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that ESP learners have struggled to deal with a variety of problems from acquiring the content to mastering language (e.g., Ho, 2016; Rosyidah, 2013; Ha, 2011; Tran & Duong, 2018).

Among ESP areas, legal English is considered to be one of the most complicated ones due to the terminology, linguistic features, which result in the difficulty in understanding and interpreting legal terms. From the linguistic point of view, the transfer of the meaning and interference with the other languages and mother tongue present major obstacles to both teachers and learners as it is quite difficult to cope with law and language simultaneously. Learners have to focus not only on general English, but also on specialized vocabulary, i.e. legal English (Saliu, 2013). White (1982) indicated that one of the most problematic features of legal discourse was 'invisible'

(p. 423). He claimed that "the most serious obstacles to comprehensibility are not the vocabulary and sentence structure employed in law, but the unstated conventions by which language operates" (p. 423).

Tarkhova (2007) carried out a research in the context of her institution in Russia, a civil law country. Textbooks used in this context were published by UK Publishing Houses. It is common knowledge that the UK common-law tradition clearly differs from Russian civil-law tradition. The findings showed that the difficulties in legal English reading primarily arose from the legal terms, the differences in the legal systems between Russia and the UK. This affirms the fact that legal languages are shaped by the legal system in which they are used with different legal rules, legal concepts, therefore, the semantic domains of legal terms did not correspond with one another (Mattila, 2006).

Tiersma (1999) stated that teaching and fostering the skills of legal English is extremely significant and necessary for law students, even for legal experts. However, supplementary sills for legal English reading comprehension for students to access legal English documents are yet to be focused. Therefore, students are still not aware of the appropriate methods needed to analyze the legal English documents. Moreover, inadequate number of seminar discussions or talk shows have been organized for students to exchange their strategies on the process of learning legal English reading comprehension.

In the context of Vietnam, Nguyen et al. (2016) affirmed that legal English is a complex major because legal English includes many genres, each of which has its own distinct level of complexity. Those features make legal English learners find it difficult to tackle reading problems. More recently, Nguyen et al. (2016) carried out a study to clarify the effects of applying ESP

materials on reading comprehension of students of law enforcement in Vietnam. The findings revealed that ESP reading materials motivated students to enhance both vocabulary and knowledge of their own field of study and at the same time, encouraged them to use English in everyday situations.

In general, the reading of legal English texts with complex sentence structures proves to be extremely demanding as it comprises specific legal terminology. In order to deeply comprehend the meaning of the legal jargons, students are required to have adequate background knowledge. Moreover, they need to be able to bring “real world” knowledge into the legal texts (Deegan, 1995) in order to interact with them. Reading legal cases in English is another type of challenging reading since students need to get access to knowledge of case briefs such as the name of the case, facts of the case, legal issues, judgement, and reasoning. Grammatical structures are also the factor contributing to difficulties in legal English reading comprehension. On the one hand, Dewitz (1997) points out that grammatical knowledge “helps the readers understand the relationship among concepts within a sentence” (p. 225). On the other hand, Christensen (2007) emphasizes that understanding the grammatical and syntactical structure of legal texts may pose a challenge to novice legal readers due to its complex nature. Finally, research has shown that knowledge on reading strategies proves to be of great importance for it allows readers to “set a purpose for reading, self-question, search for important information, make references, summarize and monitor the developing meaning” (Dewitz, 1997, p. 228).

3. Methods

3.1. Participants and Settings

The number of 215 legal English majored students of third and fourth year at

Hanoi Law University took part in the survey. The participants shared the similar characteristics, in which they have finished three legal English courses. Also, reading comprehension is required in all three legal English courses. However, one thing noted is that legal English students do not have adequate knowledge of the variety of law areas namely civil law, criminal law, tort law, contract law, commercial law; company law, international law, and even real property law since law is not their major in the training program.

At Hanoi Law University, legal English majors are required to study four legal English courses. The textbooks used throughout the four courses are *Professional English in Use – Law; Introduction to International Legal English; International Legal English* – which are all published by the UK publishing houses. It is widely known that the UK follows the Common-law tradition, which is different from Vietnamese civil-law tradition.

3.2. Data Collection Instrument

Survey questionnaire is the main method to collect the data to clarify the difficulties in legal English reading comprehension encountered by English majored students. The questionnaires consisted of two questions seeking the participants’ attitude towards legal English reading comprehension and its difficulties. Then it is followed by twenty statements on a 5-point Likert Scales. Among twenty statements, there are eight statements of linguistic aspects of legal English, three statements of legal traditions (9-11), two statements of legal background knowledge (12-13), four statements of reading strategies (14-17); and the last three statements of psychological factors. The participants were expected to indicate (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree.

3.3. Procedures of Data Collection and Data Analysis

At the beginning of the second legal English course in the academic year of 2021-2022, the survey questionnaires were administered to 215 legal English major juniors' email addresses. The respondents were requested to return the questionnaire after one week since the date of email-shot to ensure that all issues in the survey were considered carefully before replying. The data was then collected and coded for the purpose of the data treatment. SPSS program was used to analyze the data quantitatively. Specifically, frequency count, percentage, and descriptive mean were employed to address the difficulties in learning legal English with Likert scales, particularly the mean value of each item can be interpreted as follows: (1.0-1.79) strongly disagree, (1.8-2.59) disagree, (2.6-3.39) neutral, (3.4-4.19) agree, and (4.2-5.0) strongly disagree.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1. Participants' Attitude Towards Legal English Reading Comprehension

Figure 1

Learners' Attitude Towards the Necessity of Legal English

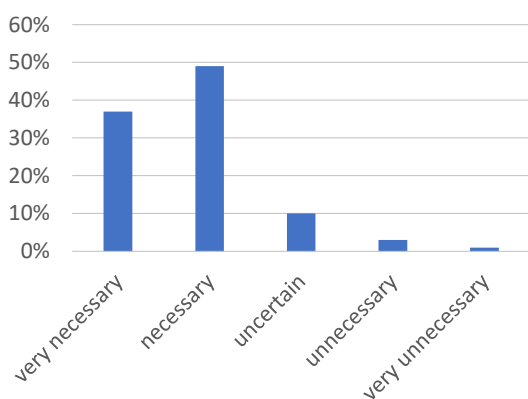
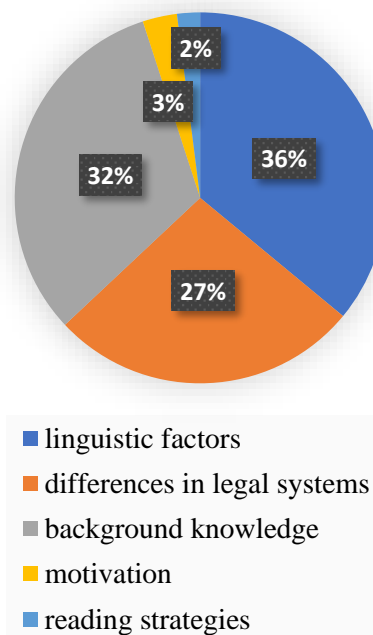


Figure 1 illustrates the learners' attitude towards the necessity of legal English. It is obvious that the majority of participants surveyed with a total of more

than 85% were self-conscious of the great necessity of legal English. Realizing the importance of legal English is considered to be one of the main motivations for students to acquire legal English.

Figure 2

Learners' Difficulties in the Legal English Reading Comprehension



In terms of the dominant factors contributing to difficulties in legal English reading comprehension, linguistic factors are considered to be the most challenging one for most of the learners, which accounted for 36%. The lack of background knowledge and differences in legal systems stood on the next rank of difficulty with the choice rate of 32%, 27% respectively. The participants had a few obstacles in terms of reading strategies and motivation. Reading strategy and motivation were not the big difficulties with the low choice rate of less than 5% for each.

4.2. Difficulties in Legal English Reading Comprehension

Table 1 shows the factors contributing to difficulties in legal English reading comprehension.

Table 1*Difficulties in Legal English Reading Comprehension*

Item	Content	Mean	SD
1.	The use of common words with uncommon meaning makes it difficult for me to understand the reading text.	4.14	.678
2.	I feel confused about double and triple synonyms of legal English.	3.19	.774
3.	I usually cannot know how to use the meaning of the archaic words.	4.17	.828
4.	It is hard to understand the meaning of Latin terms.	4.33	.516
5.	I find it easy to guess the meaning of French borrowed words.	3.66	.740
6.	The use of passive structure in the reading texts make it difficult to understand.	3.90	.594
7.	I find it hard to comprehend due to long and complex sentences.	4.29	.733
8.	I think the use of impersonal style makes the reading text more challenging to understand.	3.89	.840
9.	Isometimes do not understand the reading text due to non-equivalent Vietnamese legal terms for English ones.	4.05	.727
10.	Highly specialized concept of English legal systems makes me difficult to understand.	4.66	.476
11.	The unfamiliar law fields and topic are challenging to me.	4.06	.655
12.	I do not understand much about the content of the reading texts because of my insufficient Vietnamese background knowledge of the topics.	4.01	.727
13.	I usually do not understand much about the content of the texts because of my insufficient background knowledge of common-law traditions.	4.17	.617
14.	It is very hard for me to guess the words from the context.	3.13	.664
15.	I do not know how to decide what to read carefully and what to ignore.	2.43	.574
16.	I have difficulties in applying skimming and scanning strategy in legal English text.	2.20	.620
17.	When reading legal English texts, I try to translate the terms into my native language.	4.83	.408
18.	I think legal English reading is not useful to me.	2.12	.470
19.	Teachers do not give me interesting and useful law topics to encourage my reading.	1.43	.570
20.	I cannot understand teachers' instructions on legal English reading lessons.	2.33	.674

As seen from Table 1, the results show that eight distinctive features of legal English were deemed to be challenging, with the high mean ranging from 3.19 to 4.33. The participants strongly agreed that the use of Latin terms in legal English texts made it

difficult for them to acquire with the mean of 4.33. Archaic words and long, complex sentence stood on the next ranks of challenging level with the mean of 4.29 and 4.17, respectively. Other linguistic features of legal English including the use of

common words with uncommon meaning (4.14), use of passive structure (3.90), the use of impersonal style (3.89), double and triple synonyms (3.19), and French borrowed words (3.66) were problematic factors. In general, there is no doubt that linguistic features of legal English cause great problems to learners in reading comprehension as most of the students agreed with the items surveyed in questionnaires.

Concerning the differences between two legal systems, Vietnamese and English ones, all participants strongly agreed that highly specialized concepts, unfamiliar legal areas and topics, non-equivalent legal terms were the hard factors in the process of acquiring legal English with the high mean value of agreement of 4.66, 4.06 and 4.05, respectively. It gave no surprise to the researcher because of the fact that the semantic domains of legal terms did not correspond with one another (Mattila, 2006). As a result, the translation of legal concepts was complex and could lead to severe misunderstandings (Gotti, 2016). There are a number of no equivalent terms due to the different legal traditions. Such intercultural differences between various legal systems are of central importance to legal language and cause frequent misunderstandings in international legal communication.

Inadequate background knowledge of Vietnamese law and English law are also the contributing factors to difficulties in legal English reading comprehension with the high mean of 4.17 and 4.01 respectively. It should be noted that the participants involved in the study were English majors, therefore, the lack of background knowledge of law field is found easy to understand.

In terms of reading strategies (items 14-17), learners did not find it much difficult to apply reading focus ability as well as skimming, scanning in legal contexts with

the mean of 2.43, and 2.20, respectively). However, a large number of the participants were neutral when mentioning the guessing strategy of the new English legal terms. This statistic is not surprising at all due to both its distinctive feature and learners' lack of background knowledge. Learners, therefore, viewed it challenging to guess its meaning despite their effort in applying reading techniques. One notable technique that learners had the tendency to use when trying to understand legal English reading is translation ($M=4.83$). As noticed, clarity and deep content understandings are necessary in legal fields, translating from the source language into the target language proves to be useful in legal English reading comprehension.

Similarly, psychological factors are important for learners to achieve learning purposes. In this study, the majority of the participants showed positive and optimistic attitude to legal English reading activities and legal English instructors with the mean ranging from 1.43 to 2.33. In other words, learners were not demotivated, teachers' instructions were not a factor causing them troubles in reading comprehension, either.

The findings showed that legal English majored students did encounter difficulties in reading legal English texts, particularly in terms of linguistic factors, legal systems and inadequate background knowledge of law areas. As shown, legal English has its own distinctive features, which makes even native speakers find it challenging. Moreover, law is not the participants' major, thus they lacked legal background knowledge. The result is in line with previous studies in the context of ESP reading (e.g. Ha, 2011; Tran & Duong, 2018), which concluded that learners had difficulties in dealing with ESP reading texts due to inadequate ESP vocabulary and limited background knowledge of the ESP subjects.

5. Implications and Conclusion

This study demonstrated the difficulties in legal English reading comprehension faced by English majored students at Hanoi Law University. Most of the obstacles arise from distinctive linguistic features of legal English, differences in legal traditions and inadequate background knowledge. It is necessary that students are required to be equipped with content of law knowledge before being taught legal English. Although legal English majors do not need to master legal concepts, it should be noted that when structuring a legal English course, teachers have to provide information regarding their own legal systems. Teachers are advised to incorporate the basic legal principles in English to equip learners with background knowledge of laws. A variety of legal topics including criminal law, tort law, contract law, company law, commercial law, international law, etc. should be introduced to learners. In order to achieve this aim, law subject classes should precede legal English classes to ensure that learners can acquire legal English learning effectively.

In case of not being able to assign law course before legal English course, it may be suggested that “providing background knowledge through pre-reading as well as previewing content for the reader seems to be the most obvious strategies for legal English teacher to come up with the problems students have in reading comprehension” (Shabani, Khatib, & Ebadi, 2010, p. 6). This encourages language program designers to adopt Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach in teaching and learning legal English.

In addition, a review of language will be of great value in legal English teaching context. For different legal topics, learners should be provided with a wide range of language exercises covering the distinctive

features of legal English, for example, the use of Latin terms, borrowed words, or common words with uncommon meaning. Those exercises, if possible, should be included in various activities, e.g., role-play, enabling learners to interact with legal English language. In this way, language teachers can enhance the learners’ motivation, thus promoting reading and learning process. Moreover, using authentic materials of legal cases for learners to read is highly recommended. It is undeniable that nothing is more precious than engaging them into simulated real-life cases.

Despite the results the current study has achieved, there are several limitations. Firstly, the study was conducted to find out the difficulties in legal English reading comprehension, other skills are not the scope of this study. Secondly, the number of participants, which was restricted to English majors, was rather limited. Law students were not involved in this study, the results, to some extent, cannot reflect the behaviour of a larger population in different law majors or contexts. Therefore, in order to have a detailed insight, further research should be carried out to fill in the research gaps.

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Appendix

This questionnaire aims at investigating “Difficulties in legal English reading comprehension of English-majored students at Hanoi Law University”. This questionnaire will be used for the purpose of data analysis. I look forward to receiving your cooperation and ensure that your information is only for educational purposes.

1. In your opinion, how necessary is legal English reading comprehension in the training program you are studying?

- Very unnecessary
- Unnecessary
- Uncertain
- Necessary
- Very necessary

2. What is the most challenging factor contributing to the difficulties in legal English reading comprehension? (Tick one choice)

- Linguistic factors
- Inadequate background knowledge
- Differences in legal systems
- Lack of reading strategies
- Psychological factors

3. What are the difficulties in legal English reading comprehension? Please tick (✓) your choice. (SD = strongly disagree; D = disagree; N = neutral; A = agree; SA = strongly agree)

Items	Contents	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	The use of common words with uncommon meaning makes it difficult for me to understand the reading text.					
2.	I feel confused about double and triple synonyms of legal English.					

3.	I usually cannot know how to use the meaning of the archaic words.					
4.	It is hard to understand the meaning of Latin terms.					
5.	I find it easy to guess the meaning of French borrowed words.					
6.	The use of passive structure in the reading texts make it difficult to understand.					
7.	I find it hard to comprehend due to long and complex sentences.					
8.	I think the use of impersonal style makes the reading text more challenging to understand.					
9.	I sometimes do not understand the reading text due to non-equivalent Vietnamese legal terms for English ones.					
10.	Highly specialized concept of English legal systems makes me difficult to understand.					
11.	The unfamiliar law fields and topic are challenging to me.					
12.	I do not understand much about the content of the reading texts because of my insufficient Vietnamese background knowledge of the topics.					
13.	I usually do not understand much about the content of the texts because of my insufficient background knowledge of common-law traditions.					
14.	It is very hard for me to guess the words from the context.					
15.	I do not know how to decide what to read carefully and what to ignore.					
16.	I have difficulties in applying skimming and scanning strategy in legal English text.					
17.	When reading legal English texts, I try to translate the terms into my native language.					
18.	I think legal English reading is not useful to me.					
19.	Teachers do not give me interesting and useful law topics to encourage my reading.					
20.	I cannot understand teachers' instructions on legal English reading lessons.					

NHỮNG KHÓ KHĂN TRONG ĐỌC HIỂU TIẾNG ANH PHÁP LÝ CỦA SINH VIÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH TẠI TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC LUẬT HÀ NỘI

Nhạc Thanh Hương

Đại học Luật Hà Nội

87 Nguyễn Chí Thanh, Đống Đa, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Tiếng Anh pháp lý là yếu tố không thể thiếu, góp phần vào sự phát triển của lĩnh vực pháp lý. Trong quá trình học tập tiếng Anh pháp lý, kỹ năng đọc hiểu đóng vai trò quan trọng bởi đọc hiểu là cơ sở để phát triển các kỹ năng khác. Thông qua phương pháp điều tra khảo sát, nghiên cứu nhằm tìm ra những khó khăn mà sinh viên ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại Trường Đại học Luật Hà Nội gặp phải trong quá trình đọc hiểu văn bản tiếng Anh pháp lý. Kết quả cho thấy người học gặp khó khăn do đặc điểm khác biệt của ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh pháp lý, thiếu kiến thức nền pháp luật và các yếu tố tâm lý của người học. Tác giả hi vọng những kết quả này sẽ đưa ra một số đề xuất sư phạm cho giảng viên trong quá trình giảng dạy tiếng Anh pháp lý.

Từ khóa: khó khăn, tiếng Anh pháp lý, đọc hiểu, Đại học Luật Hà Nội

EXPLORING VIETNAMESE NON-ENGLISH-MAJORED FRESHMEN'S ENGLISH-SPEAKING ANXIETY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

Ho Dinh Phuong Khanh, Truong Thi Nhu Ngoc*

*University of Economics Ho Chi Minh City,
59C, Nguyen Dinh Chieu, Ward 6, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam*

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Abstract: The study investigates Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen's speaking anxiety. 297 non-English-majored freshmen enrolled at a public university in Vietnam answered the Questionnaire of Speaking Anxiety. The results show that participants had a moderate level of English-speaking anxiety, with female students having a higher level of speaking anxiety than male students. To provide insights into sources of speaking anxiety, anxiety-provoking situations and strategies that students use to cope with speaking anxiety, follow-up qualitative data was collected. 24 students from the pool of participants were conveniently recruited and randomly assigned to five focus groups, who answered the semi-structured interview questions. The findings show that students experience a higher level of speaking anxiety when they are called to answer questions by their teacher in class and during a speaking test, and to make an oral presentation than when they perform a role-play in front of the class and work in groups. Besides, students attributed their speaking anxiety to their English-speaking abilities, the nature of teachers' questions, fear of losing face and being judged, and fear of receiving low scores. To cope with speaking anxiety, students reported using social and cognitive strategies. The study provides helpful information for English lecturers to understand the nature of students' speaking anxiety and help students tackle speaking anxiety.

Keywords: speaking anxiety, non-English major, Vietnam

1. Introduction

English has earned itself the global status of the most commonly spoken language, with billions of learners worldwide recognizing the importance of learning English. In Vietnam, many investments and efforts have been made to improve the quality of English teaching and learning. One specific example is the National Foreign Languages Project 2020, which the government expects to enable students to communicate well in English. Among the four skills, speaking is essential,

especially for those entering the job market. Improved communication skills allow students to apply for better jobs and have higher living standards. Many Vietnamese universities have recently focused on high training quality, international exchange programs, and internationally recognized research publications. Thus, the demand for effective oral communication skills is higher than ever. More and more subjects are being taught in English, so students are expected to have an excellent English-speaking ability to interact with their teachers and peers in the

* Corresponding author.

Email address: ngocttn@ueh.edu.vn / truongthinhungoc2303@gmail.com
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classroom and socialize with the international academic community. However, Vietnamese EFL students tend to speak English with difficulty and seem to have trouble communicating in English. Among various issues that hinder oral proficiency, English speaking anxiety is the crucial factor that can impede students' speaking ability.

Thus, this study investigates the speaking anxiety level of Vietnamese non-English-majored first-year students and explores how students experience speaking anxiety, the causes of their speaking anxiety, and strategies they use to address this psychological factor. The findings of this study, which provide some insights into teaching and acquiring speaking skills, can be a great boon to both teachers and students. First, teachers can be more aware of the obstacles their students encounter. Teachers can realize that teaching styles and classroom techniques may impact students' attitudes towards learning English and their oral performance. They can make changes to establish rapport with students and create a supportive learning environment which can result in higher levels of student participation. Understanding the source of problems that cause speaking anxiety, teachers can develop strategies to help students overcome the barriers and enhance their self-confidence. Second, first-year students who have just entered university may not be familiar with new teaching methods and classroom requirements. Learning in a new environment with more emphasis on speaking skills, they will likely encounter problems and face difficulties. By participating in the study, students can identify the factors that make them nervous, develop strategies and learn to control their speaking anxiety, which helps them prepare better for their subsequent learning. The study results can also be used to adjust the teaching methods, program design, and classroom activities.

Accordingly, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What is Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen's English speaking anxiety level?
2. How do Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen experience English speaking anxiety?
3. What factors cause Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen's English-speaking anxiety?
4. What strategies do Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen use to cope with speaking anxiety?

2. Literature

2.1. *Anxiety, Language Anxiety, and Speaking Anxiety*

Anxiety is the state of an individual when feeling "uneasiness, frustration, self-doubt, apprehension, or worry" (Scovel, 1978, p. 134). In language learning, Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) defined language anxiety as "a distinguished multipart of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom language learning derived from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128). Language anxiety can be defined as the adverse emotional reaction experienced by learners when they speak in a second or foreign language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). According to Horwitz et al. (1986), language anxiety comprises communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Communication apprehension in language learning is described as "a type of shyness characterized by fear of or anxiety about communicating with people" (Horwitz et al., 1986, p. 127) and the unwillingness of the learner to talk (Cabansag, 2020). Communication apprehension has significantly impacted learners' performance in foreign language classrooms (McCroskey & Anderson, 1976). Test anxiety, which

refers to apprehension over academic evaluation, is a type of performance anxiety caused by fear of failure (Horwitz et al., 1986). Fear of negative evaluation is defined as apprehension about others' evaluations and avoidance of evaluative situations (Horwitz et al., 1986). Anxiety also leads to passive behaviors because anxious students tend to avoid being called on to participate in class. They are also less likely to volunteer answers in spoken classes (Bekleyen, 2009).

Speaking is the skill most affected by anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986). Indeed, speaking has been cited as the most anxiety-inducing skill in language learning, and it is the most conspicuous source of anxiety in the language classroom (Ozturk & Gurbuz, 2013). In recent years, a lot of research has been done to identify language learners' speaking anxiety levels in different contexts. Miskam and Saidalvi (2019) surveyed undergraduates at a Malaysian university and found that most participants had moderate English-speaking anxiety. In Al Nakhalah's (2016) study, observations and interviews revealed some speaking difficulties that fourth-grade students at Al Quds Open University face due to fear of mistakes, shyness, anxiety, and lack of confidence. Liu and Jackson (2008) investigated the unwillingness to communicate and anxiety among Chinese first-year undergraduate non-English-majored learners. Findings revealed that more than one-third of the participants felt anxious in their English language classrooms. Gumartifa and Syahri (2021) conducted a descriptive study investigating some difficulties university students face and found that the majority are depressed when practicing or beginning to speak English in public.

2.2. Factors Causing English Speaking Anxiety

Factors affecting and causing speaking anxiety among language learners

vary across Asian contexts. According to Rajitha (2020), "many factors such as linguistic, psychological, physiological and cultural factors affect and cause the second language speaking anxiety" (p. 1055). Rajitha (2020) conducted a qualitative study among 50 undergraduates in India. The primary anxiety factors are language factors, lack of knowledge of grammar, pronunciation factors, stage fear, lack of confidence, shyness, and peer factor. Debreli and Demirkan (2016) documented factors that cause speaking anxiety among 196 Turkish students enrolling in the English Preparatory School of a university in Cyprus, including pronunciation difficulties, being asked immediate questions by the teacher, and failure to understand the teacher's questions. Likewise, Manley (2015) did a quantitative survey using a modified Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS among 832 first-year students in a Korean university. The results showed that the main factors contributing to English classroom speaking anxiety involve anxiety about class performance, uncomfortableness when speaking, pressure for tests and preparation, comparisons to peers, and negative attitudes towards English class. Similarly, through classroom observation, self-reported questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews, Tian (2019) pointed out that the major causes of English-speaking anxiety among 22 sophomores at a national university in Korea include negative attitude towards the speaking task, preparation time, language proficiency, and negative feedback from peers.

Similar findings were reported for the Southeast Asian contexts regarding sources of classroom speaking anxiety. For instance, using the Anxiety Scale in Spoken English as a Lingua Franca, Wilang, and Singhasiri (2017) found that fast speech and understanding the meaning behind an utterance were anxiety-provoking situations among undergraduates in Thai universities.

Batiha et al. (2014) used a mixed-method approach to investigate the causes of speaking anxiety among Indonesian students. The authors concluded that factors that provoked foreign language anxiety include test anxiety, fear of failing the course, instructor-learner interaction, vocabulary, negative evaluation, and high expectations. Other causes were reported by Jugo (2020), who revealed that negative self-perception, error correction, fear of making mistakes or being negatively evaluated are significant sources of anxiety for Filipino learners. Likewise, Milan (2019) documented that Filipino students experienced speaking anxiety due to grammatical errors, lack of opportunities to speak the language, internal motivation, and misconceptions about spoken English fluency. Besides, Milan (2019) pointed out that lack of personal training in the target language, instructional materials unrelated to students' interest or major, and concerns about being corrected or ridiculed caused speaking anxiety.

Studies among learners in other EFL contexts, especially in the Middle East and Arab world, reveal a common cause of speaking anxiety: low proficiency in the language. Sabbah (2018) conducted a study among students in a Qatar college and found that causes of anxiety included a lack of necessary basics of English, the discrepancy between the teaching methods and techniques used in class, and fear of being laughed. Ahmed et al. (2017) surveyed 240 students at the University of Balochistan in Pakistan using the adapted FLCAS. The participants attributed their anxiety to the disappointment caused by a failure to speak English fluently, poor accent, and inefficiency in using English structures. In the same context of Pakistan, Bahtti et al. (2016) studied 145 intermediate-level EFL students of different public colleges in Hyderabad, Sindh. They found that the learners' speaking anxiety was caused by

their feeling of low proficiency, nervousness, or lack of confidence. Shabani (2012) disclosed that Iranian students ascribed their speaking anxiety to fear of failing and leaving unfavorable impressions on others (Shabani, 2012). Mohtasham and Farnia (2017) found several causes: lack of preparation, lack of practice, self-doubt, fear of making pronunciation and grammar mistakes, and negative reactions from teachers and classmates among learners in Afghanistan. In a study among 373 English major students at Taif university in Saudi Arabia, other anxiety-provoking situations were found to be "worrying about the consequences of failing, forgetting things they knew and feeling uneasiness during language tests" (Alsowat, 2016, p. 193).

In addition to psychological and cultural factors, demographic factors, i.e., gender, may influence the anxiety level among language learners with mixed findings. Mohtasham and Farnia (2017) interviewed 40 Iranian EFL learners and found that females' anxiety level was significantly higher than that of males in impromptu speaking activities. Similarly, Park and French (2013) examined gender differences in language anxiety among 948 university students in Korea and pointed out that females reported higher anxiety levels than males. Likewise, surveying 383 Turkish university students, Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013) found that female students got more anxious than male students while speaking in English in the classroom. This finding was confirmed by Çağatay (2015), who found that female students seem more anxious when speaking English. However, Lian and Budin (2014) found that Malaysian male students were more anxious than females in the English class. Meanwhile, gender was found to have no significant impact on English-speaking anxiety in other countries such as Saudi Arabia (Alsowat, 2016), Turkey (e.g., Debreli & Demirkan, 2016), and Jordan (e.g., Batiha et al., 2016).

2.3. Effects of Speaking Anxiety

Speaking anxiety does not permanently harm language learners. On the one hand, the positive force, i.e., facilitating anxiety may benefit language learners in several ways. According to Milan (2019), anxiety is not negative because a certain percentage of anxiety can enhance students' motivation to learn. The feeling of anxiety indicates that a person dares to be a successful language learner (Sutarsyah, 2017). Using three instruments in collecting the data: a speaking test, questionnaire, and interview, Christy and Mukhaiyar (2020) found out that the students having low levels of anxiety performed well in the speech test. This finding implies that anxiety positively affects students' performance. Employing observations, interviews, and a questionnaire, Djahimo et al. (2018) also revealed that anxiety impacted speaking performance and asserted that low-level anxiety students could perform better thanks to high motivation and self-confidence.

On the other hand, debilitating anxiety may cause learners to withdraw from the language task and lead to avoidance behaviors (Scovel, 1978). Many researchers and instructors also recognize anxiety as a hindrance for those learners who want to achieve good speaking abilities (Fleury, 2005). Studies have found that anxiety may significantly impact students and prevent them from participating in classroom speaking activities (Cabansag, 2020). Students' anxiety may also result in physical and psychological effects such as increased heart rate, trembling, sweating, hesitance to speak, stage fright, and avoidance of eye contact with their teachers (Milan, 2019). Studies have pointed out the negative impacts of speaking anxiety on students' performance, apart from adverse behavioral and emotional reactions. Melouah (2013) concluded that speaking anxiety greatly affects students' oral performance.

According to Mohamed and Wahid (2009), speaking anxiety can lead to low performance in both speaking skills and oral performance. In a semi-structured interview, most participants reported that anxiety negatively affects their speaking performance, causing a lack of logic, fluency, and accuracy in their utterances (Wang & Roopchund, 2015).

2.4. Speaking Anxiety in Vietnam

For many Vietnamese learners of English, speaking is considered the most challenging skill, and speaking anxiety has been seen as a significant factor contributing to their English-speaking difficulties. Several studies on English-speaking anxiety have been conducted to explore this issue in Vietnam. Ngo and Nguyen (2018) surveyed 40 high school students at a high school in the southern part of Vietnam who had been learning English for approximately seven years. The authors confirmed the negative impact of test-taking anxiety on EFL learners' speaking performance and demonstrated that students with high anxiety levels had low speaking achievement.

Tran (2019) conducted a study using FLCAS to examine anxiety levels in the language classroom among 39 first-year students at Hanoi National University of Education. The participants reported low English proficiency, demonstrated through their reticence and passivity in class, unwillingness, and uncertainty in using the language. Based on the findings, the author suggested that speaking anxiety did exist in the foreign language classroom, and the participants experienced a high level of anxiety. The main causes were a lack of confidence in communication and worrying about the consequences of failing. The respondents also felt anxious about tests, speaking activities, teachers' speaking speed, and feelings of inferiority toward classmates.

Le and Tran (2020) used a descriptive research design to conduct a study among 123 first-year students at Thai Nguyen University. The authors found that the participants experienced a moderate level of speaking anxiety. The main causes were fear of being laughed at (95%), fear of making mistakes (86%), and lack of confidence (75%). Other causes, such as fear of negative evaluation and fear of being the focus of attention were also reported. However, regarding the main effect of anxiety levels, the mean levels of proficiency for Low anxiety ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 0.70$) was significantly larger than for High anxiety ($M = 1.68$, $SD = 0.66$), $p = .002$. These results indicated that higher levels of anxiety hindered academic performance.

2.5. Strategies to Tackle Speaking Anxiety

Some studies have been carried out to identify the self-coping strategies used by language learners. Alotumi (2021) used an online Google-Forms-based survey to collect data among 300 EFL college Yemeni students aged 21-26. The results showed the students had a medium level of learning environment regulation and high levels of task value activation, regulation of affect, and classroom environment. Lizuka (2010) studied learners' anxiety-coping strategies among 108 Japanese EFL college students. Based on the results from an open-ended questionnaire, the students were most likely to use positive strategies such as having better preparations or making greater efforts. Furthermore, the students also asked their peers for help, especially when failing to understand what the teacher explained.

Ardi (2007) investigated Indonesian university students' foreign language anxiety and demonstrated that participants used four strategies to handle their language anxiety: preparation, relaxation, positive thinking, and peer seeking. Likewise, Pabro-Maquidato (2021) found that Filipino university students used several strategies to

cope with their nervousness, such as utilizing helping learning tools, putting their thoughts into writing, overcoming shyness by speaking practice, and making requests for teacher feedback. Chou (2018) surveyed 638 second-year undergraduates from four universities in Taiwan and highlighted that the more frequently university students practiced speaking and used rehearsal and paraphrasing strategies, the less likely they reported having speech anxiety.

In addition to positive strategies, passive strategies such as giving up, ignoring, or distancing oneself from difficult situations were also reported. Genç et al. (2016) did a quantitative study among 232 EFL students at a university in Turkey. Using the Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety Scale and Anxiety Coping Strategies Scale to investigate the anxiety-coping strategies used in the classroom, Genç et al. (2016) revealed that students mostly used the resignation strategies to cope with their anxiety (e.g., giving up, stopping paying attention, and accepting the situation). Though the participants looked for support from their classmates for relaxation, they used positive thinking the least.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The participants were 297 non-English-majored freshmen (77 males and 220 females) aged 18 who were enrolled in different disciplines at a public university in Vietnam: accounting-auditing ($n = 69$), e-commerce ($n = 64$), real estate ($n = 42$), business administration ($n = 71$), tourism ($n = 34$) and insurance ($n = 17$). At the time of data collection, the participants had an average of 9.6 years of learning English and had just completed the Business English course in their first term. The participants were conveniently recruited and consented to respond to the Questionnaire of Foreign

Language Speaking Anxiety. After the survey, 24 students from the pool of surveyed participants were conveniently selected and assigned to five focus groups to participate in the semi-structured interview. Each focus group has 5 participants, except the final focus group with only 4 participants. Participants signed the informed consent forms before the interviews, and their identities were kept confidential. Pseudonyms were used to protect their identity.

Table 1 details the participants' demographic information.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants	<i>n</i>	%
Participants	297	100
Gender		
Male	77	25.9
Female	220	74.1
High school location		
City	206	69.4
Rural areas	91	30.6
Disciplines		
Accounting-auditing	69	23.2
E-commerce	64	21.5
Real estates	42	14.1
Business administration	71	23.9
Tourism and travel	34	11.4
Insurance	17	5.7
Years of learning English		
6-9	115	38.7
10	102	34.3
>10	80	26.9

3.2. Instruments

3.2.1. Questionnaire of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety

The Questionnaire of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety was adapted

from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and Bashori et al.'s (2021) Questionnaire of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (FLSA). Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS comprises 33 items with high internal reliability ($r = .93$), which was widely used and validated across studies (e.g., Aida, 1994; Aydın et al., 2016; Park, 2014; Toyama & Yamazaki, 2018). As the analytical factors were not provided for Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS, Aida (1994) was the first to conduct a factor analysis of FLCAS to examine constructs that represent Japanese students' foreign language anxiety. Four factors were retrieved: (1) speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation, (2) fear of failing the class, (3) comfortableness in speaking with Japanese people, and (4) negative attitudes toward the Japanese class. Meanwhile, Park (2014) found two factors in his Korean version of FLCAS: (1) communication apprehension and understanding and (2) communication apprehension and confidence. In a study conducted on Japanese undergraduate students' foreign language anxiety, Toyama and Yamazaki (2018) found two factors: communication apprehension and fear of failing.

Besides, the foreign language speaking anxiety scale, adapted from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLACS, has been modified for EFL/ESL population (e.g., Bashori et al., 2021; Gökhan & Nurdan, 2014). For instance, Bashori et al. (2021) modified 18 items from Horwitz et al.'s (1986) FLCAS. They validated the foreign language speaking anxiety scale on secondary school Indonesian students with high internal validity ($r = .92$). Also, Cabansag (2020) adapted 17 items from the same FLCAS to measure speaking anxiety among Filipino undergraduates but did not provide information about the reliability value. In this study, 18 items that Bashori et al. (2021) adapted from Horwitz et al.'s (1986)

FLACS were adapted to measure Vietnamese students' English-speaking anxiety (See appendix).

3.2.2. Semi-Structured Interview Questions

The semi-structured interview includes five questions that explore how students experience speaking anxiety in different classroom situations (e.g., responding to teachers' questions and taking part in group discussion), the sources of their speaking anxiety, and the strategies they use to cope with speaking anxiety (See Appendix).

3.3. Data Analysis

3.3.1. Quantitative Findings

SPSS (version 25) was used to analyze the quantitative findings. Descriptive statistics, including mean and standard deviation, provided information about the level of speaking anxiety among Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen. Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient is used to provide internal reliability of the adapted instrument. One-way analyses of variance were computed to assess the differences among Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen of different gender, disciplines, years of learning English, and high school locations in terms of speaking anxiety.

3.3.2. Qualitative Findings

Inductive content analysis was used to analyze the qualitative results providing insights into how Vietnamese non-English-majored freshmen experienced speaking anxiety. Data were transcribed verbatim and subsequently translated from Vietnamese into English. The steps of data analysis follow Creswell's (2002) guidelines. In the initial reading of text data, the researchers read the gathered data in detail until they were familiar with its content and understood the themes and events in the text.

The researchers identified relevant text segments connected with research objectives in the second step. The researcher wrote codes for the relevant texts to label text segments to create categories and marked the text segment copied into emerging categories. The researchers reduced overlapped codes and removed redundant codes or categories to create a small number of categories. The researchers searched for sub-topics within categories, including contrasting views and new insights, and selected suitable quotations to represent the core theme or category. The researchers combined or linked similar categories under a superordinate category. Regarding the reliability procedure, both researchers-cum-authors conducted multiple transcript reviews to reduce the mistakes in the participants' narratives of experiences and revisited the students for further clarification.

4. Results

4.1. Speaking Anxiety Level of Vietnamese Non-English-Majored Freshmen

The Cronbach alpha value for the adapted FLSA, $r = .90$, indicated that FLSA has high internal consistency. The results show that participants had a moderate level of English-speaking anxiety ($M = 3.34$, $SD = .63$). Further analyses show that female students ($M = 3.39$, $SD = .64$) had a higher level of speaking anxiety than male students ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .61$) and this difference was statistically significant, $F(1, 295) = 5.16$, $p = .02 < .05$. Likewise, there was a statistically significant difference among students of different disciplines in terms of speaking anxiety, $F(4, 275) = 5.14$, $p = .001 < .01$. Accounting-Auditing students had the highest level of speaking anxiety ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .64$), followed by E-Commerce ($M = 3.43$, $SD = .60$), Real Estates and Tourism students ($M = 3.30$, $SD = .69$). Meanwhile, Business Administration

students had the lowest level of speaking anxiety ($M = 3.01$, $SD = .55$). Although differences in speaking anxiety were observed among students of different gender and disciplines, no significant difference was found among students with different years of learning English, $F(2, 294) = .62$, $p = .54 > .05$ and between those who attended high school in the city and rural areas, $F(1, 295) = 3.49$, $p = .06 > .05$.

4.2. English Speaking Anxiety Experienced by Vietnamese Non-English-Majored Freshmen

In general, Vietnamese non-English-majored first-year students in this study experienced diverse dimensions of speaking anxiety in many different situations. For instance, when asked to answer questions in the English class, most participants in the five focus groups shared that they experienced similar negative emotions (e.g., worried, afraid, confused, panicked, scared, and anxious), especially when receiving the teacher's random questions.

FG1S4: in unexpected situations or when things come all of a sudden, I feel anxious.

FG2S6: I feel anxious and worried

FG3S11: I feel confused, panicked, and worried...

FG3S13: I feel anxious, and I shiver

FG4S18: I shiver even when I know the answer.

FG2S6: I'm afraid my answer is wrong when I answer the questions that I haven't prepared for.

Also, most students experienced a high level of anxiety when their lecturer asked them a question during a speaking test, feeling "scared" and "shiver[ing]" (e.g., student FG1S1, FG2S6, FG3S13, and FG4S21). However, from many participants' sharing, making an oral presentation triggers the most negative emotions.

FG1S1: Making a presentation in Vietnamese in front of the class is difficult, let alone English. So the level of anxiety will double. Not everyone can present confidently in a language other than mother tongue, so I feel rather anxious and worried.

FG3S11: I feel anxious and embarrassed and afraid of forgetting what I'm going to say.

FG3S13: The possibility of me shivering when making a presentation is multiplied by 100 times. If I speak too softly, others cannot hear me. I likely forget things when I shiver. Sometimes I even cannot say anything. I am just at a standstill.

FG5S23: I shiver a little. If I present in front of people I don't know, I may forget what to say.

Meanwhile, when working in groups, only some students experienced anxiety (e.g., worried, anxious, scared) because 'working in groups is less scary than speaking with teachers' (FG3S13). Most students felt more comfortable working with helpful and respectful teammates at the same English level and could help them correct mistakes and improve.

FG2S6: I feel more comfortable. My friends help me improve my pronunciation.

FG3S13: I don't feel scared because if I say things wrong or I don't understand, my friends can correct my mistakes. I work with friends and talk to them, so I feel more comfortable.

FG5S23: I feel rather happy because my teammates respect me and help me correct my pronunciation. They make me comfortable. I can learn a lot from them.

Likewise, only a few students felt

anxious when performing a role-play or dialogue in front of the class. For instance, they "shiver" (FG3S11, FG3S13) and feel "scared" (FG3S14). In contrast, most students had positive emotions, especially when working with a similar English-level partner in role-play activities.

FG1S 3: We are at the same level of English, so we can work together in a comfortable way.

FG4S16: We feel very happy when we work together.

FG5S22: I feel better working in pairs.

FG4S18: My partner and I are at the same level, so we can speak comfortably.

Another anxiety-provoking situation includes starting a conversation with a native speaker, which worries many students. They posited that they were worried about not being able to understand the native speaker's questions and not being understood. Some students described their feelings as "worried", "confused", "awkward" and "embarrassed" but emphasized that they did not feel nervous.

FG2S6: I used to speak with native speakers. I feel that I speak so badly that they cannot understand me. I feel embarrassed and worried.

FG1S2: I'm afraid they will not understand my answer.

FG3S15: I feel worried and scared, but I will try to give them the answers because they ask me.

FG4S16: I feel a little confused because I'm afraid I cannot answer them. But I don't feel nervous at all.

FG4S20: I will try to answer. I feel a bit embarrassed if I don't know the answer, but I feel happy.

Meanwhile, some students had entirely positive feelings when speaking with foreigners because they considered it a chance to speak without caring about

judgments. Several others see speaking English with native speakers as an opportunity to practice English. Thus, they do not experience any feelings of anxiety.

FG3S11: I think it's interesting to speak with a native. I look forward to having a chance, I don't feel scared.

FG3S13: I feel OK. Native speakers may start a conversation with me by asking something, I enthusiastically reply to them. Because they need my help, they will not make judgments like when I'm in class or take a test. I feel comfortable when I speak, I'm not afraid of making mistakes.

FG4S16: I don't feel anxious. I feel happy when I have a chance to speak with native speakers. But my grammar is limited, I try to converse in the shortest ways, I cannot speak fluently and fully express my ideas.

FG4S18: I feel like speaking with a native, although I cannot always reply to them. I don't feel nervous at all.

4.3. Causes of Speaking Anxiety Among Vietnamese Non-English-Majored Freshmen

4.3.1. English Speaking Abilities

Participants ascribed their speaking anxiety to several reasons related to actual English oral abilities: poor pronunciation, lack of idea arrangement, and problems with vocabulary, which prevented them from fully expressing their ideas.

FG1S3: If the question is that I cannot answer, I feel more anxious because I have to think about how to arrange ideas.

FG5S23: I worry about my pronunciation. It does not sound good, so people may misunderstand me.

FG4S19: I feel scared because I don't know how to express my ideas fully.

FG3S12: ...when it comes to discussing in English, I don't have enough vocabulary to express my ideas fully.

4.3.2. Lack of Speaking Self-Efficacy

Also, some students attributed their speaking anxiety to a lack of speaking self-efficacy, and worrying about their speaking skills, pronunciation, and vocabulary, which might obstruct comprehension.

FG2S10: I feel a bit embarrassed because I'm afraid that I don't have enough vocabulary and I make grammatical mistakes.

FG3S15: I feel scared and don't feel like speaking with a native because I think my speaking skill is not good, and I'm not confident to speak.

FG3S23: I'm afraid my pronunciation is not good enough and others cannot understand me.

FG2S7: I'm worried that they cannot understand what I say.

4.3.3. Nature of Teachers' Questions

Besides, many students stated that they felt worried and anxious when their teachers posed challenging, unrelated questions, especially those with complicated, unfamiliar terms and concepts and those that did not allow students time to prepare.

FG1S1: At first, I feel a little anxious and worried... if the question is too difficult, I will find it difficult to answer.

FG1S2: I usually feel anxious if the question is not related to the lesson.

FG2S9: I don't feel very confident if the question has special terms.

FG3S11: I feel confused, panicked, and worried because I'm surprised and not prepared to answer.

4.3.4. Fear of Negative Evaluation

A few students shared that they feared losing face and being judged. In particular, they mentioned that they felt embarrassed and were afraid of being criticized for giving wrong answers when performing a role-play or being called to answer questions in front of the class.

FG3S11: I feel very embarrassed if I mispronounce the words or make grammatical mistakes.

FG3S12: I feel worried. I will be embarrassed if I give wrong answers, which is very important.

FG3S13: I feel anxious, and I shiver. Sometimes, I cannot understand what the teacher asks, and I will likely keep silent. I'm afraid to be criticized. Likewise, some students explained that they feel worried and afraid of being judged when working with more proficient partners or making an oral presentation.

FG1S2: When working in groups, I feel a bit worried that the others will make judgments and think I'm not good... Presenting in front of others is frightening to me. I am afraid of being judged and laughed at.

FG4S17: I worry about grammar. Specifically, I don't know how to use the correct verb tenses. I'm afraid people will laugh at me.

FG4S19: I feel anxious if my teammates are so good and speak English fluently. They may make judgments if I make mistakes.

4.3.5. Test Anxiety

Test anxiety occurred when the students received low scores, contributing to speaking anxiety. For example, when answering their lecturer's questions during a speaking test, some students attributed their speaking anxiety to the fact that their marks

might be affected if they could not give answers.

FG1S1: I'm afraid of getting lower marks.

FG2S6: I'm afraid of getting low marks.

FG5S21: I feel scared and anxious because it may affect my marks.

FG4S17: I feel really anxious about things related to marks or scores. I'm afraid I will have to retake the course if my marks are too low.

4.4. Strategies Used to Cope With Speaking Anxiety by Vietnamese Non-English-Majored Freshmen

4.4.1. Social Strategies

Some students reported using social strategies (e.g., seeking help from teachers and others) when they did not know how to answer their teacher's questions individually and in pairs.

FG3S15: If I cannot understand, I will ask the teacher to repeat.

FG4S16: We can help each other correct mistakes.

FG5S22: We can exchange ideas and correct mistakes for each other.

4.4.2. Cognitive Strategies

Besides using social strategies, some students mentioned using their mother tongue and the translation strategy to answer teachers' questions to help them avoid feeling anxious.

FG4S19: If I don't know what to say, I will answer in Vietnamese, and the teacher will help me translate it into English.

FG4S16: If I don't understand the question, I feel confused and anxious at first, then I translate the meaning and be calm to answer.

FG1S3: My teammates often speak in Vietnamese and then complete the

task in English, so I feel confident to contribute.

FG5S23: We make outlines in Vietnamese, then translate and practice English.

When a native speaker asked a question, some students shared positive feelings because they could make themselves understood by using a mental outlining strategy, i.e., giving the main ideas, answering to the point, and using necessary content words.

FG3S11: I feel OK. I will reply to them because I think they just need to get the main ideas. They don't care about grammar.

FG3S12: I feel OK. I just need to answer to the point, and I don't need to be too formal.

FG3S14: I will try to come up with the words necessary to give them the answers

FG4S19: I will give short answers if I know. Otherwise, I will say "I don't know".

Besides, some students reported that preparing in advance helped them feel less anxious to cope with speaking anxiety when making an oral presentation.

FG1S5: If I have prepared before and presented in front of the people I know, I feel less anxious and more confident.

FG4S20: I feel more confident when presenting in front of the class because I have preparations beforehand.

FG5S21: I think I don't feel nervous because I have prepared before.

Also, some used entertainment and learning methods such as watching movies, listening to music, and playing games.

FG3S12: I play games, and I pair up with a foreigner. When I make

mistakes, they can help me correct them.

FG4S18: I learn new vocabulary by watching films.

FG4S19: I watch cartoons because they are easy to understand and entertaining.

FG4S20: I watch movies with subtitles to learn more.

Students shared that they used other strategies to avoid speaking anxiety, including practicing alone with apps, podcasts, Youtube, Google Translate, self-translate, and voice recording.

FG2S6: I use Google Translate to check whether I have the correct pronunciation or not.

FG4S23: I watch movies and listen to music. I also try this way: I translate an article I have read into English, then I tell my friend to see if they can understand or not.

FG3S14: I record my voice, listen again and improve myself.

FG3S15: I practice alone or watch clips on Youtube and try to imitate.

FG4S17: I listen to podcasts on Spotify.

Besides, some students take a course or join clubs to practice speaking and listening skills. They also opt to find a partner to practice.

FG1S3: I learn vocabulary, improve communication skills, join English clubs or find someone who has the same interest and desire to improve my English as me.

FG4S19: I will take a speaking course.

FG4S16: I think I should find a partner to practice with and help me improve. I will take an English course... to improve my pronunciation. I can practice in front of the mirror.

5. Discussion

This study revealed insightful findings about speaking anxiety among Vietnamese non-English-majored first-year students. Regarding English language speaking anxiety, the quantitative and qualitative analysis results indicated that most participants had a moderate level of anxiety, which conforms to what Le and Tran (2020) concluded in their studies about Vietnamese learners. It is worth noting that although the anxiety level was average, it caused the students to have adverse psychological reactions and hindered their oral performance. For example, the students cannot deal with questions, forget things when making presentations and give answers in fragments, just as Milan (2019), Wang and Roopchund (2015), and Mohamed and Wahid (2009) stated in their studies. In addition, it can be pointed out that speaking anxiety varies according to gender. Female students were found to be more anxious compared to male ones, which is similar to the findings by Çağatay (2015), Mohtasham and Farnia (2017), Öztürk and Gürbüz (2013), and Park and French (2013).

Interestingly, students of different disciplines in this study experienced different anxiety levels, which have not been mentioned in previous studies; thus, further investigation is necessary. Besides, as for the anxiety-provoking situations among the students, this study found that most of the participants experienced anxiety in activities that involve interaction with others, such as answering teachers' questions and giving oral presentations, which is in line with what Horwitz et al. (1986) stated about communication apprehension. Data from the interview also provided new findings that might enrich the existing literature. Contrary to several previous studies in which peer factor was found to be a source of anxiety (e.g., Rajitha, 2020; Debreli & Demirkan, 2016; Tian, 2019), the results of this study

indicated that the students felt less anxious working with their peers. They also experienced less anxiety when speaking in front of their friends or people familiar with them. This finding aligns with what Liu and Jackson (2008) stated about the importance of relationships with classmates: students can speak English freely when classroom intimacy increases.

Furthermore, a prominent finding is that the students feel optimistic about conversing with native speakers. Also, the participants attributed anxiety to various factors such as English speaking abilities, lack of speaking self-efficacy, and fear of negative evaluation. These causes are also common in studies conducted in Asian contexts where English is spoken as a second or foreign language (e.g., Milan, 2019; Mohtasham & Farnia, 2017; Jugo, 2020; Sabbah, 2018). Test anxiety (e.g., fear of receiving low scores and failing) was also reported (Batiha et al., 2014; Shabani, 2012).

In contrast to Genç et al.'s (2016) findings, the participants in this study did not report any passive strategies. Nevertheless, the students employed social and cognitive strategies to handle speaking anxiety, such as preparation and peer seeking, which were previously reported by Lizuka (2010) and Marwan (2007). Besides, it is essential to note that the students resort to their mother tongue when speaking English, indicating that students use code-switching and translation to reduce speaking anxiety. However, this finding has not been reported in previous studies.

6. Implications

The findings in this study provide valuable information to improve instructional practices. First, teachers must be aware of speaking anxiety in the English language classroom. As females often make up a large percentage of students in foreign language classes, teachers may need to

consider this finding when carrying out classroom activities. Teachers should pay more attention to female students' emotional reactions and give timely support and encouragement to help them avoid uncomfortable feelings when speaking English. Furthermore, the findings shed some light on material preparation and task design. The content of the tasks should be carefully and suitably chosen to arouse students' interests. The topics of speaking assignments should be related to their majors to help them comfortably and confidently speak about what they know. Apart from tasks that require individual performances, teachers can design activities that involve student-student interaction, such as pair work or group work, so that students can partake with greater confidence and better feelings. Moreover, to help students alleviate nervousness, teachers should also consider students' proficiency levels when pairing and grouping them.

Interestingly, the students feel positive about speaking to foreigners. Thus, more foreign teachers should be recruited to assist students in their learning process. As fear of losing face is understandable in Asian cultures, mistakes should be allowed, accepted as unavoidable, and treated with leniency. Students should acknowledge that they can learn from their mistakes and develop positive attitudes towards errors. It is, therefore, suggested that the rating scale focus on accuracy makes up a small proportion of the marking criteria.

With regard to strategy use to tackle speaking anxiety, social strategies were found to be commonly used by the participants. Thus, teachers play a pivotal role in creating a relaxed learning environment in which student-student and teacher-student rapport is established and enhanced. In addition, to make students feel more comfortable when seeking help, teachers should be friendly and empathetic

and motivate them by giving them encouragement or compliments. Specific strategies should be explicitly taught through activities organized in the classroom so that students can recognize the benefits of learning strategies and refrain from using the ones that hinder their performance. Furthermore, to improve English speaking proficiency and build self-confidence, students should proactively seek opportunities to expose to the language and practice speaking English in different situations.

7. Conclusion

Based on the research results, it can be concluded that speaking anxiety exists in the language classroom in Vietnam and the anxiety level varies according to gender and discipline. The participants have a moderate level of anxiety. Myriad factors cause them to feel nervous when they speak English, such as lack of speaking self-efficacy, actual English oral abilities, fear of losing face and being judged, and the nature of the teachers' questions. However, the students show reasonable efforts to improve their speaking skills and have taken various measures to cope with anxiety, including social and cognitive strategies. The study provides insights into students' speaking problems, which helps teachers make adjustments and devise possible solutions to assist their students. Teachers should be aware of students' speaking difficulties and employ various teaching strategies to keep anxiety levels at bay. The study recruited a limited number of participants from a public university, so the findings may not be generalizable to all Vietnamese university students. Thus, future studies are necessary to explore speaking anxiety and speaking strategies further.

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Statements and Declaration

The authors declare that this manuscript is original, has not been published before, and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere. The authors can confirm that the manuscript has been read and approved by all named authors and that there are no other persons who satisfied the criteria for authorship but are not listed.

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Appendix

Questionnaire of Foreign Language Speaking Anxiety (English)

Thank you for taking the time to respond to the following questionnaire. Please give your most candid and thorough responses to the questionnaire below. Rest assured that the information you share here is confidential. Please read each statement carefully and respond accordingly.

Personal Information

Name: _____

Birthyear: _____

Year at university: _____

Gender: _____

Originality: North Central South

Location of high school: Urban Rural

How long have you been learning English? _____

Speaking Anxiety

Please read the following statements carefully and choose the answer to each statement that best describes your speaking anxiety.

SA = strongly agree; A = agree; N = neither agree nor disagree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree.

Speaking anxiety	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I never feel quite sure of myself when I am speaking in the English class.					

2. I tremble when I know that I'm going to be called on in the English class.					
3. It frightens me when I don't understand what the teacher is saying in English.					
4. I start to panic when I have to speak without preparation in the English class.					
5. It embarrasses me to volunteer answers in my English class.					
6. I feel nervous speaking the foreign language with native speakers.					
7. I get upset when I don't understand what the teacher is correcting.					
8. I feel confident when I speak in the English class.					
9. I am afraid that my English teacher is ready to correct every mistake I make.					
10. I can feel my heart pounding when I'm going to be called on in my English class.					
11. I always feel that the other students speak English better than I do.					
12. I feel very self-conscious about speaking English in front of other students.					
13. I get nervous and confused when I am speaking English in my English class.					
14. I get nervous when I don't understand every word the English teacher says.					
15. I feel overwhelmed by the number of rules I have to learn to speak English.					
16. I am afraid that the other students will laugh at me when I speak English.					

17. I would probably feel comfortable around native speakers of English.					
18. I get nervous when the language teacher asks questions which I haven't prepared in advance.					

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. How do you feel
 - a. when your lecturer asks you a question in your English class?
 - b. when you take part in a group discussion in your English class?
 - c. when you perform a role play or a dialogue in front of your class?
 - d. when you give an oral presentation in front of your class?
 - e. when your lecturer asks you a question during the speaking test?
 - f. when you start a conversation with a native speaker?
 - g. when a native speaker asks you a question?
2. In what other situations do you feel anxious about speaking?
3. What do you think was the source of your speaking anxiety in those situations?
4. What do you think you can do to cope with speaking anxiety?

TÌM HIỂU TÂM LÝ LO LẮNG KHI NÓI TIẾNG ANH CỦA SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ NHẤT KHÔNG CHUYÊN TIẾNG ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CÔNG LẬP VIỆT NAM

Hồ Đình Phương Khanh, Trương Thị Như Ngọc

*Trường Đại học Kinh tế Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh,
59C Nguyễn Đình Chiểu, Phường 6, Quận 3, Tp. Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam*

Tóm tắt: Bài nghiên cứu này khảo sát tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên năm thứ nhất không chuyên ngữ tại Việt Nam. 297 sinh viên năm thứ nhất không chuyên tiếng Anh tại một trường đại học công lập ở Việt Nam đã tham gia trả lời Bảng Khảo sát tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh. Kết quả cho thấy người tham gia khảo sát có tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh ở mức trung bình, trong đó nữ có mức độ lo lắng cao hơn nam. Để hiểu rõ hơn về nguyên nhân gây ra tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh, các tình huống dẫn tới lo lắng và các chiến lược sinh viên sử dụng để ứng phó với sự lo lắng này, dữ liệu định tính cũng đã được thu thập. 24 sinh viên trong tổng số người tham gia làm khảo sát đã được lựa chọn ngẫu nhiên và được phân vào năm nhóm phỏng vấn tập trung để trả lời các câu hỏi phỏng vấn. Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên cảm thấy lo lắng hơn khi phải trả lời câu hỏi của giáo viên trong lớp, trong khi thi nói và thuyết trình so với khi nói theo cặp và theo nhóm. Ngoài ra, sinh viên cho rằng sự lo lắng gây ra bởi khả năng nói tiếng Anh, bản chất câu hỏi của giáo viên, tâm lý sợ bị đánh giá, sợ mất mặt và sợ bị điểm thấp. Để ứng phó với sự lo lắng này, sinh viên cho biết họ sử dụng các chiến lược nhận thức xã hội. Bài nghiên cứu cung cấp thông tin hữu ích giúp giảng viên môn tiếng Anh hiểu được bản chất tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh của sinh viên và giúp sinh viên ứng phó với sự lo lắng này.

Từ khóa: tâm lý lo lắng khi nói tiếng Anh, sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh, Việt Nam

A STUDY ON ASSESSMENT CRITERIA FOR ENGLISH – VIETNAMESE CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING TESTS*

Tran Phuong Linh**, Do Minh Hoang

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

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Abstract: The study investigates the reliability and user feedback about the rubrics to evaluate English – Vietnamese consecutive interpreting tests taken by undergraduates at VNU-ULIS created by Tran and Do (2022). Five VNU-ULIS raters – two experienced raters and three novice ones – independently rated ten different interpreting tests and provided their feedback on the rubrics. The results reveal the newly created rubrics is mostly considered user-friendly and practical application for interpreting evaluation. Overall, inter-rater reliability, which was presented through Cronbach’s alpha and the single measure intra-class coefficient, was acceptable. Besides, the value among the novice raters was higher than that between the two experienced ones. The raters’ perception of each quality criterion and their rating process may account for the differences in their score decisions. The findings also suggest further improvements in terms of descriptor wording, weightings and rater training.

Keywords: consecutive interpreting tests, assessment criteria, rubrics

1. Introduction

Regarding effectiveness testing of evaluating tools, Lee (2008) pointed out that the central concepts in all assessments are validity and reliability. The validity is “the extent to which we can interpret a test score as an indicator of the ability we want to measure” (Bachman & Palmer, 1996, p. 21, as cited in Lee, 2008). For example, the level of interpreting skills or interpreting quality should be the only thing being assessed in an interpreting test. Reliability, meanwhile, refers to the consistency of measurement of one assessor in various tests or many different assessors in one test. These are “two interlocking concepts” in which test score is nothing without reliability and

reliability is needed to facilitate validity (Sawyer, 2004; Moore & Young, 1997). The study is limited to the reliability of the new interpreting quality assessment set for English-Vietnamese consecutive interpreting established in Tran and Do (2022)’s study.

It should be noted that the goal of assessment criteria developed in Tran and Do (2022)’s study was to evaluate undergraduate students’ competence to provide a good interpreting performance in their final test of an interpreting course, rather than assessment for real-life interpreting or accreditation. By ‘good’ performance, the researchers referred to the ability to synthesize information from a complicated type of speech and to deliver accurate interpretation fluently, confidently

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** Corresponding author.

Email address: linhnp@vnu.edu.vn

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and coherently¹. In this study, the researchers focus on the effectiveness of the established assessment benchmark to evaluate undergraduate students' English-Vietnamese interpreting performances in the Consecutive Interpreting course's final test at VNU-ULIS.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Consecutive Interpreting

Consecutive interpreting is one of the three modes of interpreting that make up conference interpreting (AIIC, 1982).

It involves listening to what someone has to say and then, when they have finished, reproducing the same message in another language. The speech may be anything between a minute and 20 minutes in length and the interpreter will rely on a combination of notes, memory and general knowledge to recreate their version of the original. This form of consecutive is sometimes called "long consecutive" to distinguish it from "short consecutive", which usually involves a speaker stopping after each sentence (or a couple of sentences) for the interpreter to translate. (Gillies, 2019, p. 1)

CI used to be "the standard for international meetings of every kind" before being overtaken by SI or, to be more exact, the invention of equipment to make SI possible in the 1920s. However, CI has not vanished. In fact, there are numerous situations in which CI is required, such as ceremonial speeches, business trips, guided tours, high-level bi-laterals, negotiations, depositions / court testimony, press conferences, company in-house training courses, etc. CI will be used whenever complicated equipment for SI is unsuitable

or impossible in the setting in which the meetings take place. For example, government visits or technical experts' working trips often involve going around many locations to see how things have been done in another country and the interpreter(s) is expected to get out of the "fully equipped conference centre" to accompany the clients. It means the interpreter(s) has to interpret all descriptions and explanations consecutively. Or in another case, CI is also the only option because the simultaneous equipment has broken down.

There are other reasons why CI is chosen rather than the fact that the setting does not allow SI. Firstly, it is widely believed that CI may "achieve greater accuracy of interpretation" (Van Hoof, 1962; Weber, 1989, as cited in Gillies, 2019; Hale, 2007, pp. 27-30; Pienaar & Cornelius, 2015, pp. 199-200). Because of the nature of CI mode, in which the interpretation is produced after the speaker(s) have finished, the CI interpreter may have time (even it is only a few seconds before starting interpreting) to analyze the SL Content and clarify vague information by asking the speaker directly. Therefore, the interpreter is "less likely to fall victim to misguided anticipation", which can happen more easily in SI as the interpretation is delivered nearly at the same time as the SL. Also, note-taking and corrections are totally possible in CI; hence, it is argued that consecutive interpreters can reformulate all the elements of the source speech, including tone and nuances. While SI only requires medium levels of accuracy with a strong focus on Content, CI provides high levels of accuracy including the manner of speaking (Hale, 2007, pp. 27-30). That is why CI is preferred in settings where sensitive issues are discussed or the verbatim records of interpretation are kept for evidence, such as

¹ Cited from Course guide of Advanced Interpreting course at VNU-ULIS.

in legal proceedings. Secondly, CI helps assure the effectiveness of the delivery of the interpretation through the interpreter's interaction with both the speaker(s) and audience. For example, it is totally easy and acceptable for the interpreter to make eye contact with the participants, clarify what has been said as well as manage the discourse turns (Russell & Takeda, 2015, as cited in Gillies, 2019). It is also obvious that CI is chosen because of its convenience and lower costs. Given that SI booths cost more money and a single consecutive interpreter can be responsible for a two-language meeting instead of a team of at least two like in SI, event organizers who want to cut down the expenses will undoubtedly prefer CI to SI (Ouvrard 2013, p. 85, as cited in Gillies, 2019).

In addition to several reasons mentioned above, CI still plays an essential role in interpreting training. In most translation training programmes including ones at VNU-ULIS, CI training is considered the first and foremost element which offers trainees not only fundamental knowledge and skills relating to interpreting but also the foundation for further study on SI. Consequently, the study on this interpreting mode is necessary, especially when the number of papers about CI in the educational context is quite limited.

2.2. Methods for Interpreting Assessment in Educational Context

There are various methods to assess an interpreting performance, including scoring impression, error counts, checklist, analytic scales, etc. (Lee, 2015). Each method has its own advantages and can be used to serve particular assessing purposes. For example, checklist has been widely used for "recording observations", especially in peer assessment and self-assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010). The way to conduct the assessment and its purposes may be varied, but, in general, two main

approaches to evaluate an interpreting performance in the educational context, namely the holistic marking method and the analytic marking method.

Holistic marking method

The holistic method has gained popularity in both training and the industry since the 20th century (Beeby, 2000, p. 185; Valero-Garcés, Vigier, & Phelan, 2014, as cited in Hale et al., 2012, p. 31). In this marking method, the quality of an interpreting performance will be assessed based on the assessor's "overall impression", "against a predetermined total". That is also why this method is often considered "intuitive" and "impressionistic" (Bontempo & Hutchinson, 2011; Lee, 2009). One obvious advantage of the holistic marking method is that it is fairly easy to understand and usually used for large scale assessment in which no "specific reference to performance features" or just decision about pass or fail is required. (Hunter et al., 1996, as cited in Lee, 2015). However, it is true that holistic marking method would not be a wise choice for inexperienced raters or the ones who are not skillfully trained in it. Green and Hawkey (2010) pointed out that there were radical differences among raters rating the same interpreting performance from holistic perspective because the raters had distinct views on how to interpret and what a good performance should be. As a result, different raters may give different weights to a particular feature of the performance.

Analytic marking method

The nature of this method was pointed out by Mariana et al. (2015, p. 155) in her definition relating the translation testing:

[The analytic method] is a way to assess the quality of a translation by looking at segments of the text [...] and **awarding or deducting** points

to the overall score of the translation based on whether each text unit meets certain criteria.

In interpreting testing, instead of segments of text, the raters usually look at separate interpreting parts across criteria and finalize the score by using all the various points. So, it can be seen that unlike the holistic method in which the score is generated through overall impression, the analytic one asks the raters to give points based on “pre-specified” criteria. Besides, the definition provided by Mariana et al. (2015) above also mentioned two distinct ways to rate an interpreting performance using the analytical marking method which are (1) error deduction and (2) criterion-referencing (awarding with the use of scales of descriptors). In some translation tests, the combination of these two can be employed to assess the translation quality (Turner et al., 2010, as cited in Hale et al., 2012, p. 53).

Rubrics-based marking method

It is undeniable that the error-focused marking system has become less popular recently. Instead, the scholars’ attention tended to switch to criterion-referencing, especially rating scales or rubrics (Angelelli, 2007, 2009; Lee, 2005; Lee, 2008; Jacobson, 2009; Lee, 2015) or both methods. The rating scales or rubrics contain one or some criteria of the skills being assessed and several sets of descriptors of the criteria plotted against levels of achievement. A numeric grade or titles like ‘poor’, ‘good’, ‘excellent’ are assigned to each level. In fact, at an early stage in the marking process the assessor still needs to identify the errors that the assesses made. However, the score of an interpreting performance is awarded as the assessor compares and chooses the level which has the most closely matched descriptors in the rubrics.

One of the strengths of the rubrics-based marking method is that it provides assessors with a bigger and more

comprehensive view while evaluating the quality of interpreting performance. In other words, the assessors have to consider “a wide range of factors”, like meaning, terminology, style, delivery and the ability of the interpreter, etc., to decide the final score. Because of that, this marking method allows interpreting to be assessed as not only a product but also a process. Secondly, because the rubrics are always attached with a full set of descriptors for each distinguished level, it can be useful for the post-marking stage. For example, trainer(s) can use descriptors, well-designed and written only, to write a detailed and meaningful report of results for their students. It is also easier to justify the result by pointing to the descriptors selected in case there are any disputes from students over the testing results.

However, the rubric-based approach still has its potential flaws. Firstly, to have the rubrics valid, assessing criteria and construct has to be chosen and devised carefully (Angelelli, 2009, p. 22). Secondly, it is important to revise and carefully write the descriptors because any vague terms or expressions can lead to room for differences in what each level means. Besides, because it is obvious that the rubrics-based method is more complicated than the holistic method. An extensive and intensive training and trial marking are required for all raters before officially conducting evaluation.

Notwithstanding these above disadvantages, rating scales or to be more specific, rubrics still showed its usefulness in subjective assessment like language proficiency or interpreting quality performances. The authors firmly believed that the advantages outweigh its disadvantages and use of rubrics is a good method of assessment in this study. Firstly, because assessment means measurement, rubrics with specialized bands for separate criteria will absolutely allow numeric results to be used in interpreting summative

assessment at VNU-ULIS. Secondly, descriptors in rubrics can not only assure the comprehensiveness but also be a more reliable source for raters who do not have much experience in their assessment.

2.3. Consecutive Interpreting Assessment Criteria

This study used the findings in Tran and Do (2022)'s study in which a set of criteria was created for CI test marking purpose in educational context. From 132 criteria in total for interpreting assessment, the researchers analyzed and created the rubrics with three macro criteria which also received considerable agreement among various scholars including content fidelity, target language quality, delivery. This assures there would not be too much pressure on evaluators' memory to memorize all the criteria but still provides adequate explanation for each to produce more correct numeric assessment.

Content fidelity

Content fidelity is most widely used and "invariably deemed essential" in interpretation rating practice. (Liu, Chang, & Wu, 2008, as cited in Liu, 2013; Pöchhacker, 2001). This concept, in fact, has been given different names and expressions by different researchers. In this study, Content fidelity includes accuracy and completeness of information or meaning transferred from the source language to the target language. This definition was taken from the description of the rating scales used in *Chinese and English Translation and Interpretation Competency Examinations (ECTICE exams)* for both translation and CI (Liu, 2013).

'Accuracy' was mentioned in previous studies by various terms. Bühler (1986), Gile (1995, 1999), Kurz (2001) claimed sense consistency with original messages is a fundamental aspect of interpreting quality. This concept is close to the core quality criteria "accurate rendition"

included in Roberts' (2000) research, Pöchhacker's (2001) model and Lee's (2015) interpreting feedback form. It is also similar to "equivalence" proposed by Riccardi (2002) or "equivalent intended effect" in Pöchhacker's (2001) and includes *intelligibility* and *informativeness* in Carroll (1966)'s study. The quality of accuracy here should "go beyond lexical similarity between the source speech and the interpreted rendition" (Lee, 2008). The interpretation is considered as a "faithful image" (Gile 1991, p. 198) or "exact and faithful reproduction" (Jones, 1998, p. 5) of the original discourse. As it is based on the accurate comprehension of the source speech, the interpreted version may achieve the same effect on the target audience as on the source language audience.

In addition to 'accuracy', 'completeness' also plays a crucial role in interpreting assessment (Kurz, 2001). The completeness of an interpreting performance, at first, is generally defined as the percentage of what is reproduced among all propositional units, as if CI is a variation of typical prose recall (for example, Goldman & Varnhagen, 1986; O'Brien & Myers, 1987). In ecologically sound interpreting research, however, the concept of completeness may be more *trained* and contextualised to assessors. It is not the relative completeness, but the optimal completeness that interpreters should aim to achieve most of the time, particularly in CI. This idea was succinctly captured by Setton (2005, p. 288, as cited in Setton & Dawrant, 2016) in a relevance-theoretical framework:

Any global measure of quality should therefore include a measure of procedural effectiveness, i.e. of how effectively the interpreter's discourse evokes the relevant context, in addition to the traditional check on whether information explicitly encoded is sufficiently explicitly rendered. Recognising the

role of inference in communication will lead to a very different assessment of completeness: for example, referents not explicitly reproduced in the output will not be penalised as omissions if they are easily inferable. (Jin, 2017, p. 8)

In the testing system, the level of fidelity may be reflected in the extent to which certain deviations are observed in interpreting performance. These deviations are meaning units, unjustified changes or distortions, omission, additions of the meaning and intention, and logical cohesion. They are easily recognizable and countable; hence the marking can be done more precisely and easy to seek agreement among different raters. Besides, 'coherence' or idea organization is also an important element in meaning transferring. This sub-criterion examines whether the interpreted text is arranged in an orderly and consistent manner and whether the different parts of the oral rendering are well integrated into a whole (Ouyang, 2017).

It is also important to note that the rating units for this criterion cannot be individual sentences as individual sentences can "convey at least the 'core' meaning" in the original sentences (Carroll, 1966, p. 56). Considering the nature of consecutive interpretation and the difficulty to match individual target language sentences with source language sentences, a segment of several sentences that cohesively form an idea is regarded as the rating unit. This is also suitable with the final interpreting test structure at VNU-ULIS, in which the whole consecutive interpreting is divided into four to five segments. Each segment can contain two to three meaning units.

Target language quality or language use

Target language quality or *target language use* is associated with "the quality of the rendition in terms of linguistic 'correctness', naturalness, and contextual appropriateness of language" (Lee, 2008). This criterion is similar to the "adequate target language expression" in Pöchhacker (2001)'s model, "form" in Lee (2015)'s feedback form and "target text features" in Wang et al. (2015). It should be noted that Content fidelity and Target language quality are two independent criteria. While the former focuses on the equivalence and amount of information rendered from the source to target speech, the latter targets specifically at the quality of the target language. A qualified interpretation should achieve a greater level of not only terminology and grammar accuracy but also tone and nuances². It should sound a newly created speech in the target language.

The sub-criteria for target language quality are features of terminology, naturalness or idiomatic target-language expressions, grammatical aspects, and register and style. Ineffective source language interference may be included in this criterion.

Delivery

According to Pöchhacker (2001), the quality of an interpreting performance cannot be "pinned down" to linguistic aspects only. The level of communicative effect and impact on the interaction within particular situational and institutional constraints must be considered during the evaluation process. Sharing the same opinion, Wadensjö (1998, p. 287) said "in practice, there are no absolute and

² Consecutive interpreters hear the entire utterance before delivering the interpretation, which means they can take more time to reformulate all the elements of the source speech and it is easier for bilinguals who are present to notice interpreting errors. Therefore, all the elements of language, including linguistic accuracy, tone and nuances, in CI are often assumed and required to be at a higher level than those in SI. (Russel & Takeda, 2014)

unambiguous criteria for defining a mode of interpreting which would be ‘good’ across the board. Different activity-types with different goal structures, as well as the different concerns, needs, desires and commitments of primary parties, imply various demands on the interpreters.”

Unlike the other two criteria, content fidelity and target language quality, the third criterion under the name of “delivery” can be assessed without reference to the source language or source speech. Delivery features invoke public speaking or, more broadly speaking, effective communication skills (Lee, 2008). It is similar to “successful communicative interaction” in Pöschhacker (2001)’s model.

The criterion ‘delivery’ in this study measures a number of different elements. Fluency is the first and foremost one. This element can be shown through the number of hesitations, length of pauses, frequency of fillers and false starts, repetitions and self-corrections. A successful delivery can also be measured through other obvious elements such as articulation, voice, confidence and pace. Articulation is also known as pronunciation, diction or enunciation, in which in a good interpreting performance, all the words have to be pronounced correctly with appropriate stress and intonation, pleasant voice and easy-to-hear volume. Confidence or poise is a recognizable element and affects the effectiveness of every communication situation. As a result, it is also a sub-criterion in this assessment category. Confidence indicates in both speaking manner and how the interpreter respond to errors during their interpreting process. ‘Pace’, in this research, refers to the interpreter’s ability to switch between two languages, time lag and ability to finish the interpretation within time limit. All the tests are audio-taped with pre-set time for interpretation among each segment, the students who took the test were required to start their interpretation from English into

Vietnamese as soon as possible and complete it within that amount of time.

While some researchers or existing framework include “accent” as a marking element (ATA Certification Exam & Zwischenberger, 2010), it is still a matter of controversy whether it should be considered in the evaluation. The reason is it is really hard to measure how good or acceptable an accent should be. In Vietnam, for example, Vietnamese people in the North may find it difficult to fully understand the speech or interpretation conducted by people with Central or Southern accent as there are three main accents belonging to three main regions of the country. Therefore, the researchers decided to exclude this micro criterion in this research.

All three mentioned macro criteria (content fidelity, target language quality and delivery) were then used to write a rubric for evaluating interpreting final tests at VNU-ULIS. It is a 6-point scale from level ‘0’ to level ‘5’. All the descriptors start with “action words” to depict the interpreting and linguistic competences which test takers achieve. Here are some verbs used in the rubric: ‘convey’, ‘make’, ‘organize’, ‘demonstrate’, ‘produce’, ‘show’, ‘have’, ‘interpret’, ‘reflect’, ‘display’, ‘lack’, ‘fail’. The length of rubric does not exceed two A4 pages (in case landscape orientation is applied).

The level of quality was differentiated by the following adjectives: namely, ‘skillful’, ‘good’, ‘adequate’, ‘weak’ and ‘inappropriate’; while the gravity of deviations was differentiated by the quantifiers: ‘many’, ‘some’, ‘few’, ‘one’, and ‘no’. In order to add the specification to distinguish such levels, adverbs are also used: ‘entirely’, ‘frequently’, ‘mostly’, ‘very logically’, ‘logically’, ‘adequately’, ‘partially’, and ‘rarely’. Regarding the weightings, Tran and Do (2022) suggested it should be 50% for content fidelity, 25% for

target language quality and 25% for delivery (for details of the rubrics, see Appendix).

3. Methodology

The aim of this study is to trial the newly developed rubrics through answering the following research questions:

1. *Does the newly developed rubrics produce reliable assessment when assessing the final exam of Consecutive Interpreting course at VNU-ULIS?*
2. *How do the raters comment after using it?*

The two research questions are addressed from both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The quantitative (numeric) data are collected and analyzed through a numerical test, followed by another source of qualitative data from an interview. From both sources of data, the authors can corroborate findings across data sets and thus reduce the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study.

3.1. Research Participants

Five ULIS interpreter trainers (distinguished by codes R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5 for Rater 1, Rater 2, Rater 3, Rater 4 and Rater 5 respectively) were invited to evaluate ten consecutive interpreting from English into Vietnamese, using the proposed rubric. Among those trainers, R1 and R2, Experienced Raters (ER), have 10 years of experience in interpreting training and assessment, R3, R4 and R5, Novice Raters (NR), have less than four years of experience. The five trainers were chosen for the convenience of the study as they were teaching interpreting at the study period and available to join the research.

In this research, five raters were asked to rate the same ten interpreting performances. These samples were randomly extracted from the audio-taped recordings of the final test of Consecutive

Interpreting course by ten different third-year ULIS students specializing in English translation and interpretation. The English-Vietnamese consecutive interpreting test was about five minutes in length (including both source language speech and student interpreting time) and divided into 5 subsections of 30-45 seconds each (source speech length). Besides, the English source was from an authentic video in which was performed by a native British speaker at an average speed of 140 words per minute in his real TV show interview. These recordings were chosen as the data in this study because they were collected from the latest English-Vietnamese interpreting exam at the study time.

Before the testing phase, a 30-minute face-to-face rater training was conducted to make sure that all the raters understood the rubric and how to implement the marking process. However, because of differences in their working timetable and social distance during Covid-19, only one rater could join face-to-face training. The others received a guiding package through email and undertook the marking process at their leisure. The package included the procedure consent form, the newly developed rubric, explanation of the criteria in the rubric, a score sheet, a folder of eleven audio files with source speech and students' interpretations, English source speech transcript and its suggested answer of the interpreting, and a marking sample of a test (see Appendix). The raters were asked to examine the sample carefully and raise questions (if any) before marking the rest of ten interpreting performances. They worked separately without knowing the scores given by other raters. The scores of each marking category had to be written in the score sheet and sent back to the researchers within a week.

After the marking procedure, the raters were all invited to join an interview. The interviews were conducted with three

raters online (through Zoom.us platform) and with two offline (right after they finished their marking). The manner of conducting the interview was semi-structured in which the researchers relied mainly on the given interview question log but still may ask participants to further their answers when necessary. The interview questions were written in English and the interview was expected in English as the participants are all assumed to be proficient users of the language due to their job as English lecturer. In case the participants ask to be interviewed in Vietnamese, the researchers may resort to translating her questions into Vietnamese, and recording all the answers. All the interviews will be recorded using a digital recorder with consent from the interviewees themselves who are informed before the actual interviews begin. During the interviews, the raters were encouraged to share their experience in interpreting training and marking and provide feedback on the newly developed marking rubric.

3.2. Data Analysis

Due to the scope of the study, this research focuses on the reliability of the rating only. Generally, reliability of assessment consists of two types: the consistency among different raters on the same test(s) or inter-rater consistency and the consistency within the same rater across various tests or intra-rater reliability (Bachman & Palmer, 1990, p. 222, as cited in Lee, 2008). However, because testing and retesting of the same test takers and double

marking were not undertaken in this study, intra-rater reliability was not examined in this study. Inter-rater reliability is the **level of agreement between raters or judges**. If everyone agrees, IRR is 1 (or 100%) and if everyone disagrees, IRR is 0 (0%). Several methods exist for calculating IRR, from the simple (e.g. percent agreement³) to the more complex (e.g. Cohen's Kappa or Fleiss's Kappa)⁴.

Cronbach's alpha and intraclass correlation coefficients (ICC) were chosen to measure inter-rater reliability.

Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha, α (or *coefficient alpha*), developed by Lee Cronbach in 1951, measures reliability, or internal reliability⁵.

The formula for Cronbach's alpha is:

$$\alpha = \frac{N \cdot \bar{c}}{\bar{v} + (N-1) \cdot \bar{c}}$$

Where:

N = the number of items.

\bar{c} = average covariance between item-pairs.

\bar{v} = average variance.

In this study, Cronbach's alpha was computed using SPSS by following these steps:

Step 1: Click "Analyze," then click "Scale" and then click "Reliability Analysis."

Step 2: Transfer your variables (q1 to q5) into "Items.". The model default should be set as "Alpha."

Step 3: Click "Statistics" in the dialog box.

³ Percent agreement is number of agreement scores / total scores. However, chance agreement due to raters guessing is always a possibility - in the same way that a chance "correct" answer is possible on a multiple choice test.

⁴ Cohen's kappa statistic measures interrater reliability (sometimes called interobserver agreement). Interrater reliability, or precision, happens when your data raters (or collectors) give the same score to the same data item. In addition, Cohen's Kappa has the assumption that the raters are deliberately chosen. If your raters are chosen at random from a population of raters, use Fleiss' kappa instead.

⁵ Internal consistency reliability is a way to gauge how well a test or survey is actually measuring what you want it to measure.

Step 4: Select “Item,” “Scale,” and “Scale if item deleted” in the box description. Choose “Correlation” in the inter-item box.

Step 5: Click “Continue” and then click “OK”.

Regarding the results of Cronbach’s alpha, the table below suggests a widely accepted interpretation of the results.

Cronbach’s alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.9 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

Like any inter-rater reliability, a score of more than 0.7 is generally considered acceptable (Shohamy, 1985, p. 70).

Intraclass correlation coefficients

Intraclass correlation measures the reliability of ratings or measurements for cluster data that has been collected as groups or sorted into groups. In other words, the ICC is used to measure a wide variety of numerical data from clusters or groups, including:

- How closely relatives resemble each other with regard to a certain characteristic or traits.
- Reproducibility of numerical measurements made by different people measuring the same thing.

This study takes advantage of the second use. The ICC was also calculated in SPSS with “Two-Way Random” as there were five different raters rating ten tests. The

confidence interval is 95%.

Like most correlation coefficients, the ICC ranges from 0 to 1. A high Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) close to 1 indicates high similarity between values from the same group. A low ICC close to zero means that values from the same group are *not* similar.

In addition to ICC, mean and standard deviation of ratings were also calculated using SPSS.

4. Findings and Discussions

4.1. Reliability of Rating

Cronbach’s alpha was high across the board. All the values were above 0.7, which means that the inter-rater reliability is acceptable and good. In Table 1, the criterion Content fidelity constantly received the highest numbers in the combined group of all five raters, as well as within the other two smaller groups of experienced raters (ER) and novice raters (NR); the numbers were 0.936, 0.862 and 0.874 respectively. This indicated inter-rater consistency in ranking this target criterion in spite of the lack of direct or face-to-face rater training. Cronbach’s alpha for TL Quality, meanwhile, is the lowest. The value for this criterion was good at 0.904 in the combined group and 0.826 in NR group, but it was only considered acceptable in ER group at 0.717. Surprisingly, inter-rater reliability was higher in the NR group than in the ER group. While the gap between Cronbach’s alpha for Content fidelity in the NR group and the ER group was quite small at 0.012, the figure for TL Quality was 0.109, while that for Delivery was 0.16.

Table 1

Inter-Rater Reliability

Cronbach's alpha	Content fidelity	TL quality	Delivery
Combined group	0.936	0.904	0.917
ER	0.862	0.717	0.745
NR	0.874	0.826	0.905

Table 2*Intra-Class Correlation Coefficient*

Intraclass correlation coefficient	Content fidelity	TL quality	Delivery
Combined group	0.745	0.652	0.687
ER	0.757	0.559	0.594
NR	0.697	0.613	0.76

In order to check how reliable a rater can be, the single measure intra-class correlation coefficients (with 95% confidence interval) were computed. The results reflected a similar trend with the ones shown in data about inter-rater reliability (see Table 2). In the combined group, the value for Content fidelity was still the highest at 0.745, which was 0.058 and 0.093 higher than that for Deliver and TL Quality respectively. The novice raters seemed to be more internally consistent in the rating

process than the experienced group. The correlation coefficients for *TL quality* within the NR group was 0.697, but it was only 0.757 in ER group. It can be seen that the correlation coefficients in the ER group for the other two criteria, TL Quality and Delivery, were under acceptable level at 0.559 and 0.594 respectively. However, the intra-class correlation coefficient in the ER group was higher than the NR group, which was 0.757 for the ER group and 0.697 for the NR group.

Table 3*Mean and Standard Deviation of Ratings by ER Group and NR Group*

	ER		NR	
	Mean	Std. deviation	Mean	Std. deviation
S1_CF	1.30	0.00	1.47	0.29
S2_CF	2.40	0.14	2.77	0.25
S3_CF	3.55	0.35	3.47	0.29
S4_CF	2.80	0.71	2.37	0.12
S5_CF	2.15	0.92	2.43	0.40
S6_CF	1.25	0.35	1.13	0.29
S7_CF	1.90	0.14	2.27	0.25
S8_CF	1.50	0.71	1.53	0.25
S9_CF	4.05	0.35	3.37	0.12
S10_CF	1.40	0.14	1.27	0.25
S1_TLQ	2.15	0.21	1.83	0.29
S2_TLQ	2.65	0.50	2.70	0.53
S3_TLQ	3.9	0.14	3.43	0.12
S4_TLQ	3.05	0.35	2.70	0.17
S5_TLQ	2.65	0.21	2.43	0.40

S6_TLQ	2.15	0.21	1.53	0.25
S7_TLQ	2.65	0.50	2.20	0.36
S8_TLQ	2.5	0.71	1.77	0.25
S9_TLQ	3.65	0.50	3.27	0.25
S10_TLQ	2.25	0.35	1.53	0.25
S1_D	2.15	0.50	1.93	0.51
S2_D	3.30	0.00	3.17	0.29
S3_D	4.40	0.14	4.03	0.46
S4_D	3.55	0.35	3.03	0.64
S5_D	3.15	0.21	2.93	0.60
S6_D	2.90	0.14	1.60	0.53
S7_D	3.50	0.71	3.00	0.50
S8_D	3.15	0.21	2.43	0.12
S9_D	4.50	0.71	4.43	0.81
S10_D	2.75	0.35	2.03	0.25

(S: Student, CF: Content fidelity, TLQ: Target language quality, D: Delivery)

It can be seen from Table 3 that ERs tended to give higher scores than NRs by a maximum 0.72 (see Student 10's mean scores for criteria Target language quality and Delivery). Looking at the standard deviations for Content fidelity and Target language quality, the variations in ratings were mostly higher in the ER group, indicating that ERs were less reliable in this study.

In short, inter-rater reliability which was examined through two parameters, namely Cronbach's alpha and the single measure intra-class coefficients, was at acceptable level for three assessment categories. The criterion Content fidelity achieved the highest values in both groups, followed by Delivery and TL Quality. The findings also revealed that the ERs were more generous assessors than the NRs, but not as reliable as the NRs in this study.

4.2. Raters' Feedback on the Rubric

Through the interview, five raters participating in this research described their

marking process using the newly developed rubrics, gave comments about it and suggested significant changes. Three outstanding features of the rubric have been listed and explained as below.

Firstly, all three macro-criteria in the rubrics were perceived to be adequate and comprehensive. The newly developed rubric was commented to "include the most important criteria in interpreting quality assessment" (Rater 1). All raters showed their agreement with the proposed criteria because they are also the ones they used to mark their students' interpreting performances before this research "but perhaps under different terms" (Rater 3).

Secondly, most participants found the rubric useful and fairly user-friendly. According to Rater 1 and Rater 2, the descriptors were written "quite detailed with highlighted keywords to emphasize the differences among different bands". This is better than "vague guidelines" which is "a usual challenge" for inexperienced raters

(Rater 5). It is considered as “a huge advantage” (Rater 4) because after thorough study on the newly rubrics and sample marking, the rater could “produce immediate score” when hearing the students’ interpreting and looking at the band descriptors. Some raters thought the rubric is “helpful” as they can “quantify” the interpreting quality, hence it seems to be “reliable” (Rater 1, Rater 2, and Rater 4). Besides, Rater 2 commented that the rubric was still “fairly user-friendly” though it took her a lot of time to understand and differentiate five bands in each assessment criteria.

Thirdly, despite different techniques each rater chose to use, the study showed that marking ULIS interpreting tests using the rubric required a reasonable amount of time. The raters responded they needed to hear the full recordings once and occasional incomplete segments to mark the tests. Rater 4 and Rater 5, who conducted the marking process offline, listened to all ten recordings once only and finished the evaluation within 55 minutes. Rater 2 reported that she decided to hear the first two tests twice “to get familiar with the evaluation using the new rubric “and once for the other recordings. Rater 1 and Rater 5 maintained hearing the audios the second time for a few segments in particular test with different strategies. While Rater 1 paused after each segment in all the tests, Rater 5 listened to full recordings and listened again to some parts to produce scores ‘carefully’. No matter how many times the Raters had to listen, it took them about one hour to mark all ten sample tests in this study. This is good time management as ULIS interpreting assessors often have to evaluate up to hundreds interpreting performances including both mid-term and end-of-course tests each semester.

When it comes to details of the rubric, the number of bands was favored by

all the raters. Besides, the current descriptors were mainly approved, but one novice rater still preferred more specific descriptions and one experienced rater thought the descriptors were too long. All the raters agreed that the criterion Delivery was the easiest category to evaluate because they had no difficulty in understanding and differentiating five bands in this criterion. As a result, they could make a very quick and precise decision relating to the score of this criterion after only listening once. That the correlation coefficients of Delivery, which is presented in the previous part, was quite high means level of agreement among different raters in this criterion was high. The other two macro-criteria, however, were not that easy for the raters. The main reason lied in the word choice for particular bands and it seemed to be more challenging for the novice raters compared to the experienced ones.

It is easy to give students band 3 and above, but it is much more difficult to decide between band 1 and 2. When I read the descriptors for Content fidelity, I understood that if students made some minor or one major errors in accuracy and completeness, they will get band 3. Band 2 will be applied if there are some serious errors and band 1 means many serious errors are made. So, what if the student made some major errors and some minor errors at the same time, which band should I give them? I was really confused by this case. (Rater 5)

It can be seen that due to lack of experience in interpreting training and testing, novice raters often had difficulties in distinguishing between minor and major errors and they often strictly based on quantifiers like ‘one’, ‘some’ or ‘many’ to choose suitable bands when marking the interpreting tests. This, however, is less challenging for experienced raters.

I supposed Content fidelity is the easiest marking category. If it is a perfect interpreting performance in terms of accuracy and completeness, which I could not catch any errors, it is absolutely band 5. In band 4, there are a few but still acceptable mistakes. Band 3 has more errors than band 4... (Rater 1)

Some words or phrases in the rubric are also considered vague and require more thorough teacher training to assure the scoring results among different raters. Rater 2 was confused between ‘*very logically*’ and ‘*logically*’ in idea organization in Content fidelity while Rater 4 and 5 required more examples to understand differences between ‘*skillful*’ and ‘*good*’ use of vocabulary in TL Quality or the meaning of ‘*idiomatic*’.

At least three out of five raters suggested removing the criterion about grammar from the rubric. Their reason is as Vietnamese is the target language, “the naturalness itself is more important than grammar in Vietnamese” (Rater 2, Rater 3 and Rater 5); plus, it is hard to judge whether Vietnamese grammar was correct or not” (Rater 5).

There was general agreement on weighting among different raters in which all the raters agreed that the criterion Content fidelity should be given the biggest weight (at least 40%). There was greater consensus on weightings among ERs than NRs. Both ERs suggested the ideal weightings be 50% for Content fidelity, 30% for TL Quality and 20% for Delivery. Only one rater thought TL Quality should be given smaller weight than Delivery.

It’s English-Vietnamese interpreting and it occurs to me that Vietnamese is not so highly demanded in terms of grammar and collocations like English. More importantly, I believe that paralinguistic elements in delivery category have more impact

on making impression and contributions to a good interpreting performance. (Rater 3)

Table 4

Rater’s Views on Weights

	Content fidelity	TL quality	Delivery
Rater 1	50%	30%	20%
Rater 2	50%	30%	20%
Rater 3	50%	20%	35%
Rater 4	40%	30%	30%
Rater 5	45%	30%	25%

There is one comment on the length and the language of the rubric. It was thought to be better for rater if the rubric was written within one page and in Vietnamese. The shorter the rubric is, the better and faster raters can learn and memorize. Other suggestions were made relating to test design and marking guidelines. The current test includes 5 small segments lasting from 30 to 45 seconds, which was considered “*too short to assess how good the language use was*” (Rater 2). Moreover, through reflection of marking techniques, all raters gave scores for each individual segment and calculated the average to finalize the score for each criterion. This involves a lot of numbers and calculation; therefore, it can be time-consuming and easy to miscalculate. A detailed marking guideline is a must to facilitate the assessment. Acknowledged that some raters, especially novice ones, may strictly follow the marking guidelines, the suggested answer should include more than one way to interpret and point out which answer should not be accepted. A detailed but flexible enough answer can save rater a lot of time and increase inter-rater reliability.

The two raters who had just completed interpreting training, stated that the design of the rating sheet (see Appendix) along with the rubric would help them identify the test takers’ good points and

mistakes during their interpreting. These comments suggest that the use of well-defined and well-written rubric may also be useful for formative assessment or in-class activity when trainers have to provide feedback for their trainees.

4.3. Discussion

The study assessed the reliability and users' feedback about the rubrics to assess interpreting tests at VNU-ULIS created by Tran and Do (2022). It should be noted that a marking rubric is a popular tool in evaluation and all three criteria in the rubrics including Content fidelity, Target language quality and Delivery was consistent with the findings in the studies conducted by Lee (2008), Lee (2015) and Wang (2015).

Although rubrics is a reasonable choice, weighting was a controversial area which requires more investigation. That the proposed formula of weightings in which $TOTAL = 50\% \text{ Content fidelity} + 25\% \text{ TL Quality} + 25\% \text{ Delivery}$ was not completely agreed among interviewed raters may be attributed to various personal concepts about the importance of each criterion among raters and special features of the Vietnamese language. From the interviewees' opinion, the authors proposed another formula of $50\% + 20\% + 30\%$ for Content fidelity, TL Quality and Delivery respectively. This calculation is also suitable when considering characteristics of the target language which grammar does not play an essential role in Vietnamese.

Besides, the word choice during the writing level descriptors stage was the main cause of confusion among interviewed raters. These qualifiers and adjectives like 'very', 'some', 'a few', 'major', 'minor', 'good', 'skillful' should be considered carefully before being added in the descriptors.

In the second phase, the testing of newly developed rubrics, several findings

are highlighted as below. The first key finding is ERs turned out to be more generous markers than NRs, particularly Rater 1 with 10-year experience and Rater 5 who has just spent only 14 months in translation training and one semester in interpreting training. This may have been attributed to different perceptions of quality held by ERs and NRs, or different levels of expectation between these two groups of raters. Through the interview, both ERs agreed that experienced interpreting trainers may be 'less demanding' or 'less strict' than those who worked in the industry only. It is mostly because they were aware of the educational context, in which several factors such as expected learning outcomes of the course, test design and students' competence needed to be considered. The NRs, on the other hand, strictly followed the descriptors and to some extent, lack of knowledge about quality from client or users' perspective, can show high expectation about how well test takers must perform in order to reach the top levels on the scale.

Another key finding is that the inter-rater reliability between experienced raters (Rater 1 and Rate 2) was lower than among novice raters (Rater 3, 4 and 5). This finding, which is surprisingly inconsistent with the previous results in Lee (2008)'s study, may be explained by the following factors. It is true that rating can be influenced by raters' backgrounds, experience and expectations, or their different interpretations of scales, standards of severity and reactions to elements not relevant to scales (McNamara, 1996; Lee, 2008; Wang et al., 2015). In this study, with 10 years in interpreting training and testing, both experienced raters have evaluated a wide range of interpreting performances; therefore, they may have established their own personal standards in interpreting quality. Additionally, as both ERs did not attend face-to-face training, there was no chance for discussion and seeking agreement between them as well as

nothing to assure that they had investigated and strictly followed the guidelines to use the newly developed rubric without any different personal assumptions.

Thirdly, content fidelity received the highest inter-rater reliability among three assessment criteria in the newly developed rubric. The reason is fidelity or accuracy or any names it may take is the universal and the most important element in interpreting quality, which was mentioned in all research in this field. The rater's perception of the criterion may be similar; consequently, there would be a high percentage of agreement in each band score. Besides, the fact that the criterion Target language quality has the lowest inter-rater reliability and interview data about weightings suggests that there should be a change in the total weights. Like what has been discussed in the previous session, the authors proposed the lowest proportion for the criterion Target language quality, about 20%. Obviously, the effectiveness of this change still awaits close investigation which is beyond the scope of this study.

Fourthly, at least three out of five raters answered in the interview that they found it difficult to identify the difference between band 2 and band 3 for criterion Content fidelity while one rater claimed she was confused between band 4 and band 5 for criterion TL Quality. This confusion originated from the choice of quantifiers and expressions in the descriptors. Obviously, a review and modification are needed to rewrite all the descriptors, especially those highlighted with confusion and difficulties for raters to understand. Nonetheless, it can be a good idea to decrease the number of levels in the rubric to four levels instead of five like the current one. A four-point scale will not only reduce level overlapping among two successive levels, hence it is easier for the raters to award the appropriate level for performance.

It is noted that rater training plays a critical role in the marking process. A thorough rater training is to make rater feel more assured of the whole marking process and to narrow down the disparities in ratings. A group face-to-face training before the actual evaluation is compulsory to ensure optimal inter-rater reliability and intra-rater reliability. Samples with sufficient varieties for each level on a rating scale or different translated options should be provided to elicit the differences among different bands. It is also important to give raters adequate time for rating practice and discussion can also help raters achieve ease and consistency during actual rating. At the same time, the grading protocols, including suggested timeframes, the marking process and scoring techniques should be agreed upon within the group of assessors.

During the whole marking process, the raters are encouraged to compare different students' performances and scores to maintain their self-consistency and make marking adjustments to scores if necessary. Ideally, all raters should have been gathered at the end of the assessment process to discuss: why they gave highly discrepant scores to some tests, their views on the assessment rubrics and the rating process, and their suggestions for ways to achieve satisfactory inter-rater reliability.

5. Conclusion

The study has made a meaningful contribution to addressing the complexity of interpreting performance assessment, by showing the application of rubrics in assessing English-Vietnamese consecutive interpreting quality in an educational context like summative assessment at VNU-ULIS. It can be concluded from the study that the newly developed rubric in this research might work effectively in multiple interpreting performance assessments, particularly as a means to enhance rating

consistency. By using one standardized rubric with detailed descriptors, summative assessment in interpreting courses as well as general interpreting evaluation would be more correct and consistent among different raters over time. Another contribution made in this study is that novice raters can be more reliable than experienced ones as long as they all have background in interpreter training and a careful rater training is provided.

However, this study has inherent limitations that should be taken into account. A major limitation is that all conclusions regarding inter-rater reliability need to be qualified in light of the small number of raters (N = 5) and the small number of tests evaluated by all five raters (N = 10). A larger sample, more than ten raters and or more than 50 tests, for example, would have enabled the researchers to run a more reliable SPSS analysis.

The findings also indicate that a great deal of additional research remains to be done to validate the rating scales. Follow-up research is also needed in order to implement this rating rubric in a wider context, for example with bigger samples or in a different context or with different groups of raters such as interpreter educators, interpreting practitioners, users. Extensive feedback from rating scale users would be helpful not only in fine-tuning the scale, but also in designing a modified version for a different assessee group and/or a different mode of interpreting. Second, the issue of establishing relative weighting for assessment categories should receive further attention. How relative weighting can be applied to assessment should be further researched, using different statistical methods (e.g., factor analysis) in a variety of settings. Third, a comparison of reliability in analytic scoring and holistic scoring or intra-rater reliability and more importantly, testing of the validity of the newly created rubric should be put under further investigation.

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NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ TIÊU CHÍ ĐÁNH GIÁ CHẤT LƯỢNG BÀI THI PHIÊN DỊCH ỨNG ĐOẠN ANH - VIỆT

Trần Phương Linh, Đỗ Minh Hoàng

Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ, ĐHQGHN, Phạm Văn Đồng, Cầu Giấy, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Sử dụng kết quả nghiên cứu của Trần và Đỗ (2022), nghiên cứu này tìm hiểu về độ tin cậy và phản hồi của người dùng với rubrics xây dựng bởi hai tác giả để đánh giá bài thi phiên dịch ứng đoạn Anh-Việt của sinh viên tại Trường Đại học Ngoại ngữ - Đại học Quốc gia Hà Nội. Năm đánh giá viên gồm 2 đánh giá viên nhiều kinh nghiệm và 3 đánh giá viên ít kinh nghiệm đã chấm mười bài thi dịch nói khác nhau một cách độc lập và đưa phản hồi về rubric này. Kết quả cho thấy rubrics mới được xây dựng khá thân thiện với người dùng và có tính ứng dụng trong đánh giá dịch nói. Nhìn chung, tính thống nhất trong đánh giá giữa các đánh giá viên, thể hiện qua chỉ số Cronbach's alpha và hệ số tương quan nội bộ, cho kết quả ở mức có thể chấp nhận được. Bên cạnh đó, giá trị thu được giữa các đánh giá viên ít kinh nghiệm cao hơn đánh giá viên nhiều kinh nghiệm. Nhận thức của người đánh giá về từng tiêu chí và quy trình đánh giá có thể giải thích cho sự khác biệt trong quyết định điểm số của họ. Các phát hiện cũng đề xuất cải thiện về từ ngữ sử dụng khi mô tả từng tiêu chí, trọng số và tập huấn đánh giá viên.

Từ khóa: bài thi phiên dịch ứng đoạn, tiêu chí đánh giá, rubrics

Appendix – C1 Test Assessment Rubric

Band	Content Fidelity	Target Language Quality	Delivery
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conveys a sense of original message with complete accuracy in which there is no opposite meaning and no unjustified change in meaning. - Transfers all the information with no omissions, additions and no differences in numbers and names. - Very logically organizes information and ideas; forms a natural whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates skillful use of vocabulary and specialist terminology. - Produces idiomatic and on the whole correct expressions, and entirely appropriate register. - Shows a master control of TL grammar with very few or no errors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interprets smoothly with only rare hesitation, pauses, fillers or false starts, repetition or self-correction. - Has excellent voice projection with precise and easily understandable pronunciation and easily heard volume. - Reflects intonation, emphasis and tone appropriate to situation. - Displays a courteous and confident manner.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conveys a sense of original message accurately. - Makes only a few minor unjustified omissions and/or additions or distortions but not affecting transfer or comprehension of information. - Logically organizes information and ideas; forms a coherent whole. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates good use of vocabulary and specialist terminology. - Produces general idiomatic and on the whole mostly correct expressions, and largely appropriate register. - Shows a proficient control of TL grammar with occasional minor errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interprets for most parts smoothly with occasional hesitation and/or pauses, fillers or false starts, repetition or self-correction. - Has good voice projection with mostly understandable pronunciation and easily heard volume. - Reflects intonation, emphasis and tone appropriate to situation. - Displays a few signs of nervousness.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequately conveys a sense of original message - Makes some minor or one major inaccuracy, unjustified omissions, additions and/or distortions. - Organizes information and ideas with occasional awkward or oddly placed elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates adequate use of vocabulary and specialist terminology. - Produces to certain degree idiomatic and correct expressions, and acceptable register. - Shows a weak control of TL grammar with frequent minor errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interprets with some obvious but still acceptable hesitation or pauses, ineffective fillers or false starts or repetition or self-correction. - Occasionally displays faulty pronunciation but without impairing messages. - Makes reasonable attempts to reflect suitable intonation, emphasis and tone. - Displays occasional nervous habits.

<p>2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Partially conveys a sense of original message - Makes some serious inaccuracies, unjustified omissions, additions and/or distortions. - Somewhat awkwardly organizes information and ideas with frequent awkward or oddly placed elements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates frequently inappropriate or little use of vocabulary and specialist terminology. - Produces unnatural expressions, and inappropriate registers, which impact on comprehension. - Shows some lack of control of TL grammar with numerous errors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interprets with many long pauses, numerous ineffective fillers or false starts and unnecessary repetition or self-correction. - Has frequent mispronunciation which causes some difficulty for the listener. - Fails to reflect suitable intonation, emphasis and tone. - Displays many notable nervous habits.
<p>1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fail to convey a sense of original message. - Makes many serious inaccuracies, unjustified omissions, additions and/or distortions. - Disorganizes information and ideas. They do not flow together and are unrelated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Demonstrates excessive inappropriate or no uses of vocabulary and specialist terminology. There may be numerous ineffective SL inferences. - Produces expressions and registers which may impede comprehension. - Shows no control of TL grammar. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lacks fluency which may result in low comprehensibility. - Speech is unintelligible - Speaks in a flat monotone. - Lacks confidence.
<p>0</p>	<p>No interpretation is produced</p>		

A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF HILLARY CLINTON'S SPEECH "WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS"

Pham Thi Quyen*

Diplomatic Academy of Viet Nam

69 Chua Lang, Lang Thuong, Dong Da, Ha Noi, Viet Nam

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Abstract: In the research, the speech "Women's rights are human rights" by Hillary Clinton will be analyzed in the light of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as both theory and method to reveal how power and ideology are embedded in language in particular and the relation between language and society in general. Initially, the theoretical framework of CDA, the concepts of power and ideology are presented. The social context of women's position including women's position in the past and women's position nowadays is also revealed. The research then briefs on Hillary Clinton's role in struggling for women's rights. In terms of methodology, the importance of Systemic Functional Grammar to CDA and a framework of CDA procedure, which set the basis for the analysis of the speech "Women's rights are human rights", will be introduced and explained. Thirdly, the article analyzes the speech in the light of CDA. The analysis consists of three stages namely description, interpretation and explanation. The last part summarizes the major findings, provides concluding remarks, gives implication to teaching and learning translation and makes recommendations for further studies.

Keywords: critical discourse analysis, translation of political discourses, women's rights, human rights

1. Introduction

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a new linguistic research area in Viet Nam. However, for the past few years, more and more linguists find interest in this field and are making efforts to enhance the consciousness of how power and ideology are embedded in language in particular and the relation between language and society in general.

It is common that language learners usually find authentic discourses, especially political ones difficult to comprehend fully.

This is mainly due to their failure to interpret the author's underlying assumptions. The awareness of the ideological meanings of the discourse will enable the comprehensive understanding of authentic discourses in general and political ones particularly.

Regarding the sustainable development of a country, gender equality is considered one of the most important goals that a country should always strive for. Numerous forums and conferences on this issue where a lot of brave and responsible people have raised their voice for women and women's rights have been held

* Corresponding author.

Email address: phamthiquyen.dav@gmail.com

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worldwide. However, the fourth world conference on women in Beijing in 1995 marked a significant turning point for the global agenda for gender equality and at the conference, Hillary Clinton, the then - First Lady of the United States leading the U.S delegation delivered a historic speech “Women’s rights are human rights” that still echoes to the present: *“I believe that, on the eve of a new millennium, it is time to break our silence. It is time for us to say here in Beijing, and the world to hear, that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women’s rights as separate from human rights.”* Hillary Clinton wants to use this speech to speak for women and call for joint efforts to protect women’s rights. However, in order to fully understand the speech, to see how effective language can be in expressing the author’s ideologies and to find out the relationship between language and power, thorough analysis of the speech should be performed.

For all the above reasons, the writer conducts the research titled ‘A critical discourse analysis of “Women’s rights are human rights”’ by Hillary Clinton at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in China, 5 September 1995. The writer also expects to raise a voice in approval of applying and advancing critical discourse analysis in doing linguistics research.

2. What is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)?

2.1. Definitions of CDA

A lot of CDA practitioners like Chouliaraki and Fairclough, Gee, Luke, VanDijk, Wodak,... treated social practices not only in terms of social relationships but also in terms of their implications for things like status, power,... from critical approaches.

According to Van Dijk (1998), Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal

the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias. It examines how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts.

In a similar vein, Fairclough (1993, p. 135) defines CDA as discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power; and to explore how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony.

In *An Introduction to Critical Discourse Analysis in Education* (Rogers, 2002, p. 33), James Paul Gee emphasizes that *“in fact critical discourse analysis argues that language in use is always part and parcel of, and partially constitutive of, specific social practices, and that social practices always have implications for inherently political things like status, solidarity distribution of social goods, and power.”*

From these statements, it can be seen that CDA mainly focuses on the question of language and power, aiming at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures, connections that might be opaque to people who are not specialized in this field.

2.2. Key Concepts in CDA

In understanding CDA, it is also essential to get used to some key concepts of CDA like ideology and power since the notion of ideology and power were seen as relevant for an interpretation and explanation of text.

2.2.1. Ideology

According to Thompson (1990, p. 12), “ideology refers to social forms and processes within which, and by means of which, symbolic forms circulate in the social world. Ideology is an important aspect of establishing and maintaining unequal power relation.”

For Thompson, the study of ideology is the study of the way in which meaning is constructed and conveyed by symbolic forms of various kinds. This study also investigates the social contexts within which symbolic forms are used and not used.

2.2.2. Power

The relationship between language and power is of great importance, especially in modern times with a lot of significant social and economic changes.

For CDA, language is not powerful on its own – it gains power by the use of powerful make of it. Wodak explains why CDA often chooses the perspective of those who suffer and critically analyses the language use of those in power, those who are responsible for the existence of inequalities and who also have the means and the opportunity to improve conditions.

CDA emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary work in order to gain a proper understanding of how language functions in constituting and transmitting knowledge, in organizing social institutions or in exercising power.

Power is about relations of differences, particularly about the effects of differences in social structures. Language is entwined in social power in a number of ways: language indexes power, expresses power, is involved where there is contention over and a challenge to power.

2.3. Principles of CDA

In CDA, there are certain principles outlined by CDA practitioners (Fairclough,

1995; Kress, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996). They can be summarized as follows:

1. Language is a social practice through which the world is represented.

2. Discourse/language use as a form of social practice in itself not only represents and signifies other social practices but it also constitutes other social practices such as the exercise of power, domination, prejudice, resistance and so forth.

3. Texts acquire their meanings by the dialectical relationship between texts and the social subjects: writers and the readers, who always operate with various degrees of choice and access to texts and means of interpretation.

4. Linguistic features and structures are not arbitrary. They are purposeful whether or not the choices are conscious or unconscious.

5. Power relations are produced, exercised, and reproduced through discourse.

6. All speakers and writers operate from specific discursive practices originating in special interests and aims which involve inclusions and exclusions.

7. Discourse is historical in the sense that texts acquire their meanings by being situated in specific social, cultural and ideological contexts, and time and space.

8. CDA does not solely interpret texts, but also explains them.

What is remarkably notable from these principles is the important role of context. In CDA, not only do we have to analyze the text but also the process of making such a text, the socio-political and economical condition of the society, which are integrated under the label of context.

3. Social Context of Women’s Position

3.1. Women’s Position in the Past

It was long ago when women were

looked upon as slaves to the “hard-working” men. In today's society, women are more respected and are acceptable for many jobs as men are. Yet, long before our time, during World War II, American women were thought to be many different things that they could only imagine. During wartime, women had to do men's work. Women were encouraged to take these jobs for the first time in history. Many of them also became war nurses and helped many of the men recover. It would seem that women's interests in occupational equality were directly linked to the nation's state of distress. During the war, women received many different opportunities and advancements in their lives. After the war, the men returned home and began to take place with the women. Women continued working during the postwar period and grew stronger.

In Vietnam, during wartime, especially during the wars against French and American troops, women also had to do men's job. They were seen transporting ammunition, equipment and other supplies from Viet-China border areas and from sea harbors to the military units operating below the 17th Parallel in the South, especially on the so-called Ho Chi Minh Trails,...

It is true that women in the Anti-American War contributed a significant part to the country's victory in 1975. However, gender equality is still a problem in many parts of the country.

In the past few decades, due to the globalization and renewal policies of Vietnam, foreign cultural habits have been introduced into our country, which has had great influences on our social morality and lifestyles. Opinions, thoughts and sexual behaviours of young people are more open. However, due to the lack of knowledge of safe sex, unexpected pregnancies and

sexually transmitted diseases are increasing. Meanwhile, abortion is still allowed at public hospitals and private medical centers as a population-controlling method, which puts a lot of women under pressure and at a disadvantage in terms of thoughts, morality, position as well as psychophysiology.

3.2. *Women's Position Nowadays*

The United Nations (n.d.) defines: “human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.”

Women's rights or gender equality was made part of international human rights law by the Universal Declaration of Human rights and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948: “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights” and that “everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion,... birth or other status” (United Nations, n.d.).

During the nineteenth century, the women suffrage movement was coming out in full force to demand the equal rights for women in the United States and Europe. The movement not only was striving for equal rights for women but also for voting privileges. In the writings of John Stuart Mill, one of the earliest and strongest supporters of ever greater rights for women, he supported women's rights in *The Subjection of Women*. His book is one of the earliest written on this subject by a male author.

In Vietnam, after August 1945, the new government and leaders focused on women liberation besides fighting French aggressors. The parties contributed a lot to the better life of women, initiating their awareness of women's rights and their equality with men. Vietnamese women saw a sharp turning point in their life. More and more women were present in the national workforce.

Nowadays, on the occasion of International Women's Day (March 8th), ceremonies honoring women's roles in society are organized nationwide in our country.

Women in the 21st century have come a long way. They can now hold their heads up high and be proud of who and what they are, although they will always be fighting for the equal rights of women. In many parts of the world, a lot of women are still suffering from discriminatory treatment. These women do not even know that they deserve being equally treated or accept their fate and do not dare to speak for themselves for the sake of their children. It is high time something should be done by responsible people to better our world.

3.3. Hillary Clinton With Women's Rights

Hillary Diane Rodham is the 67th United States Secretary of State, serving in the administration of President Barack Obama.

Clinton is not the first female secretary of state, but neither of her predecessors had her impact abroad as a pop feminist icon. On nearly every foreign trip, she has met with women - South Korean students, Israeli entrepreneurs, Iraqi war widows, Chinese civic activists. Clinton mentioned "women" or "woman" at least 450 times in public comments in her first

five months in the position, twice as often as her predecessor, Condoleezza Rice. She was one of the most prominent international figures during the late 1990s to speak out against the ill-treatment towards women around the world.

Clinton's interest in global women's issues is deeply personal, a mission she adopted as first lady after the stinging defeat of her healthcare reform effort in 1994. For months, she kept a low profile. Then, in September 1995, she addressed the U.N. women's conference in Beijing and argued very forcefully against practices that abused women around the world and in the People's Republic of China itself, declaring "that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights" and resisting Chinese pressure to soften her remarks. Delegates jumped to their feet in applause. "It was a transformational moment for her," said Melanne Verwee, who has worked closely with Clinton since her White House days.

From the above, it can be easily seen that Hillary Clinton plays an active role in protecting and demanding equal rights for women all over the world. As the Secretary of the US, she wants to use her power and influence to call for actions to help women.

4. Methodology

As this research is a CDA and qualitative research, the writer applies the three stages in the framework of CDA proposed by Fairclough and systemic functional grammar (SFG) to analyze the speech of Hillary Clinton.

4.1. Critical Discourse Analysis in Practice: A Framework of CDA

The framework of CDA proposed by Fairclough is a three-stage procedure. This is

one of his most successful achievements in CDA in which he distinguishes three dimensions (description, interpretation and explanation) corresponding to the three dimensions of discourse (text, interaction and context) respectively.

4.1.1. Description

Description is the stage which is concerned with the formal properties of the text. This stage focuses on linguistic features by answering ten questions divided into three main sections: vocabulary, grammar and textual structures:

a. Vocabulary

1. What experiential values do words have?
What classification schemes are drawn upon?
Are there words which are ideologically contested?
Is there rewording or over-rewording?
What ideologically significant meaning relations are there between words?
2. What relational values do words have?
Are there euphemistic expressions?
Are there markedly formal or informal words?
3. What expressive values do words have?
4. What metaphors are used?

b. Grammar

5. What expressive values do grammatical features have?
What types of process and participant predominate?
Is agency unclear?
Are processes what they seem?
Are nominalizations used?
Are sentences active or passive?
Are sentences positive or negative?

6. What relational values do grammatical features have?

What modes (declarative, grammatical question, imperative) are used?

Are there important features of relational modality?

Are the pronouns we and you used? And if so, how?

7. What expressive values do grammatical features have?

Are these important features of expressive modality?

8. How are sentences linked together?

What logical connectors are used?

Are complex sentences characterized by coordination or subordination?

What means are used for referring inside and outside the text?

c. Textual structures

9. What interaction conventions are used?
Are there ways in which one participant controls the turns of others?
10. What larger-scale structures does the text have?

4.1.2. Interpretation

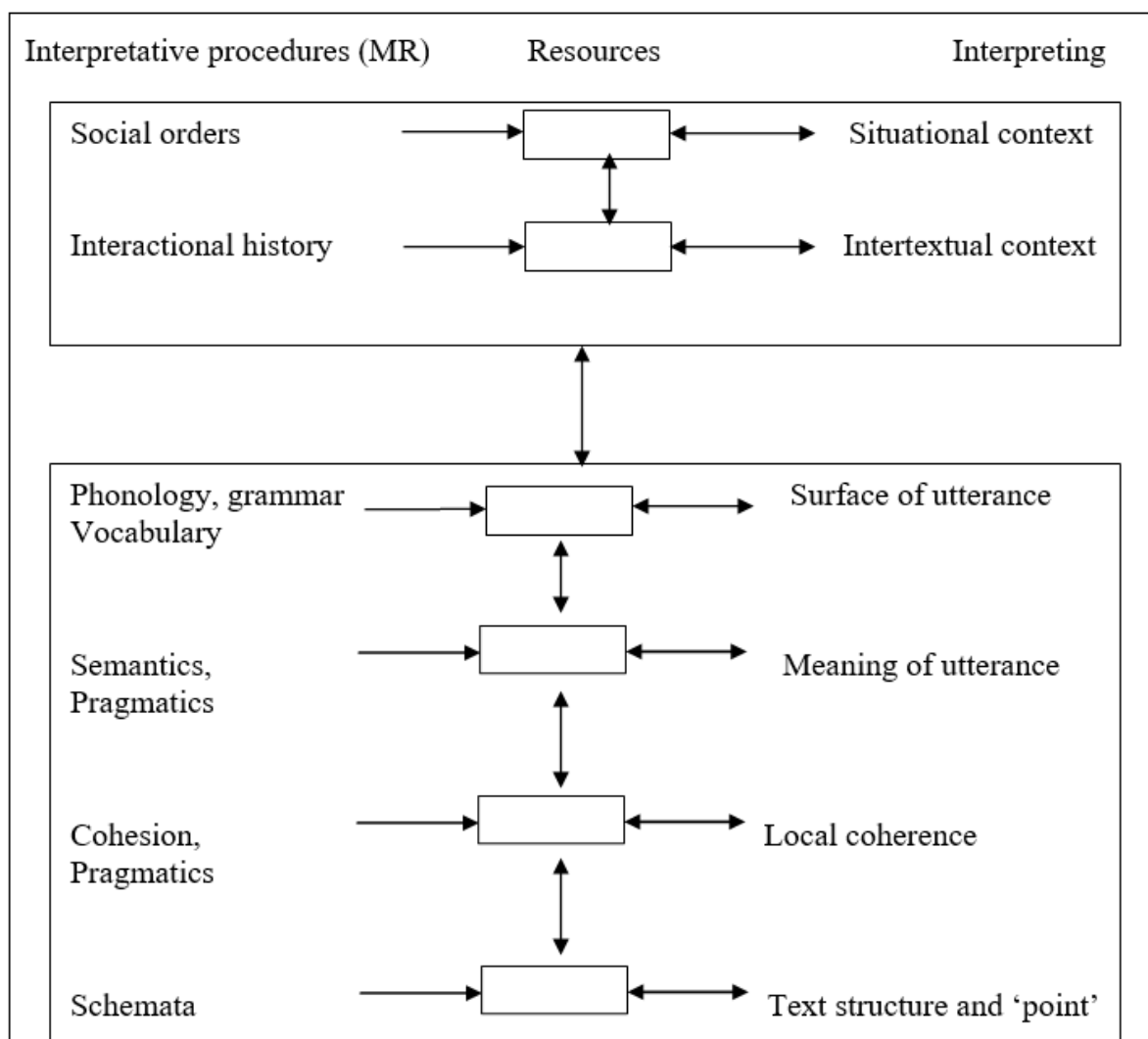
Interpretation is concerned with the relationship between text and interaction - with seeing the text as the product of a process of production, and as a resource in the process of interpretation.

According to Fairclough (2001, p. 118), '*interpretations are generated through a combination of what is in the text and what is "in" the interpreter in the sense of the members' resources (MR) which the latter brings to interpretation*'.

The process of interpretation is summed up in the following figure.

Figure 1

Interpretation (Fairclough, 2001, p. 119)



4.1.3. Explanation

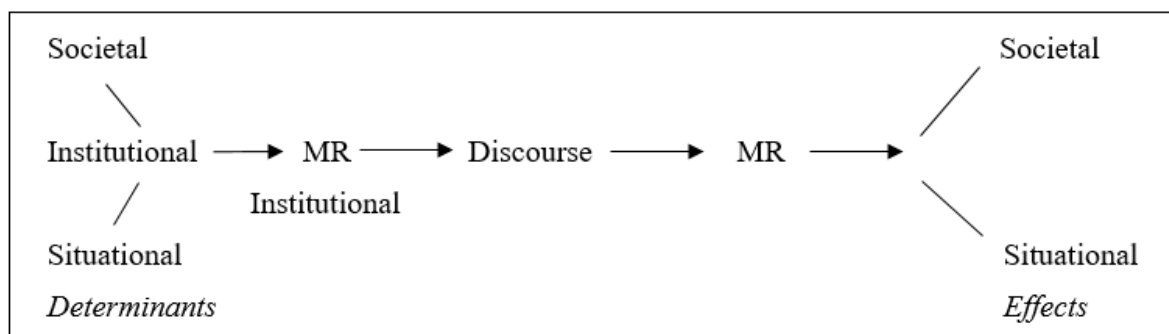
Explanation is concerned with the relationship between interaction and social context – with the social determination of the processes of production and interpretation, and their social effects.

According to Fairclough, the objective of this stage is to portray a discourse as part of a social process, as a social practice. It tries to show how

discourses are determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them. These social determinations and effects are mediated by MR: that is social structures shape MR while MR in turn shape discourses, and discourses sustain or change MR, which in turn sustain or change structures. These processes can be summarized in the following figure.

Figure 2

Explanation (Fairclough, 2001, p. 136)



4.2. Analytical Framework: Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

Systemic functional grammar (SFG) or systemic functional linguistics (SFL) is a model of grammar that was developed by Michael Halliday in the 1960s. It is part of a broad social semiotic approach to language called systemic linguistics. The term "systemic" refers to the view of language as "a network of systems, or interrelated sets of options for making meaning". The term "functional" indicates that the approach is concerned with meaning, as opposed to formal grammar, which focuses on word classes such as nouns and verbs, typically without reference beyond the individual clause.

Systemic functional grammar is concerned primarily with the choices that the grammar makes available to speakers and writers. These choices relate speakers' and writers' intentions to the concrete forms of a language. In SFG, language is analyzed in three different ways, or strata: semantics, phonology, and lexicogrammar. SFG presents a view of language in terms of both structure (grammar) and words (lexis). The term "lexicogrammar" describes this combined approach.

According to Fairclough and Chouliaraki (1999, p. 139), "...specifically the linguistic theory which we believe has the most common with CDA and most to offer CDA, systemic functional linguistics

(SFL)" and "the version of CDA which we work with ourselves has used SFL as its main resource for textual analysis".

Thompson (1996, p. 28) identifies these three kinds of meanings (functions): Experiential meaning, Interpersonal meaning, Textual meaning.

The Experiential meaning is realized through the Transitivity system which consists of different process types, participants and circumstances. In English, six process types are recognized: material process, behavior process, mental process, verbal process, relational process, and existential process (Halliday, 1994, p. 143).

The Interpersonal meaning is realized through the Mood structure. Through Interpersonal meaning, we answer the question "How do we use language to exchange?"

In terms of *Textual meaning*, thematic structure is under investigation. The textual meaning deals with creating relevance between parts of what is being said and between the text and context. It asks "How is the context of the text organized?" Lexico-grammatically, it is expressed through the system of theme and information focus. Relevant to the realization of the system of theme are two elements: the Theme and the Rheme. The Rheme serves as the point of departure of the message, which in English is the initial element of the clause; and the Rheme is the remainder of the

message. By analyzing the thematic structure of the clauses in a text we can find out the text's mode of development, i.e. how speakers construct their messages in a way which makes them smoothly fit into the unfolding language event.

5. The Analysis

5.1. Textual Description and Analysis

5.1.1. Vocabulary Used

Clinton emphasizes her right to be at this conference in Beijing to speak for women who cannot be there. She and other women at the conference are the representatives of women around the world, who have the "responsibility" to struggle for "issues that matter most in the lives of women and their families: access to education, health care, jobs and credit, ..."

Hillary Clinton knows that there are some people who doubt the contribution of women to society's progress: "there are some who wonder whether the lives of women and girls matter to economic and political progress around the globe." However, she then stresses the importance of women's contribution to the development of families and then society: "at this very moment, as we sit here, women around the world are giving birth, raising children, cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning houses, planting crops, working on assembly lines, running companies, and running countries." Moreover, "what we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish."

Despite women's contribution, there is still much inequality in every part of the world: "women comprise more than half the

world's population. Women are 70% percent of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and write... Yet much of the work we do is not valued - not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture, not by government leaders."

In addition, "women also are dying from diseases that should have been prevented or treated; they are watching their children succumb to malnutrition caused by poverty and economic deprivation;..."

More seriously, human rights, the things which are considered the most important things in a person's life, are not respected by many people around the world: "tragically, women are most often the ones whose human rights are violated."

Clinton points out that women themselves should no longer keep silent, "it is time to break our silence. It is time for us to say here in Beijing, and the world to hear, that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights." She calls for joint effort and action of women throughout the world. She also insists that "there is no formula for how women should lead their lives. That is why we must respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family. Every woman deserves the chance to realize her God-given potential. We also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected."

Women like anyone else should be given the right to enjoy freedom, which is defined as "the right of people to assemble, organize, and debate openly. It means respecting the views of those who may disagree with the views of their governments. It means not taking citizens away from their loved ones and jailing them, mistreating them, or denying them their freedom or dignity because of the peaceful expression of their ideas and opinions."

Hilary Clinton wants to emphasize women's role both in the home and in society, and that women themselves should be aware of their importance and struggle for their own rights. She also encourages women at the conference, who have chances to raise their voice, to speak up for those who are not lucky enough to be here. Not only women, but Clinton also wants to address people of all ages, all races around the globe. They should make joint efforts to build a better world without inequality.

5.1.2. Grammatical Features

5.1.2.1. The Use of Personal Pronoun

In the speech, pronouns like "I", "we" are both used to serve different purposes of the speaker. When sharing her personal experience or expressing her own ideas, Clinton uses the pronoun "I", which makes the speech more convincing: "*Over the past 25 years, I have worked persistently on issues relating to women, children and families. Over the past two-and-a-half years, I have had the opportunity to learn more about the challenges facing women in my own country and around the world.*

I have met new mothers in Indonesia,...

I have met working parents in Denmark...

I have met women in South Africa...

I have met with the leading women of the Western Hemisphere...

I have met women in India and Bangladesh...

I have met doctors and nurses in Belarus and Ukraine..."

Clinton had a lot of opportunities to work and meet women from many parts of the world, talk to them, learn about their challenges and difficulties then feel sympathetic with them. She thinks that she and people around the world have the responsibility to speak up for them.

"As an American, I want to speak

up for women in my own country, ...

I want to speak up for mothers *who are fighting for good schools, safe neighborhoods,...*

Speaking to you today, **I speak for them**, just as each of us speaks for women around the world..."

"**I** believe that, on the eve of a new millennium, it is time to break our silence..."

The pronoun "we" is used when the speaker wants to attract the attention of the audience and to call for joint effort and the responsibility to cooperate in fighting for women's rights:

"We come together in fields and in factories..."

..., **we** come together and talk about our aspirations and concerns... However different **we** may be, there is far more that unites us than divides us. **We** share a common future. And **we** are here to find common ground so that **we** may help bring new dignity and respect to women and girls all over the world... By gathering in Beijing, **we** are focusing world attention on issues that matter most in the lives of women and their families:..."

"What **we** are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish..."

"At this very moment, as **we** sit here, women around the world are giving birth, raising children, cooking meals, ...,

We need to understand that there is no formula for how women should lead their lives. That is why **we** must respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family..."

"We also must recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected."

"But **we** have not solved older, deeply-rooted problems that continue to diminish the potential of half the world's population.

...If we take bold steps to better the lives of women, we will be taking bold steps to better the lives of children and families too.”

5.1.2.2. *The Use of Voice*

The use of voice also contributes to the expression of the speaker's ideology when delivering the speech. In the text, 24 out of 104 sentences are passive ones, which makes up 23% while 80 sentences are active ones accounting for 77%. The high percentage of active sentences makes it easier for the speaker to access the audience and express her ideology. The speech is clearly stated thus misunderstanding and ambiguity are limited for the audience.

The speaker's use of active sentences also suggests that she wants to emphasize the importance of women in families and societies: “families rely on mothers and wives for emotional support and care; families rely on women for labor in the home; and increasingly, families rely on women for income needed to raise healthy children and care for other relatives” and their active role in struggling for their own rights in every field: “women must enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure.”

5.1.2.3. *Modes of the Sentences*

In the speech, three kinds of modes – declarative, imperative and grammatical questions are found, which differently contribute to the ideology expression. According to Fairclough (2001, p. 105), “these three modes position subjects differently. In the case of a typical declarative, the subject position of the speaker/writer is that of a giver (of information), and the addressee's position is that of a receiver. In the case of the imperative, the speaker is in the position of asking something of the addressee, while the addressee is a compliant actor. In a

grammatical question, the speaker/writer is again asking something of the addressee, in this case information, and the addressee is in the position of a provider of information.”

It can be easily seen that the speaker focuses on giving information as declarative sentences are mainly used in the speech (98 sentences out of 104 sentences accounting for 94.2%). Using a large number of declarative sentences, the speaker wants to confirm that it is she who has the right to include or exclude in giving such information and the addressee's position is that of a receiver.

Besides giving information, by using imperatives, the speaker also tries to make clear and emphasize that women around the world have equal rights to everyone else as they can do everything like anyone else and that they should be respected: “let them look at the women gathered here and at Huairou - the homemakers, nurses, teachers, lawyers, policymakers, and women who run their own businesses.” The speaker then gives an explanation: “if there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, it is that human rights are women's rights - and women's rights are human rights...” and a clear definition of freedom: “let me be clear. Freedom means the right of people to assemble, organize, and debate openly. It means respecting the views of those who may disagree with the views of their governments. It means not taking citizens away from their loved ones and jailing them, mistreating them, or denying them their freedom or dignity because of the peaceful expression of their ideas and opinions.”

Hillary also expresses her desire to make this conference a start for a global campaign for women's rights and calls for joint efforts to protect them. Only when the campaign is successful can a bright future for families and societies be ensured: “let this Conference be our - and the world's - call to action. And let us heed the call so that

we can create a world in which every woman is treated with respect and dignity, every boy and girl is loved and cared for equally, and every family has the hope of a strong and stable future.”

5.1.2.4. Modality

Fairclough (2001, p. 105) states that modality is to do with the speaker or writer’s authority, and there are two dimensions of modality: relational and expressive modality. By relational modality, we mean it is a matter of the authority of one participant in relation to others. By expressive modality, we mean it is the matter of the speaker or writer’s authority with respect to the truth or probability of a representation of reality.

The use of “**must**” reveals the power and the authoritative position of the speaker. The power is exerted on the audience – the addressee, and the addressee is required to perform the action she asks them to do:

*“We need to understand that there is no formula for how women should lead their lives. That is why we **must** respect the choices that each woman makes for herself and her family...”*

*“We also **must** recognize that women will never gain full dignity until their human rights are respected and protected.”*

*“The voices of this conference and of the women at Huairou **must** be heard loud and clear...”*

*“Women **must** enjoy the right to participate fully in the social and political lives of their countries if we want freedom and democracy to thrive and endure.”*

*“We **must** move beyond rhetoric. We **must** move beyond recognition of problems to working together to have the common efforts to build that common ground we hope to see.”*

The speaker then emphasizes that “those of us who have the opportunity to be here have the responsibility to speak for those who could not.”

In the text, “**need**” is also used as an ordinary verb equivalent to “**have to**” telling what is necessary in the situation:

*“We **need to** understand that there is no formula for how women should lead their lives.”*

According to the speaker, no one should tell women what they should do. Let them lead their own lives; let us “*respect their own choices that each woman makes for herself and her families*”.

“**Should**” is also found in the speech conveying the obligation meaning:

*“We need to understand that there is no formula for how women **should** lead their lives.”*

*“No one **should** be forced to remain silent for fear of religious or political persecution, arrest, abuse or torture.”*

5.1.2.5. Connective Values of the Text

Fairclough (2001, p. 108) reveals that connective values are the values formal features have when connecting together parts of texts. It is to do with the relationship between texts and contexts. Formal items with connective values have other values at the same time.

Cohesion can involve vocabulary links between sentences – repetition of words, or the use of related words and connectors which mark various temporal, spatial and logical relationships between sentences.

Repetition

The repetition of words in the speech contributes to the expression of the speaker’s ideology. In this speech, there are some phrases that appear with a high degree of frequency, which helps us recognize some important points that the speaker wants to convey:

“I have met new mothers in Indonesia,...

I have met working parents in Denmark...”

I have met women in South Africa...

I have met with the leading women of the Western Hemisphere...

I have met women in India and Bangladesh...

I have met doctors and nurses in Belarus and Ukraine..."

The speaker wants to show the audience that all the things that she is mentioning today are based on what she has experienced herself in real life. She has been to many parts of the world and met a lot of women. She has opportunities to learn about their lives and the challenges facing them every day. They even know nothing about the so-called "human rights" or "women's rights". Clinton shows her sympathy with them and realizes that something should be done very soon to help those women.

Then Clinton continues to make clear what "human rights" is by contrasting it with the real things that women themselves have been suffering. All the arguments begin with "**it is a violation of human rights**", which expresses the speaker's great sympathy with women receiving such unequal treatment.

"The voices of this conference and of the women at Huairou must be heard loud and clear: It is a violation of human rights when babies are denied food,... simply because they are born girls.

It is a violation of human rights when women and girls are sold into the slavery of prostitution.

It is a violation of human rights when women are doused with gasoline, set on fire and burned to death...

It is a violation of human rights when individual women are raped in their own communities and when thousands of women are subjected to rape as a tactic or prize of war.

It is a violation of human rights when a leading cause of death worldwide among women ages 14 to 44...

It is a violation of human rights when young girls are brutalized by the painful and degrading practice of genital mutilation.

It is a violation of human rights when women are denied the right to plan their own families,..."

Clinton also stresses the vital role of women in families as mothers and wives by repeating the phrase "**families rely on women/mothers and wives**" in her speech:

"Families rely on mothers and wives for emotional support and care; families rely on women for labor in the home; and increasingly, families rely on women for income needed to raise healthy children and care for other relatives."

For those things above, Clinton realizes that she herself and the women in this conference should act right here and right now to protect women's rights, to have a better world for everyone. She says: "*I believe that, on the eve of a new millennium, it is time to break our silence. It is time for us to say here in Beijing, and the world to hear, that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women's rights as separate from human rights.*"

"Now it is time to act on behalf of women everywhere. If we take bold steps to better the lives of women, we will be taking bold steps to better the lives of children and families too."

Connectors

In the speech, logical connectors "can cue the ideology assumption". We will discover the ideology of Hillary Clinton through the connectors used in the text.

Using "yet", the speaker presents a paradox about the truth about women around the world:

"Women comprise more than half the world's population. Women are 70% percent of the world's poor, and two-thirds of those who are not taught to read and

write... Yet much of the work we do is not valued - not by economists, not by historians, not by popular culture, not by government leaders."

The number of women in the world is *"more than half the world's population"* and they also make great contributions to the development of families and societies by doing lots of things such as *"giving birth, raising children, cooking meals, washing clothes, cleaning houses, planting crops, working on assembly lines, running companies, and running countries."* However, their contributions are not recognized, which creates a sense of unfairness in society and it also leads to the struggle of a number of courageous women in the world in general and in America in particular.

The speaker also points out the reality that it was not too difficult to avoid another world war but to solve discrimination against women is really difficult.

"We have seen peace prevail in most places for a half century. We have avoided another world war. But we have not solved older, deeply-rooted problems that continue to diminish the potential of half the world's population."

"And" is also used after the speaker has mentioned the benefits that women can bring to their families to emphasize the close relationship between families and society or nations. The families' prosperity will certainly lead to the nations' prosperity.

"What we are learning around the world is that if women are healthy and educated, their families will flourish. If women are free from violence, their families will flourish. If women have a chance to work and earn as full and equal partners in society, their families will flourish. And when families flourish, communities and nations will flourish."

5.1.3. Transitivity

The speech is divided into 158 simple clauses: 48 Relational, 110 Material. The participants and process types are presented in the appendix. Here is the summary of transitivity analysis data:

Table 1

Summary of Transitivity Analysis Data

Types of process	Times appeared	Percentage (%)
Material	110	69.6
Relational	48	30.4

In terms of transitivity, the material process, which is the process of doing and narrating things, accounts for the largest percentage: 69.6% while the relational process makes up only 30.4%. The high percentage of the material process indicates that the speaker focuses on describing the actions and events.

Table 2

Summary of Thematic Analysis

Types of theme	Times appeared	Percentage
Topical	66	76.8%
Textual	16	18.6%
Interpersonal	4	4.6%
Total	86	100%

	Times appeared	Percentage
Marked	21	24.4%
Unmarked	65	75.6%
Total	86	100%

Types of topical themes	Times appeared	Percentage
Marked topical themes	9	13.7%
Unmarked topical themes	57	86.3%
Total	66	100%

5.1.4. *Thematization*

It is easily seen from the tables that topical themes and unmarked types account for a high percentage of the total themes in the speech. The topical themes create the focus on the conference and its goal; the women at the conference, women in general and their role in struggling for women's rights.

In the speech, little use of interpersonal themes is seen (only 4.6%) in comparison with topical themes (76.8%) and textual themes (18.6%). This is due to the fact that the type of discourse is giving a speech so there is almost no interaction between the speaker and the audience.

5.1.5. *Macro-Structure of the Text*

In the previous parts, the study tries to uncover the speaker's ideology hidden behind words from the microstructure perspective by breaking the speech into small units like vocabulary, grammar, cohesive devices and grammatical features. This part will look at the macro-structure of the text to understand the communicative purpose of the speaker.

Women's rights have only been paid attention to in recent years. Realizing that something must be done to help women around the world gain their legitimate rights, first, the speaker tries to raise the awareness of people about women's roles in families and societies. She then makes herself convinced by giving her personal experience working with women in many parts of the world. A lively picture of how women live and earn their livings, which is filled with great sympathy of the speaker, is drawn through words:

"I have met new mothers in Indonesia, who come together regularly in their village to discuss nutrition, family planning, and baby care. I have met working parents in Denmark who talk about the comfort they feel in knowing that their

children can be cared for in safe, and nurturing after-school centers. I have met women in South Africa who helped lead the struggle to end apartheid and are now helping to build a new democracy... I have met the doctors and nurses in Belarus and Ukraine who are trying to keep children alive in the aftermath of Chernobyl."

Hillary Clinton then calls for action from the women at the conference to raise their voice for other women who do not have the opportunity to be there. Women's rights should be taken into consideration seriously in order to make a better world for everyone on earth. Human rights in general and women's rights in particular are also made clear in the speech:

"It is a violation of human rights when babies are denied food, or drowned, or suffocated, or their spines broken, simply because they are born girls."

It is a violation of human rights when women and girls are sold into the slavery of prostitution for human greed...

It is a violation of human rights when young girls are brutalized by the painful and degrading practice of genital mutilation.

It is a violation of human rights when women are denied the right to plan their own families, and that includes being forced to have abortions or being sterilized against their will."

It can be said that this is a good chance for the speaker to share her emotions with women here at the conference and women all over the world. She emphasizes that it is her responsibility to protect women's rights and ask for joint efforts from other women to create a bright world without unfairness.

5.2. *Interpretation of the Relationship Between the Productive and Interpretative Processes*

Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 67) state, "despite the fact that ideology

resides in the text, we cannot “read off” ideologies from text because what we want to get from the text is based on the interpretation and the interpretation is also diverse depending on the position of the interpreter”. That is why this part will help readers to uncover the ideology of the speaker when delivering the speech.

Interpretation of situational context

The interpretation of situational context is based partly on external cues such as features of the physical situation, properties of participant, what has previously said, but also partly based on the basis of aspects of their MR in terms of which they interpret these cues.

In terms of situational context, the following questions are taken into consideration: “What’s going on?”, “Who’s involved?”, “What relationships are at issue?” and “What’s the role of language in what’s going on?”

What’s going on?

The question is sub-classified into activity, topic and purpose. The activity here is delivering a speech. The central topic is women and their roles in families and societies. The speech is aimed at calling for actions to struggle for women’s rights, and for a better world, which needs joint efforts of women themselves and people of all ages around the world.

Who’s involved?

This is a speech so the subject positions are the speaker, Hillary Clinton and the audience including Mrs. Gertrude Mongella - the founding president of the Pan-African Parliament, UN Assistant Secretary General and Secretary General of 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing, China (1995).

In what relation?

Hillary Clinton is the main speaker

of the conference, in which gather leaders of many countries in the world. Therefore, there seems to be no social distance and the position of the speaker and others are the same.

What’s the role of language?

Language has been used in an instrumental way to give information, to persuade people and to call for cooperation. It is informative, directive, expressive and commissive.

5.3. Explanation of the Relationship Between Discourse Processes and Social Processes

According to Fairclough (2001, p. 135), “the objective of the stage of explanation is to portray a discourse as part of social process, as a social practice, showing how it is determined by social structures, and what reproductive effects discourses can cumulatively have on those structures, sustaining them or changing them”.

At the institutional level, as the main speaker of the World Conference on Women, Hillary Clinton wants to portray a picture of how women all over the world live and work. At the same time, she emphasizes the significant roles of women in families and societies. The speaker stresses that it is high time for people at this conference and people everywhere especially women themselves to raise their voice to protect women’s rights, which is a basis for a better world without sex discrimination.

At the societal level, the relationship in the discourse is the one between the political leader and the public. So far in society, the roles of women have not been fully recognized by the majority of people. Women themselves do not have chances or dare to speak for themselves for many reasons. The speaker tries to raise awareness of women themselves and other people about women’s remarkable contributions to the society, thus they deserve to be respected

and have their legitimate rights like others. Therefore, the speaker is in a controlling and authoritative status.

6. Implication and Recommendations for Teaching and Learning Translation

According to Fairclough and Chouliraki (1999, p. 4), “the basic motivation for critical social science is to contribute to an awareness of what it is, how it has come to be, and what it might become, on the basis of which may be able to make and remake their lives. And this is also the motivation for CDA.”

Analyzing the discourse critically in general and analyzing the discourse in translation in particular plays an important role in raising the awareness of learners of English of the word choice as well as the implicature of the text by the speaker or writer in order to deeply understand the message that the writer or the speaker wants to convey.

In terms of the relationship between translation and CDA, it can be said that CDA is an important step in translation. When translating a word or a sentence, the translator has to ask himself the question “*What does this word/sentence mean?*” and concentrate on answering it by reference, in the main, to the code itself, the elements of which it is composed and the arrangements of those elements which it permits. However, according to Bell (1991, p. 117), another question should also be asked: “*What resources does the code possess for the transmission and reception of particular kinds of meaning?*”, i.e. a question about the functions of language as a system of communication.” In the translation process as well as in CDA, three macrofunctions should be considered: the ideational (experiential) function (meaning), the interpersonal function and the textual function. Correspondingly to these three macro functions are three major networks of

the grammatical system which are *transitivity, mood and modality, and information – including theme – rheme*. Considering these three kinds of meaning helps uncover the writer or the speaker’s implication or ideology hidden behind words.

As a new discipline in linguistic research, CDA proves to be a useful tool in discerning a discourse’s ideologies and power. It is highly recommended that this approach is introduced to language learners and researchers.

This study only focuses on the speech on women’s rights by Hillary Clinton; however, it is highly recommended that it can broaden and connect the analysis to other discourses on women’s rights in particular and human rights in general.

Hereafter is the Vietnamese version of several typical excerpts of the speech, which emphasize the ideology of the writer, translated by the writer. Before translating the speech, the writer has analyzed the three functions of the language (as done in the previous parts) in order to uncover what is implied in the text and the speaker’s ideology. That is what learners of English should do or teachers should tell their students to do before beginning their translation work. The bold expressions in the translation are those which are carefully chosen by the writer. The writer is fully aware that there may be several Vietnamese versions of the original speech but this translation is believed to have best captured and reflected all the analyses, explanations and findings in the study so far.

“...Đây cũng là dịp chúng ta gặp gỡ, cũng giống như cách mà những người phụ nữ ở mọi đất nước gặp gỡ nhau hàng ngày... Cho dù là đang chơi với con trong công viên hay đang giặt giũ quần áo ở sông,... chúng ta cũng gặp nhau và nói với nhau về **những khát vọng và những lo toan** của chúng ta. Và lần nào cũng vậy, những câu chuyện của

chúng ta lại xoay quanh con cái và gia đình. **Cho dù chúng ta khác nhau như thế nào, chúng ta cũng có nhiều điểm tương đồng hơn là điểm khác biệt...**

Bằng việc quy tụ ở Bắc Kinh này, chúng ta đang hướng sự chú ý của thế giới vào **các vấn đề cốt yếu nhất** trong cuộc đời chúng ta...

Vào sớm ngày hôm nay, tôi đã tham dự một diễn đàn của Tổ chức Y tế Thế giới,... Ở đó, **các chương trình rất thành công ở quy mô địa phương** sẽ được đưa ra bàn bạc nhằm giúp các chị em phụ nữ cần cù được tiếp cận tín dụng để cải thiện đời sống của bản thân và gia đình.

...

Thách thức lớn của hội nghị này là lên tiếng cho phụ nữ ở khắp nơi, những người mà những gì họ phải chịu đựng cứ diễn ra không ai biết, lời nói của họ chẳng ai hay.

Phụ nữ chiếm hơn một nửa dân số thế giới, chiếm 70% người nghèo trên thế giới, và chiếm hai phần ba số người không được dạy đọc dạy viết.

Chúng ta là người chăm sóc chủ yếu cho hầu hết trẻ em và người già trên thế giới. Thế mà phần lớn công việc chúng ta làm lại không được lượng giá – nhà kinh tế không, nhà sử học không, người dân bình thường không, mà lãnh đạo chính phủ cũng không.

...

Phát biểu với quý vị ngày hôm nay, tôi nói hộ cho họ, như mỗi chúng ta nói hộ cho phụ nữ khắp nơi trên thế giới, những người bị tước đoạt quyền được đến trường hay đến bác sĩ,... Sự thực là hầu hết phụ nữ trên thế giới phải làm việc cả trong nhà và ngoài trời, thường là do túng thiếu quần bách.

Chúng ta cần hiểu rằng không có một công thức duy nhất nào về việc người phụ nữ phải sống ra sao. Đó là lí do chúng ta phải tôn trọng những quyết định mà họ đưa ra cho bản thân và gia đình họ. Mọi người phụ nữ xứng đáng có cơ hội phát huy khả năng thiên

bẩm của mình. Chúng ta cũng phải thừa nhận rằng phụ nữ sẽ không thể có được phẩm giá thực sự cho tới khi quyền con người của họ được tôn trọng và bảo vệ.

...Không ai đáng bị bắt buộc phải giữ im lặng vì lo sợ sẽ bị truy tố về tôn giáo hay chính trị, bị bắt giữ, lạm dụng hay tra tấn.

...đã đến lúc không thể tách rời khái niệm quyền của phụ nữ khỏi khái niệm nhân quyền.

...

Đó là một sự vi phạm nhân quyền khi phụ nữ không được quyền lên kế hoạch cho chính gia đình của mình, và điều đó bao gồm cả việc bị bắt nạt phá thai hoặc bị làm cho không thể sinh đẻ được nữa mà họ không hề mong muốn

Nếu như có một thông điệp vang động lại từ Hội nghị này thì đó là nhân quyền chính là nữ quyền và nữ quyền chính là nhân quyền. Chúng ta hãy đừng quên rằng trong số những quyền đó có bao gồm cả quyền tự do ngôn luận và quyền được lắng nghe.

...

Ở đất nước tôi, chúng tôi vừa mới tổ chức lễ kỉ niệm lần thứ 75 phụ nữ được quyền bầu cử. Phải mất đến 150 năm sau khi Tuyên ngôn độc lập được ký kết phụ nữ mới giành được quyền bầu cử. Phải mất 72 năm đấu tranh có tổ chức của rất nhiều những người đàn ông và phụ nữ quả cảm mới đạt được điều đó. Đó là một trong những cuộc chiến tranh tư tưởng gay gắt nhất của nước Mỹ. Nhưng đó cũng là cuộc chiến tranh không đổ máu. Quyền bầu cử đạt được mà không phải tổn một viên đạn nào.

...

Hãy để cho cuộc hội thảo này là lời kêu gọi hành động của chúng ta và của thế giới. Và chúng ta hãy quan tâm đến lời kêu gọi đó để xây dựng một thế giới mà ở đó mọi phụ nữ được tôn trọng, mọi bé trai và bé gái được yêu thương và chăm sóc một cách bình đẳng và mọi gia đình đều có thể hi vọng về một tương lai vững mạnh và ổn định..."

7. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the speech in the light of CDA, what is said and inferred from the language can be summarized as follows:

In terms of vocabulary, the discourse has a clear classification scheme presented by the speaker's understanding about women's contributions to families and society as well as their challenges in life and the speaker's efforts to protect women's rights. The structure of vocabulary is ideologically based.

In terms of grammatical features, the power and ideology of the speaker can also be uncovered. Thanks to the use of personal pronouns "I" and "we", the speaker would like to create solidarity and call for joint efforts of all people including her to help women in their struggle to achieve equality. Based on the use of mood and voice, the speaker exerts her power on others in an indirect way.

The high percentage of material process in transitivity and topical theme in thematization serve the speaker's aim of describing actions and events and creating reliability.

From the macro-structure, the ideology of the speaker can also be seen. The development of the discourse is organized in the structure of arguments followed by evidences which are personal experience.

In short, the speech is an effective tool for Hillary Clinton to express her power and ideology in the sense that she is sympathetic with women around the world and stresses the important role of women in the home as well as in society. She would

like to call for greater awareness and urgent actions to improve women's position and bring them the rights that they deserve to have.

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PHÂN TÍCH DIỄN NGÔN PHÊ PHÁN BÀI PHÁT BIỂU “QUYỀN CỦA PHỤ NỮ LÀ QUYỀN CON NGƯỜI” CỦA HILLARY CLINTON

Phạm Thị Quyên

Học viện Ngoại giao Việt Nam

69 Chùa Láng, Láng Thượng, Đống Đa, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Trong nghiên cứu này, bài phát biểu “Quyền của phụ nữ là quyền con người” của Hillary Clinton sẽ được phân tích dưới góc độ phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán để cho thấy cách thức quyền lực và hệ tư tưởng được lồng vào ngôn ngữ nói riêng và mối quan hệ giữa ngôn ngữ và xã hội nói chung. Trước hết, khung lý thuyết phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán và các khái niệm về quyền lực và hệ tư tưởng sẽ được trình bày. Nghiên cứu cũng sẽ tóm tắt bối cảnh xã hội về vai trò của người phụ nữ trong cả xã hội xưa và nay. Vai trò của Hillary Clinton trong việc đấu tranh cho quyền của phụ nữ sẽ được trình bày một cách vắn tắt. Về phương pháp, ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống cũng như quy trình phân tích trong phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán làm cơ sở cho việc phân tích bài phát biểu “Quyền của phụ nữ là quyền con người” được trình bày chi tiết trong bài nghiên cứu. Tiếp đó, toàn bộ bài phát biểu sẽ được phân tích qua lăng kính phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán. Ba giai đoạn của quá trình phân tích bao gồm: mô tả, diễn giải và giải thích. Phần cuối tóm tắt các phát hiện chính, đưa ra các nhận xét kết luận, các hàm ý cho việc dạy và học dịch thuật, đồng thời đưa ra các khuyến nghị cho các nghiên cứu tiếp theo.

Từ khoá: phân tích diễn ngôn phê phán, dịch các diễn ngôn chính trị, quyền của phụ nữ, quyền con người

EFL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' LEARNING ENGAGEMENT AND PROBLEMS IN ENGLISH LISTENING COMPREHENSION

Tran Quoc Thao^{1*}, Nguyen Hoang Chau Long²

¹ Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology (HUTECH University)
475A Dien Bien Phu, Ward 25, Binh Thanh, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

² Phan Ngoc Hien Gifted High School
74 Phan Dinh Phung, Ward 2, Ca Mau City, Ca Mau, Vietnam

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Abstract: Listening is considered one of the most challenging language skills, so most of EFL learners find it difficult to get engaged in learning it. Various obstacles have been reported causing challenges for EFL learners in English listening comprehension. This study, therefore, aimed to explore EFL students' learning engagement and their problems in English listening comprehension. The research was conducted at a high school in Ca Mau province, Vietnam with the participation of 180 tenth grade EFL students in answering the questionnaires. The collected quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS software. The findings revealed that EFL students got engaged in listening comprehension emotionally and agentically rather than behaviorally and cognitively, and their emotional engagement tended to be the most influential. It was also found out that EFL students sometimes faced different types of difficulties (perception problems, parsing problems and utilization problems) in their English listening comprehension.

Keywords: EFL, learning engagement, high school, language skill, quantitative research

1. Introduction

Listening comprehension plays a pivotal role in the process of second/foreign language learning as it is a medium to access various sources of knowledge, and it is a threshold to determine whether an EFL learner is a competent language speaker or not (Hassan, 2000; Nunan, 2015). Besides, it is also one of the most crucial language skills and is a fundamental skill which can support and develop other language skills (Oxford, 1990; Rost, 2001). Rost (2001) points out that listening is the most important skill for second/foreign language learning because it is widely used in normal daily life, and he

also claims that there is no spoken language without listening so that listening is not a passive skill, but it is an important medium of achieving a new language. The learners cannot get the exquisite consequences with their speaking, reading, and writing abilities when they cannot comprehend the input that they are expected to receive in the classroom. Likewise, Oxford (1990) states that listening comprehension develops faster than the three other language skills, and he also suggests that it can assist the progress of the other language skills' appearance.

Furthermore, as it is known that people use English in a wide way as a major language in daily life and in many education

* Corresponding author.

Email address: tq.thao@hutech.edu.vn

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levels in both native and non-native English speaking countries all over the world. Some countries (e.g., Thailand, Vietnam) have put English as a compulsory subject in their curriculum system, so listening comprehension is becoming more and more extensive and indispensable in achieving a new language as well as knowledge displayed in lectures and in media. Therefore, it is undoubted that listening is greatly essential for learners to learn a second/foreign language.

Despite its importance, listening comprehension is not easy to master. Hassan (2000) and Graham (2003) have stated that listening is one of the most difficult skills to learn. Likewise, Vandergrift (2007) asserts that one of the reasons is learners do not know how to discover the way to learn effectively. They may face the challenges in dealing with vocabulary, grammar, delivery speed and so on, and it is necessary for their teacher to emphasize the importance of the listening skills in the English learning process. In the context of Vietnam, the teaching and learning of English have received much attention from different stakeholders (e.g., educators, parents, learners, administrators); however, the quality of English language teaching and learning is not good as expected. From the reality of observation, many high school students in different areas, especially rural and mountainous schools seem not to get involved actively in the English language teaching in general and listening skill teaching in specific, and they are not very interested in English language learning. Hence, this study endeavors to investigate ELF students' learning engagement and their problems in English listening comprehension in the context of a high school in Ca Mau.

2. Literature Review

Listening comprehension

Various researchers have defined the term *listening comprehension*. Underwood (1989) states listening comprehension is the activity of paying attention to and trying to get meaning from something we hear and understand. Meanwhile, Vandergrift (1999) defines that listening comprehension is a complicated interactive process which learners have to focus on all elements such as sounds, intonation, linguistic structures, and social structural contexts. In this regard, Rost (2002) considers listening comprehension as a process of receiving the information from the speakers, constructing and representing meaning, negotiating meaning with the speakers and responding, and creating meaning through involvement, imagination and empathy. Thomson (2003) states that the learners absorb enough language input actively in the process of listening comprehension. In the same vein, Holden (2014) pinpoints that listening comprehension is also a complex activity needing a mental attempt to ensure understanding. In brief, listening comprehension is an active and dynamic skill which contains various kinds of activities in which learners need to employ both their language knowledge and background knowledge to comprehend what is spoken.

Learning engagement

Learning engagement, student engagement or academic engagement in the education field is defined as students' active involvement in a learning activity (Christenson et al., 2012). It is a multidimensional construct which consists of three subsystems - *behavioral, emotional, and cognitive*. Behavioral engagement refers to students' engagement in terms of attention, effort, and persistence in learning activity; emotional engagement is defined as the presence of positive emotions during

task involvement and the absence of negative emotions; and cognitive engagement refers to the degree of students' attempts to learn strategically, which means students employ sophisticated rather than superficial learning strategies, such as students use elaboration rather than memorization. Many engagement studies (e.g., Reeve, 2013; Reeve et al., 2004; Vu & Tran, 2021) are based on these three dimensions.

With the increase of learning engagement study, Reeve and Tseng (2011) put forward the fourth dimension of engagement - *agentic engagement*. They define it as "students' constructive contribution into the flow of the instruction they receive" (p. 258), and they also have claimed that students become behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively in learning activities, and those indicators could predict achievement. Therefore, Reeve and Tseng (2011) have pointed out that agentic engagement can be viewed as an ongoing series of dialectical transactions between student and teacher. In the field of language teaching and learning, foreign language academic engagement refers to the learner's degree of effort or investment which act on language knowledge, language skills and related knowledge in foreign language learning process (Guo & Liu, 2016). According to Tomlinson (1996), students get more engaged when learning basic skills in context rather than in isolation, and they can function consistently at high levels of thinking, making connections among disciplines, solving real problems, presenting products to real audiences, dealing with ambiguities, and behaving like professionals in the field.

Problems in listening comprehension

A number of studies on the various problems and challenges in English listening comprehension have been found. Friscilla and Alviaderi (2017) argue that there were

seven main problems that learners took a risk such as, problems related to the listening materials, basic linguistic problems perceived by learners, listening problems caused by the failure to concentrate, psychological characteristics, the listeners, the speaker, physical settings. Anderson (1995) and Goh (2000) throw light on the listening comprehension difficulties which came from three phases of perception, parsing, and utilization. Firstly, perception problems were concerned with the listeners' failure to recognize intonation, stress, and different accents in a speech stream. In addition, high speech rates and unfamiliar vocabulary could affect learners' listening comprehension (Goh, 2000). Besides, some EFL learners were quite familiar with native speakers like American or English; however, when they realized unfamiliar accents, the accuracy would be lower and they could not catch the words or convey the messages of the conversations (Bloomfield et al., 2010). Goh (2000) claims that parsing problems including syntactic and semantic matters also occurred in the processing phase of listening comprehension. For example, listeners could quickly forget what they had heard, and therefore, that would lead to their failure to form a mental representation from the words heard. Finally, utilization was a phase in the cognitive processing of L2 listening comprehension. These issues, which were confronted by EFL learners, are normally discourse-related; for example, listeners could have difficulties in recognizing the overall structure of the ideas in a text or lack of background knowledge about listening topics also could lead to affect EFL learners' performance (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011).

In Vietnam, listening comprehension has not been considered an important subject

in the English learning process at most Vietnamese schools (Duong & Chau, 2019). Due to the official curriculum for English language learning and teaching in Vietnam, the teachers only focus on exam-driven instruction (Tran & Duong, 2020); for example, they ask students to prepare grammar, reading, and vocabulary for examination rather than communicative competence (Bui & Duong, 2018). As a result, high school students have less opportunity to practice their communication skills, especially their listening skills although all four macro skills are included as elemental components in the textbooks at the high school level. In order to examine the difficulties in listening comprehension, Duong et al. (2019) conducted the study in order to investigate whether the 11th graders used listening strategies to facilitate their listening comprehension. Participants of the study consisted of 425 students who were in grade 11 in a high school located in Ho Chi Minh city, Vietnam and they were all generally at pre-intermediate level. The closed-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview were designed for data collection. The findings showed that the eleventh graders faced phonological and lexical difficulties in listening; however, there always existed too many unfamiliar words in a listening text, so they needed to employ memory strategies more frequently. Secondly, almost all the high school students confronted semantic problems in their listening. The main factors were that the students came across unfamiliar topics and they also lacked their background knowledge. Thirdly, most of the students had severe problems with their recognition of the overall structure of listening texts including main ideas, details, etc. Fourthly, the majority of these high school students

were in favor of social and affective strategies in their listening learning. From the fourth findings above, almost all the student participants faced several listening challenges, which negatively affected their listening comprehension.

Nguyen (2013) conducted a study in Vietnam in which listening comprehension problems were addressed. The data collected from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview were analyzed statistically and qualitatively. With the participation of 150 English majored freshmen from five classes, the study explored students' perception of listening difficulties of studying listening English comprehension. Regarding the factors pertaining to the speakers, the speech rate and reduced forms emerged as the biggest difficulties of first-year students. However, ending sounds and signal words were claimed as the most frequently-encountered problems in learning listening. Among the factors related to the learners, students reported that psychological causes and incorrect pronunciation were commonly faced problems. When it comes to the levels of difficulty, they had a consistently similar idea that lack of background knowledge and limited vocabulary were the biggest obstacles to the listeners. Besides, unfamiliar topics and dense information in the recording were considered the most common hindrance in listening. Finally, the sitting position in the class did not regularly affect students' message conveying; whereas, classroom facilities contributed much to the students' performance in learning to listen. Overall, those abovementioned studies were conducted at a variety of contexts including both foreign countries and Vietnam, but there is a scarcity of research on the high school students who had special talents.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Site and Participants

The current study was carried out at a high school in Ca Mau province, Vietnam, which was one of the qualified high schools in Ca Mau province, and each year they held an enrolment for grade 10th with a large number of students who came to attend and compete. The surveyed school had ten EFL teachers. Most of them were female and had at least five years' experience teaching English as a foreign language. Eight out of ten teachers (80%) had an M.A degree, while each of the remainder (20%) had a B.A degree. This school had English classes for students of different majors, so non-English major students had to take five English classes per week, while English major students had to take six English classes weekly. The teachers could freely choose English language skills to teach their students when they needed to improve.

The study involved 180 English major students at a high school (80 males; 100 females). They were conveniently sampled. Among participants, 174 (96.7%) students were 16 years old, and 6 (3.3%) students were 17 years old. Additionally, 78.8% (142 students) reported that they had been learning English from five to nine years, 8.9% (16 students) had been learning English below five years and 12.3% (22 students) had been learning English for more than ten years. It was further reported that 30% (54 students) of the participants often self-studied English from one hour to five hours daily, and 65.6% (118 students) often self-studied English for less than 1 hour. Meanwhile, only 4.4% (8 students) often self-studied English more than five hours per day. According to the report, 41.1% (74 students) got the English score at school

from 8.5 to 10. Besides, 33.3% (60 students) got the English score from 7.0 to 8.4 while 23.9% (43 students) got the English score from 4.0 to 6.9. Only 1.7% (3 students) got the English score from 0.0 to 3.9.

3.2. Research Instrument

The study employed a closed-ended questionnaire which contains three sections: Section I collected personal information, whereas Section II was adapted from Reeve and Tseng's (2011) study with 20 items in four components, namely behavioral engagement (5 items), cognitive engagement (8 items), emotional engagement (3 items) and agentic engagement (4 items) which were designed with a 5-point Likert scale (from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*). Section III was adapted from Anderson's (1995) and Goh's (2000) study with 15 items to explore students' listening problems in terms of perception problems (6 items), parsing problems (4 items), and utilization problems (5 items) during their listening process. They were designed based on a 5-point Likert scale (from *never* to *always*). The questionnaire was translated into Vietnamese so that respondents did not have any difficulties in answering the questionnaire.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

Before collecting the data, the researchers first obtained the relevant permissions from the school administrators, and then the questionnaires were administered to students in person. It took students around 15-20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. The explanation was given to students before they answered the questionnaire. With respect to the data analysis, the software SPSS version 21 was employed in terms of descriptive statistics (Mean = M; Standard deviation = SD). The meaning of the interval mean scores is

interpreted as 1-1.80: Strongly disagree/Never; 1.81-2.60: Disagree/Rarely; 2.61-3.40: Neutral/Sometimes; 3.41-4.20: Agree/Often; and 4.21-5.00: Strongly agree/Always.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Results

4.1.1. EFL Students’ Learning Engagement in Listening Comprehension

As could be seen in Table 1, the total mean score of EFL students’ learning engagement in listening comprehension is 3.35 out of 5 (SD=.58). Regarding the components of the engagement in listening comprehension, the mean scores of EFL students’ emotional engagement, agentic engagement, behavioral engagement and cognitive engagement are 3.42 (SD=.57), 3.41 (SD=.64), 3.31 (SD=.66) and 3.23 (SD=.45), respectively. Such findings mean that overall EFL students were uncertain whether they got engaged in their listening comprehension. They got involved in listening comprehension in terms of emotional and agentic engagement but behavioral and cognitive engagement.

Table 1

EFL Students’ Learning Engagement in Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180	
		M	SD
1	Behavioral Engagement	3.31	.66
2	Emotional Engagement	3.42	.57
3	Agentic Engagement	3.41	.64
4	Cognitive Engagement	3.29	.45
Average		3.35	.58

The results in Table 2 reveal that the participants in EFL students believed that they listened very carefully to their teacher’s talking about a new topic (item A3: M=3.52, SD=.67) and they worked hard when they started new activities in listening class” (item A10: M=3.48. SD=.86). Nevertheless, they were unsure if they listened carefully while doing listening tasks (item A1: M=3.14. SD=.75), paid attention in the listening process (item A5: M=3.30, SD=.90) and did the listening tasks attentively (item A6: M=3.14. SD=.54).

Table 2

EFL Students’ Behavioral Engagement in Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180	
		M	SD
A1	I listen carefully while doing listening tasks.	3.14	.75
A3	The first time my teacher talks about a new topic, I listen very carefully.	3.52	.67
A6	I do the listening tasks attentively.	3.14	.58
A5	I pay attention in the listening process.	3.30	.90
A10	I work hard when I start new activities in listening class.	3.48	.86

With respect of the results in Table 3, the participants in EFL students agreed that “when [they worked] on something in class, [they felt] interested in it” (item A13: M=3.57, SD=.97), and “when [they were] in

class, [they felt] curious about what [they were] learning” (item A18: M=3.42, SD=.73). However, they were uncertain if they enjoyed learning new things in class or not (item A8: M=3.13, SD=.83).

Table 3

EFL Students' Emotional Engagement in Listening Comprehension

No	N = 180		
	M	SD	
A13	When I work on something in class, I feel interested in it.	3.57	.97
A18	When I am in class, I feel curious about what we are learning.	3.42	.73
A8	I enjoy learning new things in class.	3.13	.83

As for the results in Table 4, the participants in EFL students agreed that “[they let their] teacher know what [they were] interested in” (item A19: M=3.44, SD=.62), “during class, [they expressed their] preferences/opinions about topics being discussed” (item A17: M=3.52,

SD=.56), and “[they offered] suggestions about how to make the listening period better” (item A20: M=3.48, SD=.84). Nonetheless, they were neutral if they asked questions about the listening tasks (item A2: M=3.27, SD=.85).

Table 4

EFL Students' Agentic Engagement in Listening Comprehension

No	N = 180		
	M	SD	
A2	I ask questions about the listening tasks.	3.27	.85
A19	I let my teacher know what I'm interested in.	3.44	.62
A17	During class, I express my preferences/opinions about topics being discussed.	3.52	.56
A20	I offer suggestions about how to make the listening period better.	3.48	.84

Regarding the results in Table 5, the participants in EFL students did not get involved in the listening comprehension cognitively. They were neutral about what they wanted to get (item A9: M=3.24, SD=.54) and what they should do in listening comprehension (item A14: M=3.34, SD=.73) done before listening. When doing listening tasks, they were unsure if they could try to “relate what [they

were] learning to what they already [knew]” (item A4: M=3.19, SD=.86), “connect what [they were] learning with [their] own experiences” (item A15: M=3.30, SD=.97), “make all the different ideas fit together and make sense” (item A7: M=3.36, SD=.95), and “change the way [they learned]” (item A16: M=3.24, SD=.63). After the listening, they were also neutral if they should ask questions to teacher (item 11: M=3.30, SD=.91).

Table 5

EFL Students' Cognitive Engagement in Listening Comprehension

No	N = 180		
	M	SD	
A4	When doing listening tasks, I try to relate what I'm learning to what I already know.	3.19	.86

A15	When I listen, I try to connect what I am learning with my own experiences.	3.30	.97
A7	I try to make all the different ideas fit together and make sense when I study listening.	3.36	.95
A9	Before I begin to listen, I think about what I want to get done.	3.24	.54
A12	As I study, I keep track of how much I understand, not just if I am getting the right answers.	3.38	.69
A14	I imagine what I should do in listening comprehension.	3.34	.73
A16	If what I am listening is difficult to understand, I change the way I learn.	3.24	.63
A11	After checking the answers, I often ask questions to my teacher.	3.30	.91

4.1.2. EFL Students' Difficulties in English Listening Comprehension

The results in Table 6 reveal that the overall mean score of EFL students' difficulties in English listening comprehension was 3.36 out of 5 (SD=.62), which means that the participants in this study sometimes experienced the listening difficulties in terms of perception problem (M=3.39; SD=.57), parsing problem (M=3.35; SD=.73) and utilization problem (M=3.36; SD=.58).

Table 6
EFL Students' Difficulties in English Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180		
		M	SD	Level
1	Perception problem	3.39	.57	Sometimes
2	Parsing problem	3.35	.73	Sometimes
3	Utilization problem	3.36	.58	Sometimes
	Average	3.36	.62	Sometimes

Table 7
EFL Students' Perceptions Problem in English Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180		
		M	SD	Level
B3	I mistake one word for another in the listening.	3.54	.33	Often
B4	I encounter too many unfamiliar words and/or expressions in the listening.	3.50	.84	Often
B5	I miss the next part of the listening while I am thinking about	3.28	.28	Sometimes

In detail, the participants as can be seen in Table 7 admitted that they often faced difficulties in perception problems in English listening comprehension such as “[they mistook] one word for another” (item B3: M=3.54, SD=.33) and “[encountered] too many unfamiliar words and/or expressions” (item B4: M=3.50, SD=.84). However, they sometimes “[missed the next part of the listening while [they were] thinking about the meaning of the earlier part” (item B5: M=3.28, SD=.28), “[missed] the beginning of the listening” due to fast speech rate (item B2: M=3.17, SD=.54), “[were] not sure if it [was] right or [they could not] recognize so many sounds” in the listening process (item B1: M=3.03, SD=.67), and sometimes “[they found] it hard to concentrate on the listening comprehension” (item B6: M=3.02, SD=.70).

	the meaning of the earlier part.			
B2	Fast speech rate makes me miss the beginning of the listening.	3.17	.54	Sometimes
B1	I hear sounds but I am not sure if it is right or I cannot recognize so many sounds.	3.03	.67	Sometimes
B6	I find it hard to concentrate on the listening comprehension.	3.02	.70	Sometimes

The participants (Table 8) admitted that they still had many difficulties in parsing problems in English listening comprehension. They sometimes found it difficult to understand a lot of new information in a short time (item B10: M=3.13, SD=.83) and to divide the long

listening into several parts” (item B9: M=2.67, SD=.88), and forgot phrases or sentences just heard because of the length (item B7: M=2.89, SD=.66). However, they rarely could “understand the content of different parts of the listening” (item B8: M=2.53, SD=.79).

Table 8

EFL Students’ Parsing Problems in English Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180		
		M	SD	Level
B10	It is difficult to understand a lot of new information in a short time.	3.13	.83	Sometimes
B7	I forget phrases or sentences just heard because of the length.	2.89	.66	Sometimes
B9	It is difficult to divide the long listening into several parts.	2.67	.88	Sometimes
B8	I cannot understand the content of different parts of the listening.	2.53	.79	Rarely

As can be seen in Table 8, the participants reckoned that they still had many difficulties in utilization problems in English listening comprehension. They sometimes “[got] confused about the main idea of the listening” (item B14: M=3.23, SD=.49), “[could not] grasp the intended message although [they knew] words” (item B12: M=3.10, SD=.79), “[had] difficulties in

following unfamiliar topics” (item B11: M=2.80, SD=.52), and “arrange ideas of the listening to get the relationship among ideas” (item B13: M=3.07, SD=.26). Nevertheless, there was only one problem that the students rarely experienced was “[they could not] get details or supporting ideas in the listening” (item B15: M=2.59, SD=.56).

Table 9

EFL Students’ Utilization Problems in English Listening Comprehension

No		N = 180		
		M	SD	Level
B14	I get confused about the main idea of the listening.	3.23	.49	Sometimes
B12	I can’t grasp the intended message although I know words.	3.10	.79	Sometimes
B13	It is difficult to arrange ideas of the listening to get the relationship among ideas.	3.07	.26	Sometimes
B11	I have difficulties in following unfamiliar topics.	2.80	.52	Sometimes
B15	I can’t get details or supporting ideas in the listening.	2.59	.56	Rarely

4.2. Discussion

As mentioned above, there were four components of learners' engagement, namely behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, agentic engagement, and cognitive engagement. This study has revealed that EFL students were not actively engaged in the listening process on a general basis. They only focused on the listening comprehension emotionally and agentially, but they were uncertain about their behavioral and cognitive engagement in the listening process. It could be explained that although the participants in this study were English major students, and they allocated their time to self-studying English daily, listening is still one of the most challenging language skills for them (Hassan, 2000; Graham, 2003). Hence, the participants may pay much attention to the listening emotionally and get themselves involved in the listening process. Additionally, it could be due to the reality that the listening skill is not tested in the final high school exams and the teaching and learning are exam-driven (Tran & Duong, 2020). EFL students may be aware of the importance of the listening skill, so they may feel interested in the listening comprehension; nonetheless, they seemed to be indifferent in the listening process behaviorally and cognitively because they may learn things useful to get prepared for the exams.

As regards the difficulties in listening comprehension, viz. perception problems, parsing problems, and utilization problems, the results unraveled that EFL students sometimes experienced them in listening comprehension. With respect to the perception problems, EFL students often had difficulties in dealing with unfamiliar vocabulary in the listening process and sometimes experienced difficulties in

understanding the content of the listening and recognizing the sounds. This may be that the listening recordings may contain different new words that EFL students could not know, and there may be different types of accents that students could not recognize. This finding is supported by Goh (2000) and Bloomfield et al. (2010) who have asserted that students who fail to recognize different accents and unfamiliar vocabulary and cope with high speech rates can encounter difficulties in listening comprehension. Additionally, this finding is partially corroborated with that Tran and Duong's (2020) study which discovered the high speed of delivery and speakers' accent as causes for listening problems.

With respect to parsing problems in English listening comprehension, EFL students sometimes encountered difficulties in remembering what they could listen due to the time length, amount of information and syntactic and semantic matters in the listening. These problems may be related to the fact that these high school students have established certain learning habits such as a desire to listen and understand each word in a listening text, so they may find it difficult to arrange the ideas in a listening text to see the links between them. This finding is supported by Goh (2000) who has claimed that learners can face parsing problems including syntactic and semantic matters in the listening comprehension.

In terms of utilization problems in English listening comprehension, EFL students were sometimes confused with the content of the listening and alien listening topics. This may imply that EFL students did not usually encounter the difficulties in understanding the overall content of the listening. As they were English major students, they may practice their listening skill a lot. Therefore, they may be able to grasp the content of the listening on a general basis.

5. Conclusion

From the results above, it can be concluded that EFL students' listening comprehension ability seemed to be influenced by their emotional and agentic engagement not behavioral and cognitive engagement, and their emotional engagement was believed to be the most dominant in the listening comprehension. Furthermore, EFL students sometimes encountered listening problems (perception, parsing and utilization problems) in their listening process. Such findings can lead to some pedagogical implications. Firstly, there should be a change in the English language teaching which should focus more on specific English language skills, especially the listening and speaking skills even though the final exams do not embed such skills so that they can adjust students' behavioral and cognitive engagement in the listening process. Secondly, EFL teachers should instruct students with listening strategies to listen effectively. They can create different listening tasks for different groups of listening strategies so that students can employ to practice. Thirdly, EFL students should change their learning habits from learning for exams to learning for enhancing their English language proficiency. Finally, administrators should organize different training workshops for teachers to improve the quality of English language teaching in general and English language skills in specific in order to adapt the teaching methods and techniques to different characteristics of students.

In spite of the possible contributions of the study to the field, there remain some limitations. First, the sample size is not large enough for generalizations to other contexts. This is because only tenth grade EFL students were in this study. Second, the findings would be more useful if more research instruments such as observations and/or journals to provide students and

teachers with opportunities for shedding the light on listening problems had been employed.

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TÌM HIỂU VIỆC THAM GIA HỌC TẬP VÀ KHÓ KHĂN CỦA HỌC SINH PHỔ THÔNG TRONG QUÁ TRÌNH NGHE HIỂU TIẾNG ANH

Trần Quốc Thao¹, Nguyễn Hoàng Châu Long²

¹ Đại học Công nghệ Tp. Hồ Chí Minh
475A Điện Biên Phủ, P. 25, Q. Bình Thạnh, Tp. Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

² Trường THPT chuyên Phan Ngọc Hiển
74 Phan Đình Phùng, P. 2, Tp. Cà Mau, Cà Mau, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Kỹ năng nghe được xem như là một trong những kỹ năng khó nhất trong quá trình học ngôn ngữ nên hầu hết người học tiếng Anh như là ngoại ngữ ít chú trọng trong việc tham gia học kỹ năng này. Ngoài ra, trong quá trình học kỹ năng nghe, người học cũng gặp nhiều khó khăn. Do đó, nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu mức độ tham gia học nghe và các khó khăn trong quá trình nghe hiểu của học sinh phổ thông. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện tại một trường trung học phổ thông ở Tỉnh Cà Mau, Việt Nam với 180 học sinh lớp 10 tham gia trả lời bảng khảo sát. Phần mềm SPSS được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu. Kết quả cho thấy học sinh phổ thông tham gia học nghe hiểu theo cảm xúc và tác nhân hơn là hành động và nhận thức, và học sinh có xu hướng tham gia học nghe hiểu theo cảm xúc ở mức độ cao nhất. Kết quả còn chỉ ra học sinh phổ thông đôi khi gặp các khó khăn khác nhau (khó khăn về nhận thức, khó khăn về phân tích cú pháp, và khó khăn về cách sử dụng) trong quá trình nghe hiểu tiếng Anh.

Từ khóa: tiếng Anh, tham gia học tập, trường phổ thông, kỹ năng ngôn ngữ, nghiên cứu định lượng

DISCUSSION

METACOGNITIVE READING STRATEGIES USED BY ENGLISH-MAJORS AT A UNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

Dinh Thi Bich Ngoc*, Vu Thi Nhung

School of Languages and Tourism - Hanoi University of Industry, Hanoi, Vietnam

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Abstract: Metacognitive reading strategies which include (1) global reading strategies, (2) support reading strategies, (3) problem solving strategies are critical for effective reading comprehension (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). This research aims to explore how high-achieving and low-achieving students at Faculty of Foreign Languages at a university in Vietnam use metacognitive reading strategies in comprehending English reading texts. A mixed research method is employed with two data collection instruments - a survey questionnaire adopted from MARS Scale by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) and semi-structured interviews. Forty two English-majors participated in the questionnaire, then representatives of high-achievers and low-achievers participated in semi-structured interviews to provide deeper information. The findings revealed students' different frequency levels of using metacognitive reading strategy groups in reading comprehension. Additionally, the results indicated how frequently each metacognitive reading strategy is used by the high-achievers and low-achievers. This research would enhance teachers' awareness of using metacognitive reading strategies for English majors at their different levels and suggest how they instruct their students of different levels to practice metacognitive reading strategies appropriately and effectively.

Keywords: metacognitive reading strategies, reading comprehension, high-achievers, low-achievers

1. Introduction

In EFL teaching, reading is considered as one crucial skill to be developed for successful language comprehension. Among various ways to enhance this skill, reading strategies are proven to be effective tools to enable students at tertiary level to comprehend English reading texts. However, not many students can apply the reading strategies efficiently, which may contribute to students' poor reading comprehension. As EFL teachers, the researchers have been

concerned by the fact that many of their English-majors have difficulties in reading English texts effectively despite their training and practice of reading strategies. An analysis of reading test scores of the students by the researchers of reading skill showed that a number of students still struggled with comprehending the reading texts after two first reading courses. During the third course, many students did not show their comprehension at the target level: they often answered the questions in the reading texts incorrectly in class and their scores of the reading tests were not very high even

*Corresponding author.

Email address: phibi1010@gmail.com

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though the reading strategies were learnt and frequently practiced. A question raised to the teachers was which factors contributed to the students' difficulties in reading comprehension. According to Grabe (2009), to be an effective reader, learners need to foster different reading strategies including metacognitive reading strategies which means they could "integrate information, summarize main points, build a coherent interpretation of the text, and critically evaluate that text information. All of these abilities require an effective combination of strategy uses that serve the reader's intended goals." Hence, there is a close relationship between learners' ability to apply metacognitive reading strategies and their reading competence. If learners are not able to combine these strategies, they will not comprehend the reading texts thoroughly, and their performance in reading tests during the course will not be as good as expected. Moreover, for certain purposes, using metacognitive reading strategies employed for achieving comprehension goals are the same for different readers. However, in spite of many studies on metacognitive reading strategies used by non-English majors around the world, very few studies have covered the use of metacognitive reading strategies in reading comprehension among English majors, especially in the context of Vietnam. Therefore, in the limit of this research, metacognitive reading strategies (MRS) were selected to study. It is questionable that which group of MRS and which individual MRS are most frequently used by the high-achieving and low-achieving students. This research is necessary to investigate which MRS group is most used in reading comprehension by the learners and the difference in usage frequency of each strategy between high-achievers and low-achievers. More detailed, the research aims to address two research questions as following:

(1) Which group of metacognitive reading strategies is most frequently used by high-achievers and low-achievers in reading comprehension?

(2) How frequently do high-achievers and low-achievers use each item of metacognitive reading strategies?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Definition of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension has been defined by many researchers. According to Grellet (1981, p. 3), "reading comprehension is extracting the required information from the text as efficiently as possible." Similarly, Alderson (2000, p. 52) defined this ability as "actively constructing meaning internally from interacting with the material that is read." In line with this perspective, Grabe and Stoller (2002, p. 9) argued that reading comprehension is "the ability to draw meaning from the printed page and interpret this information appropriately." Grabe (2009) claimed that reading comprehension happens when the reader can combine his/her background knowledge with the information from the text to obtain the required information. According to Ahmadi et al. (2013), during the process of comprehending the text, the reader interacts with the text using various conscious and unconscious strategies in order to construct the meaning from the contexts. As can be seen from the above review, reading comprehension is to grasp the meaning of the text utilizing reading strategies. In this research, the authors narrow the focus of reading comprehension on understanding the text through giving right answers to questions about English reading texts in a reading skill course.

2.2. Definition of Reading Strategies

Reading strategies used in language learning play an important role in progressing reading comprehension

(Anderson, 2003). Whether the readers master language or not are related to how they use their reading strategies (Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006; Shen, 2003). A strategy is related to a conscious and systematic plan (Afflerbach et al., 2008). Some readers will not process appropriate strategies for a particular situation or they lack the knowledge of how to utilize the strategy (Gerstein et al., 2001). Reading strategies indicate how readers conceptualize a task, how they understand what they read, and what they handle when they don't understand the materials. These strategies consist of strategies including skimming and scanning, contextual guessing, and reading for meaning, utilizing background knowledge, recognizing text structure, and so forth (Hsu, 2006). Furthermore, based on a review of Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2016), there are seven effective reading strategies for reading comprehension: 1) activating and using background knowledge, 2) generating and asking questions, 3) making inferences, 4) predicting, 5) summarizing, 6) visualizing, 7) comprehension monitoring. However, Chamot (1987), O'Malley and Chamot (1990) stated that reading strategies have been usually classified into three broad categories, depending on the level or type of thinking processing involved: cognitive, metacognitive strategies, and social affective strategies.

2.3. Metacognitive Reading Strategies

Reading strategies are categorized in a variety of types but to the limit of this study, the researchers focus on what MRS learners use in reading comprehension in class. Metacognitive reading strategy is a technique that learners use to plan for learning, think about the learning process, monitor their comprehension and evaluate learning after completing the task (Semtin & Maniam, 2015). Zhang and Seepho (2013) stated that metacognitive strategies in reading increased readers' knowledge of

awareness, improved their reading comprehension, and evaluated whether their attempt at comprehension had been achieved. Besides, metacognitive reading strategy is an effective factor that fosters reading comprehension among readers (Salataki & Akyel, 2002). Wang et al. (2009) believed that MRS were beneficial to students' reading comprehension and encouraged their learning activities. Research about MRS for learning on university EFL students in China revealed that students were confident about their ability to comprehend the texts when applying MRS and there was a positive association between MRS and learners' learning achievement results. Furthermore, students who could utilize metacognitive reading strategies such as, planning, monitoring and evaluating were more successful than those students that did not use this strategy in their learning and reading program (Wang et al., 2009). Metacognitive reading strategies were classified into three categories, namely 1) problem-solving strategies (PS), 2) global reading strategies (GS), and 3) support reading strategies (SS) (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002; Semtin & Maniam, 2015). They showed that PS were means to overcome difficulties in reading such as adjusting the reading speed, rereading the text, reading aloud, guessing the meaning of the difficult words, and assessing learners' abilities to solve reading problems. Meanwhile, GS were used to guide learners to think about the reading purpose. Additionally, according to Mokhtari and Reichard (2002), SS were aimed to provide learners with extra reading techniques such as dictionary use, note-taking, sentence-underlining, paraphrasing, self-question asking and paraphrasing the paragraphs. In regards to the use of GS, Chen and Chen (2015) found a high frequency of occurrence in the use of GS, namely planning how to read and managing comprehension followed by PS and SS.

2.4. Previous Studies

A number of studies have been conducted on students' use of metacognitive reading strategies in the world in general and in Vietnam in particular, but few studies focused on such frequency level of using those strategies among high-achievers and low-achievers.

In the study of Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) which assessed students' metacognitive awareness and perceived use of reading strategies, low-achieving students seemed to have lower levels of awareness than high-achieving ones. Thus, students who had low metacognitive awareness usually had difficulties in terms of reading materials, for instance, they felt that they struggled with unfamiliar words from the text. Additionally, Pammu et al. (2014) indicated in their study that participants applied the reading strategies in their reading; however, the frequent usage was varied among three types of reading strategies. For PS, students usually applied the strategy of "reading slowly but carefully to be sure what to read" at a high level. In terms of GS, "setting purpose for reading, previewing text, determining what to read, resolving conflicting information, and confirming prediction" were recognised as high-frequency usage groups. For SS, underlining or circling information in the text to help comprehension and using reference materials to improve comprehension were also reported at high level. Moreover, the study by Rastegar et al. (2017) about the relationship between EFL learners' MRS use and their reading comprehension achievement on 120 senior BA students majoring in English Literature and English Translation also showed that there was a significant relationship between the use of overall MRS by the learners and their reading comprehension accomplishment. Especially in Vietnam, Do and Phan (2021) who studied on metacognitive awareness of

reading strategies on mixed-level undergraduates majoring in teaching English, revealed that MRS were used in comprehending academic texts at medium frequency level with the high usage of PS, followed by medium usage of SS and GS. The study also showed that high-reading-ability students applied metacognitive reading strategies more frequently than poor-reading-ability students.

It has been proved that metacognitive reading strategies awareness positively contribute to the learners' achievement in reading comprehension. However, no studies have been conducted on the impact of reading strategies on intermediate English majors in the setting of Vietnam. Therefore, there is a need to carry out this research to fill the gap.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Participants

The participants of this research were 42 students (21 high-achievers - the students with the highest score in Reading Skill 3 course and 21 low-achievers - the students with the lowest score of the course) selected from 198 second-year English majors of a university in Hanoi. All the students have completed three courses of English Reading Skill and are at intermediate level. They have learned most reading strategies needed for comprehending different types of texts at their level such as paraphrasing sentences, skimming, scanning, guessing the meaning of unfamiliar words from context, making inference, note-taking, summarizing, understanding charts and graphs, critical analysing and evaluating the information in the text, etc. Each Reading Skill course lasted 15 weeks, mostly each of which focused on one reading strategy and students practised applying it to comprehend the text. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, English Reading Skill 3 course was delivered online using Microsoft Teams.

3.2. Research Instruments and Procedures

The study employed a mixed method design which combines both quantitative and qualitative methods to address the research questions. A survey questionnaire was chosen as the main instrument to collect quantitative data, then interviews were conducted to get in-depth qualitative data for the study.

The survey questionnaire for students which consists of 30 questions are adopted from the MARSIScale survey questionnaire by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002). This study shares the same purpose with their study, which is investigating the frequency of using MRS among students. The MARSIScale questionnaire was piloted by Mokhtari and Reichard (2002) on a large number of students (N=825) in grade 6-12 drawn from 10 urban, suburban, and rural school districts in five midwestern states and proven the reliability. In the study of Nguyen (2016), MARSIScale survey questionnaire proved its reliability in Vietnamese context. The MARSIScale questionnaire was designed based on (1) a review of recent research literature on metacognition and reading comprehension, (2) the use of expert judgment with respect to assignment and categorization of items within the inventory, (3) insights gained from existing reading strategies instruments regarding format and content, and (d) the use of factor analyses to examine the structure of the scale.

The questionnaire consists of 30 items arranged in three categories (Global Reading Strategies: 13 items, Support Reading Strategies: 8 items and Problem-Solving Strategies: 9 items). The questionnaire was transferred to Google form and delivered to the research participants via email after the course of Reading Skill 3. The instruments use a Likert scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high) for reporting the use of each strategy by the

respondents. The researchers gave Vietnamese oral instructions and explanations in an online meeting (Microsoft Teams) before the students answered the questions in the survey to avoid any misunderstanding and the participants were perceived to comprehend the items of the questionnaires well.

Mokhtari and Sheorey (2002) provided a key to interpreting the mean for each item and overall item ratings of the Survey of Reading Strategies (SORS) with 5-level Likert scale. They considered a mean ≤ 2.4 as low usage, 2.5–3.4 as medium usage, and ≥ 3.5 as high usage. We used the same rating to interpret item means in the present study.

After getting the survey result, semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researchers. The purpose of the interviews was to provide deeper information about the students' use of metacognitive reading strategies. The interview questions consist of 14 questions adapted from the MARSIScale questionnaire. Ten students were chosen for the interview based on the results of the course mentioned above: five are high-achievers (HA1-HA5) and the other five are low-achievers (LA1-LA5). Each of the students was interviewed for about 20 minutes at a time convenient to them. The interviews were recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

3.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

The procedure of the data analysis is as follows. The survey questionnaires were analyzed with the help of SPSS application and displayed in the form of statistics. Then the data from the interviews were analyzed and simultaneously presented with the results from the questionnaire. The researchers analyzed the results based on the two data sets for in-depth interpretation and used the interviews' results to shed light on the survey's findings.

4. Findings

4.1. Which Group of Metacognitive Reading Strategies are Most Frequently Used by High-Achievers and Low-Achievers in Reading Comprehension?

Table 1 below shows the differences in the degree of three reading strategies usage perceived by high achievers and low-achievers.

Table 1

Frequency of Metacognitive Strategies Used Among High-Achievers and Low-Achievers

Strategies	High-achievers		Low-achievers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Global strategies	4.02	0.75	2.86	0.56
Support strategies	3.83	0.77	2.56	0.73
Problem-solving strategies	3.96	0.72	2.76	0.61

As can be seen from Table 1 all the three groups of MRS were used frequently by high-achievers with the means of more than 3.5. The most frequently used reading strategies are GS (mean > 4), followed by PS (nearly 4) and SS (more than 3.8). In contrast, low-achievers used all the three groups of strategies at a low level of frequency with the means of less than 3.00. The students supposed that the group of strategies they applied most frequently while reading were GS (2.85) followed by PS (2.75). SS were believed to be used least (less than 2.5). Obviously, the low-achievers were not aware of the importance of

applying metacognitive reading strategies in comprehending the texts. Although each strategy group focuses on an aspect of reading comprehension, low-achievers still seldom use them to get more comprehensive. On the contrary, the high-achievers better perceive the usage of MRS in three groups at a much higher level of frequency. It is highlighted that such high awareness of MRS supported them to understand the texts more effectively.

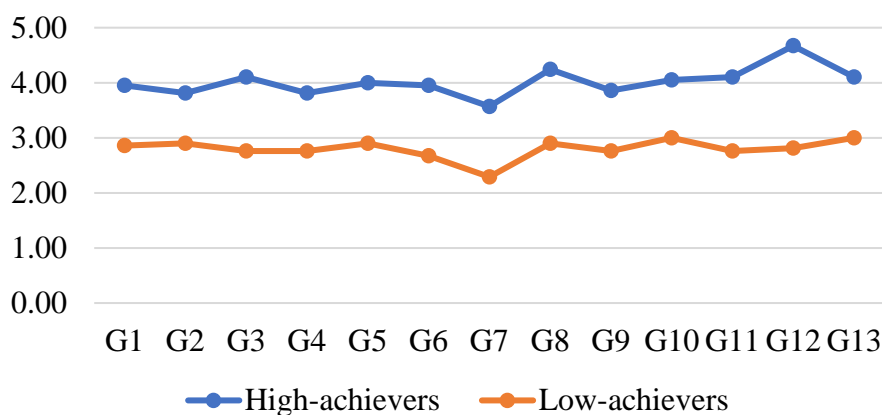
In brief, it is shown that high-achievers applied reading strategies more frequently (the means of more than 3.5) in reading comprehension than low-achievers (the means of under 3). For both, the strategies used at the highest level were GS (for high-achievers $M = 4.02$ and for low-achievers, $M = 2.86$) and the lowest was SS with mean of high-achievers and low-achievers of 3.83 and 2.56 respectively). PS were ranked at the second with the mean of high-achievers of nearly 4 and the mean of low-achievers of more than 2.7.

4.2. How Frequently do High-Achievers and Low-Achievers Use Metacognitive Reading Strategy Items?

Participants' reading strategy use showed that only 6 reading strategies were used at a low-usage level. In fact, 18 strategies of the 30 strategies were reported to be used at a high-usage level (Mean ≥ 3.5) and the 12 remaining strategies were at a moderate-usage level (Mean ≥ 2.5). The reason for the overall high usage of reading strategies might be that when students read academic texts for any purpose, they are stimulated to use more strategies, as reading academic texts makes greater metacognitive demands (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2008, p. 94).

Figure 1

High-Achievers' and Low-Achievers' Use of Global Reading Strategies



The above chart shows the differences in the degree of reading strategy use of high-achievers (the upper line) and low-achievers (the lower line) within each item. The means of the reading strategy use of high-achievers ranged between 3.5 and more than 4.5. G12 (guessing what the passage is about), G3 (previewing the text to see what it is about before reading), G10 (analysing critically and evaluating the information presented in the text), G11 (check my understanding when I come across conflicting information) have the means from 4 and up. Among those strategies, high-achievers try to guess what the passage is about when they read the most (G12) and then G3, G10, G11, G13 are followed with means of more than 4. As being interviewed, HA5 revealed that before-reading strategies such as guessing the main idea of the text, “previewing the text by looking at the title, the headings, the subheadings or the first sentence of each paragraph” could help them to “visualise the content of the text and prepare enough background knowledge to deal with the while-reading stage and post-reading stage.” Some other strategies such as thinking about what they know to help understand what they read (G2), thinking about whether the content of the text fits their reading purpose (G4), using typographical aids like boldface

and italics to identify key information (G9) and having a purpose in mind when they read (G1) were used a little less often but still at high usage (means from 3.8 to 3.95). High-achievers used tables, figures and pictures in the text to increase their understanding (S7) the least frequently with the mean of 3.57. They said that “they can easily catch the information from the tables, figures and pictures because it is short and supports their understanding of the text” (HA2, HA4).

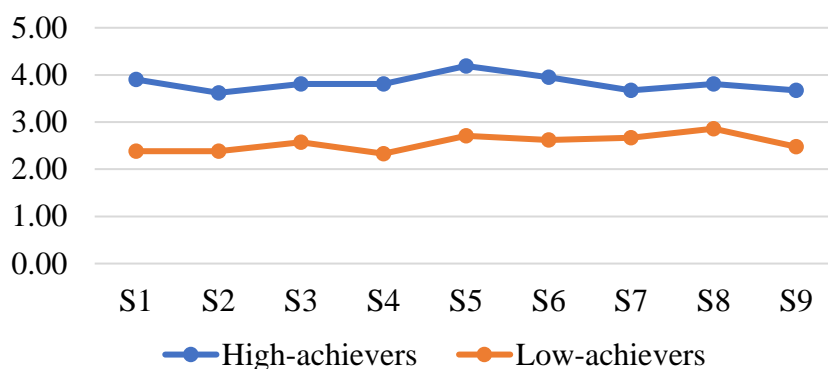
On the opposite side, all the GS items were used at medium level of frequency by the low-achieving students with the means from around 2.5 to 3.00. The students perceived to apply some GS more often: G5 - skimming, G2 - relating previous knowledge, S8 - using context to understand the text, G13 - checking guesses about the text while reading and G10 - critically analysing and evaluating the information presented in the text (means around 3.00). The least applied strategy was using tables, figures and pictures in the text to increase their understanding, which was at low-level of use (mean of G7 = 2.34). Low-achievers rarely used tables, figures and pictures in the text for reading comprehension because when reading the texts, they usually “pay attention to new words and handle them” but “ignore the information from figures and

tables.” They thought such information “is not important” and “it just illustrates the content of the text a little bit” and they also didn’t “understand what it means” (LA3, LA4).

Obviously, high-achievers are still in high usage of GS compared to low-achievers with the medium use of them. While the most common GS high-achievers used was guessing what the passage was about (G12) with the means of over 4.5, critically

Figure 2

High-Achievers’ and Low-Achievers’ Use of Support Reading Strategies



The chart clearly shows that high-achievers generally used SS more often especially S5 (underlining and circling information in the text to help them remember it) with the mean of 4.2 which aids them to comprehend the texts more while S2 (reading aloud to help understand what they read when texts become difficult), S7 (paraphrasing - restating ideas in their own words - to better understand what they read), S9 (asking themselves questions they like to have answered in the texts) are the least applied with the means of between 3.62 and 3.67. It was implied that high-achievers were relatively flexible in applying SS effectively. They were aware of which suitable SS should use in the right contexts for more reading comprehension. Their perception of using S5 in comprehending the texts was at high-use level because “underlining and circling key words in the text” was “an important technique to

analysing and evaluating the information presented in the text (G10) was the most commonly used strategy by low-achievers at the means of 3.05. It was shown that high-achievers’ perception of using GS was at a considerably higher level of frequency than low-achievers’.

Figure 2 below illustrates the frequency of using SS among low-achieving and high-achieving students.

understand the text” (HA2). It could support their reading comprehension and “have an overview about the main idea of the text” (HA5).

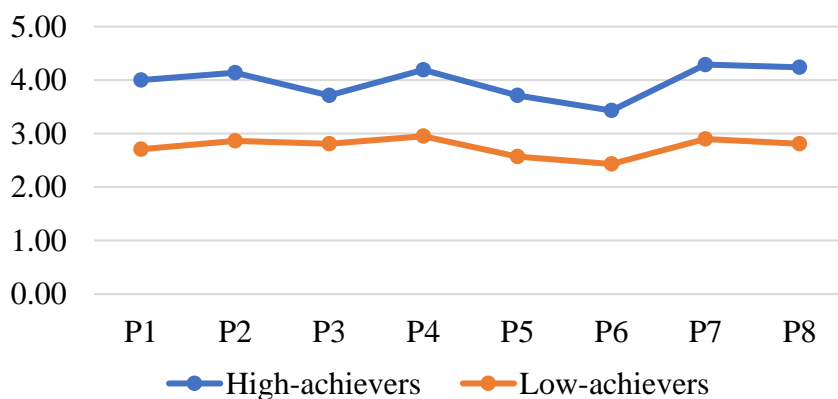
On the contrary, low-achievers recognised their low usage of SS (means < 3.00). They only sometimes used the strategies of going back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it (S8), underlining and circling information in the text to help they remember it (S5), paraphrasing (S7), using dictionary to understand the text (S6) and summarising the text (S3) (means from 2.50 to 2.86) among which S8 was most frequently used. They tended to rarely discuss what they read with others to check their understanding (S4), take note while reading (S1) or read aloud when texts become difficult (S2) with means of less than 2.5. In the interview, some students confirmed that reading aloud made them “hard to

concentrate on the reading text” and this strategy was “ineffective,” thus they “only read silently and think twice” (HA2, HA3).

As shown in figure 2, high-achieving students used the SS much more often than those of the low-achievers’ group. The most frequently used strategy among high-achievers was S5 (underlining and circling

Figure 3

High-Achievers’ and Low-Achievers’ Perceived Use of Problem-Solving Strategies



It can be clearly seen from the figure that PS were used quite frequently among high-achievers with the means of 3.5 and 4.3. Specifically, they tended to read slowly but carefully in order to understand what they were reading (P1, M = 4) and pay more attention to what they were reading when reading difficult texts (P4, M = 4.2). Even though high-achievers used P1 frequently, they said that they used it only when they read “a difficult paragraph” and they “need to control the time.” In addition, they used the strategy of guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases more often (P8, M = 4.24) and reread the texts to get more comprehension (P7, M = 4.29). Among these PS, P7 was used at the highest frequency, especially P6 (trying to picture or visualise information to help remember what they read). In the survey, HA2 said that they often reread the difficult texts to “identify the link between different pieces of information” but they “often leave those questions till the later stage of the test.” This is obvious because they said “difficult

information in the text to help them remember it) while that of low-achievers was S8 (going back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it).

Figure 3 below shows how frequently the students in two groups used problem-solving strategies.

reading passages will leave them feeling confused” so they needed to “read more carefully to be sure 80% of what the passage is about and what it means.” HA could figure out which PS should be relevant to deal with the text and they could adjust reasonably to comprehend what the author referred to and implied even the texts had some new words.

On the other hand, low-achievers used PS at the same tendency as GS and SS with the means of all the strategies below 3.00. The students seemed to rarely try to picture or visualise information to help remember what they read (mean of P6 = 2.43). Some students knew this strategy would help them “understand the text better”, but they often skipped it because they did “not have enough time for it” (LA1, LA3). The strategies of P5 (stopping from time to time and thinking about what they are reading) and P1 (reading slowly but carefully to be sure they understand what they are reading) were used slightly more often (means = 2.57, 2.71). The rest strategies were used at almost the same frequency level (nearly 3.00): P3 -

adjusting their reading speed, P8 - trying to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases, P2 - trying to get back on track when they lose concentration, P7 - rereading when texts become difficult, P4 - paying closer attention to what they are reading. The interviews revealed that most of the students did not have strategies of adjusting reading speed as they needed to “read slowly to thoroughly understand the text, especially when the passage included a lot of new words” (LA2, LA5). The students also shared that they may “know the strategies” but they “couldn’t use them as they did not have enough time to practice before.” What students answered was in great relation to their logical thinking of the strategy use.

The figure indicates that high-achievers used PS at higher frequency than low-achievers. The most frequently used strategies among both groups of students were P7 - rereading when texts became difficult, P8 - trying to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases, P4 - paying closer attention to what they were reading.

5. Discussion

The research findings mostly align with the previous studies. Like other studies (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002; Pammu et al., 2014; Rastegar et al., 2017), this research proved the significant relationship between the use of metacognitive reading strategies and students’ reading competence. While high-achieving students applied those strategies very frequently, the opposite tendency is found among low-achievers.

However, this research shows some different findings compared with those reported before. While Do and Phan (2021) proved that the highest usage of MRS were PS, followed by SS and GS, this study indicates that GS is ranked the highest level with the runners-up of PS and GS. This difference may be derived from the participants’ selection: this research only

aimed at students of the same level (intermediate) while Do and Phan (2011) targeted a wider range of mixed level students. This can be inferred that students of different levels vary in the use of MRS.

Another difference should be underlined is in terms of the most frequently used strategies of each type by low-proficiency learners. Pammu et al. (2014) revealed that the strategies of “setting purpose for reading, previewing text, determining what to read, resolving conflicting information, and confirming prediction” (global strategies), underlining or circling information in the text to help comprehension and using reference materials to improve comprehension (support strategies) and “reading slowly but carefully to be sure what to read” (problem-solving strategies) were used at highest level of frequency. However, this study indicated that the most frequently used strategies of GS, SS and PS were “critically analysing and evaluating the information presented in the text”, “going back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas” and “rereading when tests became difficult” respectively. This difference indicates that low-achieving students with different backgrounds may apply MRS in dissimilar ways.

6. Conclusion, Recommendations and Limitations

6.1. Conclusion

This research focused on the high-achievers’ and low-achievers’ frequency level of using MRS groups and their individual items in reading comprehension. The results indicate a significant difference of the two groups of students in using Global Reading Strategies (GS), Problem-Solving Strategies (PS), and Support Reading Strategies (SS), but a similar gap among the means of three types of strategies with PS ranking the most

frequently used, followed by GS and SS. This study also provided an insight into high-achievers' and low-achievers' using individual MRS. It could be concluded that the low-achievers applied MRS at low frequency in comprehending texts. The research findings suggested that educators in the education programs at the university level must recognize the influential role of MRS and their positive impacts on students' reading comprehension.

6.2. Recommendations

It can be revealed from the findings of the study that although both high-achievers and low-achievers learn metacognitive reading skills in the courses, the high-achievers use MRS in reading comprehension more frequently than the low-achievers. Specially, the low-achieving students were proven to use problem-solving skills and support skills less effectively. This fact indicates that low-achievers need more support from their teachers to gain their reading competence. Therefore, some suggestions may be offered for ESL teachers in order that they can help their students read more efficiently.

First, low-achievers should be taught how to use strategies of which they lack knowledge and skills. The teaching may include explicit modeling (Rupley et al., 2009), thinking aloud instructional strategies (Dunston & Headley, 2002) and a high level of scaffolding (Gibbons, 2002), as well as when to use them in certain contexts as a critical element of their teaching. They should not only introduce students to these strategies, but also explicitly teach how to implement and when to use them effectively in classes.

Second, as low-achievers did not realise the importance of using these MRS, thus there is a need to gain their awareness of this issue. As studies demonstrate, students benefit from receiving a direct explanation of strategies that facilitate their

reading outcome (Anderson & Roit, 1993; Baker, 1996; Dole et al., 1991). Clarifying for the students why it is important to learn a variety of strategies helps them understand and motivates them to apply the strategies in reading.

Third, from low-achievers' complaint about not having enough practice to master the strategies for later using independently, it is recommended that EFL/ESL teachers select diverse reading materials which provide students opportunities to deeply practise each metacognitive reading strategy during the classroom. This can help students flexibly apply each strategy in suitable contexts. After teaching a group of strategies, there should be a pause for students to do further practice which covers all the learned strategies. Moreover, students need to reinforce their self-study time so as to be skilled in obtaining the strategies.

Finally, among three groups of reading strategies, PS and SS are less used than GS. This is a fundamental factor that teachers should pay more attention to focus on by the way that aids students to apply these strategies at a higher level of frequency. Furthermore, teachers are suggested to recognise the needs of low-achieving students and offer help in time. Meanwhile, group work with a mixture of high-achievers and low-achievers can increase opportunities for low-achievers to get more support from high-achievers, which narrows the gap of their awareness in using metacognitive reading strategies for reading comprehension.

Hopefully, the above recommendations can contribute to the improvement of teaching and learning English reading at universities.

6.3. Limitations

This study has certain limitations. First, this research investigates MRS used by the students according to their own

perception. Therefore, it needs further study to explore whether they actually apply the strategies using other research tools such as think-aloud. Second, the data sampling was limited to intermediate English majors at a Vietnamese university, hence the findings may not be generalizable across different groups of language learners. Further research of this study may include more participants across a wider range of students' abilities and at different contexts so that research data can be subjected to more proper analysis.

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Appendix 1

Survey Questionnaire for Students

Directions: Listed below are statements about what English-majored students do when they read *academic or school-related materials* such as textbooks or library books. Five numbers follow each statement (1, 2, 3, 4, 5), and each number means the following:

- 1 means “I **never or almost never** do this.”
- 2 means “I do this **only occasionally**.”
- 3 means “I **sometimes** do this” (about **50%** of the time).
- 4 means “I **usually** do this.”
- 5 means “I **always or almost always** do this.”

After reading each statement, **circle the number** (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5) that applies to you using the scale provided. Please note that there are **no right or wrong answers** to the statements in this inventory.

Strategies	Questions		Scales				
			1	2	3	4	5
G1	1	I have a purpose in mind when I read.					
G2	2	I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.					
G3	3	I preview the text to see what it is about before reading.					
G4	4	I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.					
G5	5	I skim the text first by noticing characteristics like length and organisation.					

G6	6	I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.					
G7	7	I use tables, figures and pictures in the text to increase my understanding.					
G8	8	I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.					
G9	9	I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.					
G10	10	I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.					
G11	11	I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.					
G12	12	I try to guess what the passage is about when I read.					
G13	13	I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.					
S1	14	I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.					
S2	15	When texts become difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.					
S3	16	I summarise what I read to reflect on important information in the text.					
S4	17	I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.					
S5	18	I underline and circle information in the text to help me remember it.					
S6	19	I use reference materials such as dictionary to help me understand what I read.					
S7	20	I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.					
S8	21	I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.					
S9	22	I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the texts.					
P1	23	I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I am reading.					
P2	24	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.					
P3	25	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.					
P4	26	When the text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.					

P5	27	I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.					
P6	28	I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.					
P7	29	When the text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my understanding.					
P8	30	I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.					

(Adopted from MARSII questionnaire)

Appendix 2
High-Achievers and Low-Achievers' Awareness
of Metacognitive Reading Strategies in Reading Comprehension

Strategies	High-achievers		Low-achievers	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
G1 I have a purpose in mind when I read	3.95	0.669	2.86	0.573
G2 I think about what I know to help me understand what I read.	3.81	0.873	2.90	0.539
G3 I preview the text to see what it is about before reading.	4.10	0.768	2.76	0.625
G4 I think about whether the content of the text fits my reading purpose.	3.81	0.928	2.76	0.700
G5 I skim the text first by noticing characteristics like length and organisation.	4.00	0.775	2.90	0.539
G6 I decide what to read closely and what to ignore.	3.95	0.921	2.67	0.730
G7 I use tables, figures and pictures in the text to increase my understanding.	3.57	0.811	2.29	0.845
G8 I use context clues to help me better understand what I am reading.	4.24	0.768	2.90	0.301
G9 I use typographical aids like boldface and italics to identify key information.	3.86	0.964	2.76	0.625
G10 I critically analyse and evaluate the information presented in the text.	4.05	0.590	3.00	0.316

G11	I check my understanding when I come across conflicting information.	4.10	0.539	2.76	0.625
G12	I try to guess what the passage is about when I read.	4.67	0.483	2.81	0.512
G13	I check to see if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	4.10	0.768	3.00	0.316
S1	I take notes while reading to help me understand what I read.	3.90	0.831	2.38	0.865
S2	When texts become difficult, I read aloud to help me understand what I read.	3.62	0.865	2.38	0.865
S3	I summarise what I read to reflect on important information in the text.	3.81	0.814	2.57	0.598
S4	I discuss what I read with others to check my understanding.	3.81	0.602	2.33	0.730
S5	I underline and circle information in the text to help me remember it.	4.19	0.928	2.71	0.644
S6	I use reference materials such as dictionary to help me understand what I read.	3.95	0.805	2.62	0.740
S7	I paraphrase (restate ideas in my own words) to better understand what I read.	3.67	0.658	2.67	0.658
S8	I go back and forth in the text to find relationships among ideas in it.	3.81	0.750	2.86	0.573
S9	I ask myself questions I like to have answered in the texts.	3.67	0.658	2.48	0.873
P1	I read slowly but carefully to be sure I understand what I am reading.	4.00	0.707	2.71	0.644
P2	I try to get back on track when I lose concentration.	4.14	0.727	2.86	0.655
P3	I adjust my reading speed according to what I am reading.	3.71	0.784	2.81	0.602
P4	When the text becomes difficult, I pay closer attention to what I am reading.	4.19	0.602	2.95	0.384
P5	I stop from time to time and think about what I am reading.	3.71	0.784	2.57	0.676
P6	I try to picture or visualise information to help remember what I read.	3.43	0.676	2.43	0.746
P7	When the text becomes difficult, I re-read it to increase my	4.29	0.784	2.90	0.539

understanding.

P8	I try to guess the meaning of unknown words or phrases.	4.24	0.700	2.81	0.602
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VIỆC SỬ DỤNG CHIẾN LƯỢC ĐỌC SIÊU NHẬN THỨC CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGỮ TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC VIỆT NAM

Đinh Thị Bích Ngọc, Vũ Thị Nhung

Trường Ngoại ngữ - Du lịch, Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội, Hà Nội, Việt Nam

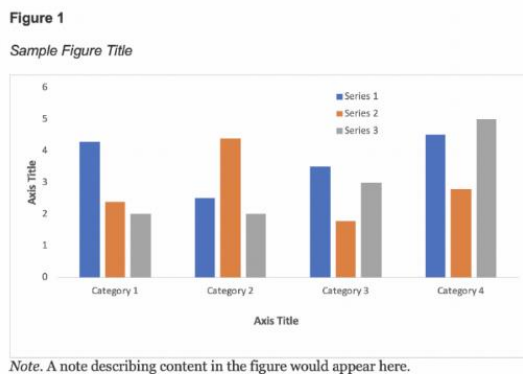
Tóm tắt: Các chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức bao gồm 1) chiến lược đọc tổng thể, 2) chiến lược đọc hỗ trợ, 3) chiến lược giải quyết vấn đề, là các chiến lược quan trọng cho việc đọc hiểu hiệu quả (Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002). Nghiên cứu này nhằm tìm hiểu mức độ thường xuyên sử dụng các chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức trong việc hiểu các văn bản đọc hiểu bằng tiếng Anh của nhóm sinh viên có khả năng đọc tốt và nhóm sinh viên có khả năng đọc yếu của ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Phương pháp nghiên cứu sử dụng kết hợp hai công cụ thu thập dữ liệu - bảng câu hỏi khảo sát theo thang đo MARSII của Mokhtari và Reichard (2002) và phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Bốn mươi hai sinh viên chuyên ngành tiếng Anh đã tham gia khảo sát, sau đó đại diện của nhóm sinh viên có khả năng đọc tốt và nhóm sinh viên có khả năng đọc yếu tham gia vào các cuộc phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc. Các kết quả cho thấy tần suất sử dụng các nhóm chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức trong đọc hiểu khác nhau giữa hai nhóm sinh viên. Ngoài ra, nghiên cứu cũng chỉ ra tần suất những chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức riêng lẻ được sử dụng bởi những người đạt thành tích cao và người đạt thành tích thấp. Nghiên cứu giúp nâng cao nhận thức của giáo viên về việc sử dụng các chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức của sinh viên chuyên ngữ ở các trình độ đọc hiểu khác nhau và gợi ý về việc dạy các chiến lược này cho các nhóm sinh viên một cách phù hợp nhằm đạt hiệu quả cao nhất.

Từ khóa: chiến lược đọc siêu nhận thức, đọc hiểu, sinh viên có khả năng đọc tốt, sinh viên có khả năng đọc yếu

THẺ 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:



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.: (Số của tác giả liên hệ)

Email: (Email của tác giả liên hệ)